



Young Adults Learning in a National Art Museum: a Holistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores holistic educational strategies with reference to a national art museum. For some young adults, an art museum serves as a space that sustains aesthetic and historical facts. Meanwhile, other young adults are not even aware of the existence and location of the national art museum. Yet a national art museum collection belongs to the public. Since 2018, 'MUŻA' – Malta's new national art museum has aimed to serve as a national community art museum.

This research provides holistic learning strategies grounded in three participatory action-research projects carried out during 2016-2017 with three different young adult communities. The projects' participants admitted they had little or no experience of the museum. In Malta, the national art museum has failed to make any significant investment in public education and the role of museum educators was, and remains non-existent. This is the justification for my thesis. The only initiatives in the education sphere undertaken by the museum have targeted school children, these visits being conducted in a touristic approach by front office staff. Although this research's projects still referred to the same art collection, the main focus was on the contexts of the participants and not the narratives of the collection.

This thesis reveals that despite the absence of education within the museum environment, holistic educational strategies can still be achieved effectively 'outside' the museum. Indeed, none of the three projects were held within the museum due to its closure and transition to the new MUŻA premises.

The proposed educational strategies are not grounded in prior knowledge of art history and aesthetics but in the open-endedness of meaning-making, embracing constructivist principles that view learning as contextual. This research evidence reveals that by bringing the museum collection closer to the interests and needs of young adults, those who do not ordinarily visit museums start to recognise their educational significance.

Finally this thesis redefines the paradoxical question of whether museum education needs the physical space of a museum. The researcher asserts that the educational potential of a national art museum lies in providing both physical and virtual accessibility to its collection. By such measures, young adults can engage with art and construct meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: Holistic Approach, Art Museum Education, Constructivist Principles, Young Adults, Participation, Contextual learning

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	Arts Council Malta
ALP	Alternative Learning Programmes
App	Application
AR	Action Research
AŻ	Agenzija Żgħażaġh
B.Ed.	Bachelors of Education
CCF	Corradino Correctional Facility
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGT	Constructivist Grounded Theory
CMA	Cleveland Museum of Art
EU	European Union
Fig.	Figure
GLO	Generic Learning Outcomes
GSO	Generic Social Outcomes
GT	Grounded Theory
HM	Heritage Malta
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ILFA	Inspiring Learning For All
KOPIN	Koperazzjoni Internazzjonali
KU	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
LIRP	Learning Impact Research Project

LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MAAT	Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MET	Metropolitan Museum of Art
MINTLAB	Meaningful INteractions LAb
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives
MoMA	Museum of Modern Art
MUŻA	MUŻew nazzjonali ta' l-Arti
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts
NEMO	Network of European Museum Organisations
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIM	Naqsam II-MUŻA
NMFA	National Museum of Fine Arts
NSO	National Statistics Office
P	Participant
PAJ	Participant Art Journal
RCMG	Research Centre for Museums and Galleries
RETINA	RE-thinking Technical Interventions to Advance visual literacy of young people in art museums
RISD	Rhode Island School of Design Museum
SMK	Statens Museum for Kunst
UCL	University College London
UKAF	Unge Kunstnere Astrup Fearnley

U.L.K.	Danish abbreviation for Young Peoples Laboratories for Art
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UREC	University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee
V&A	Victoria and Albert museum
VE	Virtual Exhibition
YES	Youth and Youngsters Educational Services

GLOSSARY

Art interpretation

Art interpretation “takes into account a range of perspectives for thinking about the work beyond the personal.” (Charman and Ross, 2004:7). To refer to art as a matter of interpretation is to imply that (like matters of taste) there are many ways to look at art, and no single way which is objectively right. Objects of experience, including works of art, have become objects of interpretation, due to their associations with the uncertainty we feel about the meaning of these objects (Steckler, 1994).

Art Journal

An art journal, similar to a visual diary, is a book where one records both visual and verbal collections of feelings, memories, ideas and experiments with different materials. It can include notes, sketches, and also mixed media elements such as collages of photos/pictures/scraps of materials. Since it is a place where mistakes are welcome, it promotes risk-taking and creative ideas. Each art journal is as unique as the person who creates it.

Action Research

Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of scientific and practical knowledge with, not on, those people with a stake in the issues at hand. It brings together action and reflection, as well as theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern (Bradbury, 2015).

Community

‘Community’ in my study refers to a group relationship among individuals who experience their identity through a sense of belonging which gathers responsibilities involving active participation (Ife and Tesoriero, 2006).

Community-based museum education

Community-based museum education — both that occurring inside the museum walls as well as that which takes place in outreach activities — is a way to expand opportunities for knowledge and power sharing, and to increase the relevance of museums to public communities (Watson, 2007).

Constructivism

Constructivism is ‘an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner’ (Elliott et al., 2000:256). It is divided into three broad categories, namely cognitive, social and radical. Cognitive constructivism, based on the work of Jean Piaget (1957), refers to knowledge as something that is actively constructed by learners based on their existing cognitive structures. Thus, learning is relative to their stage of cognitive development. Social constructivism, developed by Lev

Vygotsky, refers to learning as a collaborative process, where knowledge develops from the interactions of individuals with their culture and society, as “every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and, later on, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological) (Vygotsky, 1978:57). Radical constructivism, developed by Ernst von Glasersfeld refers to the concept that all knowledge is constructed rather than perceived through senses. Thus, knowledge is invented not discovered and “the humanly constructed reality is all the time being modified and interacting to fit ontological reality, although it can never give a ‘true picture’ of it” (von Glasersfeld, 1994:8).

Constructivism supports a variety of learner-centred pedagogies where educators act as facilitators of learning rather than instructors. This contrasts with traditional pedagogies, whereby knowledge is passively transmitted by educators to learners. However, while constructivism promotes a sense of personal action as learners have ownership of their learning and assessment, it lacks structure and thus limits those students who require highly structured learning settings to be able to reach their potential (McLeod, 2020).

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT)

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is an approach which combines the strategies of classic grounded theory within a constructivist paradigm and as a result rejects concepts of objectivity. Therefore, data does not reflect reality but “rather, the ‘discovered’ reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts” (Charmaz, 2000:524).

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy, a combination of education and critical theory, was mainly founded by Freire (1993) and later developed by McLaren (1989) and Giroux (2003). Critical theory has a dual purpose: it acts as a lens for viewing situations and as a means to change situations (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 1989). It aims at helping students achieve critical consciousness by encouraging “habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse” (Shor, 1992:129).

Critics have argued that critical pedagogues focus on promoting political perspectives at the expense of teaching other skills, such as a proficiency in writing (O'Dair, 2003). They have also suggested that critical pedagogues encourage simplistic ideologically-driven ideas about complex social issues, such as racial discrimination and class inequality, which they are not qualified to teach (Hairston, 1992). Another limit of critical pedagogy is when critical pedagogues bias the learners towards an anti-status quo position instead of allowing students to decide if they agree or disagree with the situation at hand (Seas, 2006). As teaching is considered an inherently political

act to the critical pedagogue, advocates of critical pedagogy maintain that educators must become learners alongside their students, as well as students of their students. Moreover, they must immerse themselves in the culture, customs, and lived experiences of their students (Bartolomé, 2004).

‘Falk’ model

‘Falk’ model refers to John Falk’s museum approach as the one that targets identity-related needs such as a desire to indulge one’s sense of curiosity or to temporarily escape the rat race rather than age-groups (Falk, 2009).

Habitus

Known as one of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s key terms, *Habitus* refers to habitual condition, state, or appearance. It is a theoretical belief system, which refers to how systems of social norms, understandings, and behaviour are personified in individuals (Setten, 2009). It is “necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (Bourdieu, 1984:170). *Habitus* is a useful tool for thinking about how social relations are internalized and experienced as ‘natural’, reproducing unevenness and domination. Meanwhile, there are evidences as to how habitus can work to transform such social conditions. The nature of production and reproduction of habitus needs to be subjected to further analysis by human geographers, as the dual nature of habitus needs to be made spatially sensitive in order to be a relevant disciplinary concern (Setten, 2009).

Holistic approach

Holistic approach in my study refers to the process of addressing the learner’s whole personality through emotional, practical and cognitive experiences that “stimulate creativity, empathy and passion” (Heublein and Zimmermann, 2016:10).

Knowledge construction

The pedagogies based on George Hein’s (1998) constructivist theory for museums encourage visitors’ knowledge construction “by making connections between their lives and the objects they encounter in museums” (in Mayer, 2005:14). Hein asserts that even in the most informative museum exhibition, the visitors would still construct meanings based on their personal knowledge and learning intentions rather than meanings which are generated curatorially (Mayer, 2005).

Lifelong learning

‘Lifelong learning’ has never meant only one thing but has always been a ‘composite’ concept (Biesta, 2006). Lifelong learning represents three different ‘agendas’ and hence can serve three different functions or purposes, which are: (1) lifelong learning for economic progress and development; (2) lifelong learning for personal development and fulfilment; and (3) lifelong learning for social inclusiveness and democratic understanding and activity (Aspin and Chapman,

2001: 39-40). Across the western world, the concept of ‘lifelong’ learning became part of the political agenda, aiming towards the availability of trained workers who are able to react to issues of globalisation. Over time, there have been major shifts in policies of lifelong learning by organisations such as UNESCO, promoting essential humanistic concern with achieving human fulfilment while introducing new curricular concerns such as well-being, cultural and environmental education (Field, 2001).

Meaning-making

According to museum education scholar Hooper-Greenhill (1999), meaning-making in museums is an ongoing process, and something we construct out of our own experiences, beliefs and values. She explains that our views are constructed through our own interpretations or else provided by a museum curator or educator. For the purposes of this study, I am using the term ‘meaning-making’ to refer to an educational process, where the participants engaged in constant dialogue not only with themselves but also with others. They negotiated their relationship with art, connections with their own life experiences and social themes that emerged while dealing with the projects’ task development.

According to the participants, the project’s learning process through meaning-making provided them with a deep sense of satisfaction. Thus, making sense of and expressing their own ways of seeing while being open to have their ‘seeing’ challenged and further developed, served to restore their sense of well-being. Instead of measurable learning outcomes, the participants gained skills that benefit their attitude to face a world which may challenge their preconceptions, resist their initiatives and ignore their desires. This echoes Biesta (2017)’s assertion of the function of education to prepare the individual’s desire to be-in-dialogue with a world which at times interferes with one’s ingrained beliefs.

Mediation

The word ‘mediation’ translated from the French *médiation*, refers to the commonly used museum meaning of ‘interpretation’. The concept of ‘mediation’ indicates an action aimed at integrating parties in order to bring them to an agreement (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010).

Mind-map

A mind-map is a diagram used to visually organize information. It is often created around a single concept, drawn as an image in the centre of a blank page, to which related representations of ideas such as images, words and parts of words are added. The main ideas are connected directly to the central concept, while other ideas branch out from those main ideas (Hopper, 2016).

Multiculturalism

Throughout history, human beings have developed multiple cultures in response to different living environments. The term multiculturalism seems to be self-evident, relating to many cultures, in contrast to monoculturalism. Multiculturalism does not simply refer to other races and nationalities but to practically every human grouping that separates from the norm, develops both a separate identity and also its normative identity. Indeed each person is of many cultures simultaneously.

One has a sexual identity; a racial identity; a religious identity; a class/work identity; a school identity; peers' identity; a family identity; several geographic identities: neighborhood, city, state, country, hemisphere, etc. (Jandt, 2001). The multicultural identities that today's young adults inhabit are constantly shaped by globalisation, increased migration, social pluralism, race, religion, gender, friendship groups, their usage of internet (especially social networking) and wider cultural influences on their lifestyles (Bourn, 2008).

Multicultural education aims to empower all learners to become "knowledgeable, caring and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world" (Clemons, 2005: 289). Disadvantages of multiculturalism include resentment and alienation when learners and educators don't have the training to facilitate multicultural, anti-bias classroom improvements. Rather than gaining respect for their cultural differences and receiving opportunities to share and experience them, learners might feel as though they're being forced to blend in (Tucker, 2020). Multiculturalism when rightly modelled can lead to peaceful, open-minded, supportive communities (Crowder, 2013).

The term 'transculturalism' is now being used more commonly than 'multiculturalism'. Coined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 and associated with the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch, transculturalism is a concept of cultural encounter and its consequences for society, political, and economical structures as well as cultural identities (Allolio-Näcke L., 2014). My study does not aim at transculturation as it does not highlight the creation of new cultural phenomena. The social and educational exclusion of certain participants in my study, was overcome within the framework of the research setting described.

Museum educator

Historically, the museum educator's role was not universally "considered integral to the museum" (Talboys, 2011:23), as museums' displays of artefacts were considered educational enough, thus the need for specialists to facilitate education was never felt. However, museum educators have been present in museums for a long time (Tran, 2006), which eventually contributed to museums' structure of education (Talboys, 2011).

Although there is increased research on the nature of learning at museums, research on museum educators' pedagogical role is often ignored (Tran and King, 2007). Among various responsibilities, museum educators' role involve the designing, organization and implementation of educational programmes for various public communities, while also contributing to the development of exhibitions (Tran, 2006; Talboys, 2011). Although during school visits, classroom teachers carry out educational duties with students at museums, they cannot be considered as museum educators. The teachers' educational target at museums is mainly to complement curricular subjects (Storksdieck, 2006), while that of museum educators is to facilitate the visitors' experience and understandings through the collection (Burnham and Kai-Kee, 2011).

Museum educators' duties can involve paid staff or be shared among volunteers (Tran, 2006). For the purpose of my study, the term 'museum educator' refers to the full-time paid staff working within museums carrying out education duties that primarily involve face-to-face communication with the public. The relationships a museum educator creates and develops with community groups make museums relevant to the public they serve (Henry, 2006) thus also fulfilling the museum's educational purpose of conserving artefacts (Talboys, 2011).

Museum education outreach

'Museum education outreach', in my study, refers to the application of strategies through which the relevance of the art museum with the public could be enhanced by relating its collection to life, such as through a particular community's interests. As Burns insists, "to succeed in enriching the connection people have to their world, museums need to operate in that world" (2015: Online).

Pragmatism

Dewey's pragmatic philosophy considers art as an extension of human experience rather than separating art from everyday life. People engage in the world and bring meaning into existence (Dewey, 1938). Dewey criticises those museums which place art on a social and metaphysical pedestal above other interests and practical forms of human experience (Haskins, 1992).

Reinterpretation

Reinterpretation is the responsive artwork, made and sited in proximity to existing artefacts, the latter acting as a source. Typically applied through the practice of contemporary art interventions in museums, the methodology provides a practice-based means of broad thematic, conceptual or contextual critique, which goes beyond approaches which emphasise purely formal meanings (Richardson, 2018). The term 'reinterpretation' in my study refers to the changes and adaptations of earlier interpretations (Kaufman, 2019) of the museum collection, constructed by the participants.

Relativist ontology

Relativist ontology depends on a subjectivist experience of reality. Despite an awareness that an external reality exists, an individual's subjective experience of knowledge only exists inside one's reflections and interpretations (Levers, 2013).

Relevance

'Relevance' in my study refers to a museum learning experience which is made more meaningful by giving priority to specific community, personal and contextual aspects, thus enriching the connection people have to their world.

Transferable skills

In the 21st century challenged by economic, environmental, and social issues, the accomplishment of a positive life and career is “associated with cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies that allow individuals to adapt effectively to changing situations” (National Research Council, 2012:70). The practice of these competencies, also known as transferable skills (National Research Council, 2012) was explored in my research projects. For the purpose of my study, transferable skills (eg. critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration) refer to the abilities practised within the context of the research projects which can then be applied in other contexts throughout life. I am aware of a debate around transferable skills, especially since the term ‘transferable’ does not provide a clear notion or understanding of human learning and transformation (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009). However, according to Leicester University’s learning development manager Steve Rooney, the practices that one develops throughout a learning process can still be relevant in contexts beyond a course of study. Yet, he maintains that the extent to which they might be applicable is itself a context-dependent issue (Rooney, 2018). Alternatively, Rooney suggests that educators need to find meaningful ways to support learners’ development of practices such as the presentation of their ideas and cooperating with others.

Virtual Exhibition

A Virtual Exhibition (VE) is a complimentary equivalent to a physical exhibition. It overcomes space, time and location limitations and allows global visitors to access electronically exhibitions that are often stored in museums, archives and other institutions and be able to do so at any time all year round. Well-constructed VEs can offer alternative experiences to the "real thing" and open up other opportunities that include learning, additional content related to physical exhibits, active participation and contribution by visitors through forums and uploads (Foo, 2008).

Well-being

Also referred to as ‘transformative learning’ by Mezirow (1996), ‘well-being’ in my study focuses on the participants’ sense of achievement gained through constructive and interpretive learning while dealing with contextualised tasks.

Young Adults Community

Young adults can become powerful agents for change when they feel valued and gain a sense of belonging in the wider community, leading to the improvement of the community, both as contributing citizens in the present day and also in the future (Perkins et al., 2001).

The reason for choosing an age group ranging between 21 and 30 was because they are often excluded from local cultural projects and events which focus mainly on families, school children and teenagers. In fact, a scroll down the menu of the ‘Education’ tab on the HM website (<http://heritagemalta.org/learning-2/>) only targets school children. At the beginning of the study,

during my informal meetings with HM museums and site curators, I was told the main reason there are no events tailored specifically for young adults is the fear of lack of participants. I experienced this myself when I issued an open call of participation for Project 1. But that is precisely the reason why the museums' staff should aim to find ways to reach out to such an age group. We cannot preach to converted museum goers. Meanwhile, I think the strategies recommended in the final chapter could be adapted to other age groups, as long as museum educators get familiar with the participants' characteristics and learning needs, regardless of their age.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my research is to analyse art museum learning theories and practice in relation to young adults' own learning strategies. The study's research projects put the participants at the centre of the learning process, embracing their creation of multiple narratives while engaging with the national art museum collection in Malta. Resulting from a combination of theories and practices that inform one another, my study proposes museum educational strategies that facilitate young adults' meaning-making to achieve understandings about themselves, life's challenges and art.

A year after it opened its doors, MUŻA, the national art museum in Malta still does not offer education outreach for public communities, despite branding itself as a community art museum. My research proposals could serve young adults' physical and virtual use of the national art collection for lifelong learning. It could also serve freelance educators to use MUŻA's potential as a space for holistic learning practices, thus creating and sustaining meaningful community relationships.

1.2 Research Background

At a time of intense social, political and environmental changes, museums could play a significant role as educational resources (Janes, 2009). Recently, museums have been acknowledged for their role in the global discussion about the well-being of communities. For instance, the Arts Council of England (2019) building on Hooper-Greenhill (2007a) has been promoting museum education through GLOs (Generic Learning Outcomes) and GSOs (Generic Social Outcomes) in an improvement framework for the arts and cultural sector, known as Inspiring Learning For All (ILFA, 2019). These tools and frameworks enabled the identification of learning gained from interacting with arts and cultural organisations through categories such as knowledge and understanding, attitudes, values, inspiration, creativity, progression and enjoyment.

Research has shown that collections from museums can act as agents to elicit emotional responses as the physical properties of objects can generate memories and awareness (Chatterjee 2016). A

recent work carried out by Chatterjee and Camic (2013) is specifically focused on the well-being potential of museums. They proposed a framework involving the development of partnerships between museums and healthcare facilities to organise health and well-being programmes. These programmes could be offered as a prescribed referral by health and social care organisations. Thus for example, instead of the often-stigmatised settings of mental health institutions where one may experience awkwardness to attend, museums can offer a space which encourages people to learn about themselves and connect with others (Camic and Chatterjee, 2013).

1.2.1 The Cultural Scenario in Malta

Eurobarometer surveys concerning cultural access and participation (Special Eurobarometer 466, 2017), indicates that 24% of respondents in Malta regularly visited cultural sites and events such as museums, festivals and concerts. A graph (Special Eurobarometer 466, 2017:50) shows that throughout 2017, only 37% of respondents in Malta visited a museum.

The surveys also explored what European respondents consider to be barriers hindering access to cultural events and museum visits. Focusing on the Maltese context, 42% of the respondents in Malta considered ‘a lack of interest’ as the main barrier (Special Eurobarometer 466, 2017:59), while 36% consider ‘lack of time’ as another barrier to accessing cultural heritage sites or activities. 23% see the entrance fee as a limitation and 21% cited ‘a lack of information’ as a barrier to access cultural events. The mission statement of Heritage Malta (HM) – a national agency for conservation and management of Maltese cultural heritage – declares it is committed to bring culture closer to the public (Heritage Malta, 2019).

Since HM’s inception in 2002, museums developed new initiatives focused on refining their activities to better meet visitors’ needs (Lusiani and Zan, 2010). However, their visitors are often regular cultural consumers who cannot be regarded as the public. There is a lack of differentiation in audiences which my research responds to. This points to the requirement for HM to develop new initiatives for assessing ways and means to find out which visitors are participating and identify their needs.

1.2.2 The Relevance of Arts Education in Maltese Schools

With reference to the importance of education for the appreciation of cultural heritage, the Eurobarometer analysis shows that “those who remained in education longer consistently have more positive attitudes to cultural heritage” (Special Eurobarometer 466, 2017:79) and are more likely to get involved. This recalls Pierre Bourdieu (1979) who vouched for the relation between educational capital and cultural capital. Yet, such relation can be debated when an education system such as the Maltese one, gives low value to cultural subjects.

My research contributes to the above debate about the correlation between educational attainment and engagement in cultural activities. For instance, I selected participants in the age group 21-30: all had experienced compulsory education in Malta. In Project 2, in spite of selecting participants who had gone through tertiary education, my study’s results reveal they still did not show a positive attitude to cultural heritage.

The possible reason for the lack of cultural interest could be the low value given to arts education in the formal education system in Malta. This can be mainly confirmed by the lack of time allocated to arts in schools. Only “70 teaching hours in a scholastic year” are allocated to arts education (visual art, drama, music) at primary level (Farrugia Micallef, 2008:5). To date, through my full-time profession within formal secondary education, I am aware that the common perception of heads of schools and parents is that arts subjects are ‘less important’ than other academic subjects. At secondary junior level (ages 11-12), the arts education comprising of art and music are only allocated 18 hours each throughout the scholastic year while at secondary senior level (ages 13-15), art education is only for students who opt for it.

1.2.3 MUŻA

In 2018, MUŻA, the new national museum of art in Malta was one of the flagship projects for Valletta’s tenure as European Capital City of Culture, coordinated by HM (MUŻA, 2018). ‘MUŻA’ recalls the classical muses that inspire creativity. It is also the Maltese word for ‘inspiration’ (Debono, 2014). Hence, the name suggests that its historic past is acknowledged in the new museum, while reflecting a shift in its vision of curatorial values, such that the collection

can be re-thought in terms of a community-based resource. Back in 2014, at the time when I started writing this thesis, the National Museum of Fine Arts (NMFA) was still open, located at the lower end of South Street in Valletta. It closed in September 2016 to prepare for its transition to MUŻA, located at Auberge D'Italie, Merchants Street in Valletta. MUŻA opened in December 2018. The name 'NMFA' has been used to refer to the older National Art Museum premises, especially during the time of two research projects when it was still open, while 'MUŻA' has been used to refer to the proposed ideas for the current national art museum.

1.2.4 Targeting Communities

Grounded in MUŻA's vision, my study recommends educational strategies based on empirical research targeting communities. The focus is on giving priority to specific community, personal and contextual aspects which can provide participants with a relevant museum learning experience (relevance will be discussed at a later stage). Aligned with this, MUŻA is branded as "a national-community art museum, the first of its kind" (MUŻA, 2018) with a target of making art accessible to all. Using a qualitative research methodology, I collected data grounded in the practice of educational projects with communities of young adults. Additionally, I collected data concerning the current interests of young adults through an interview with the CEO of the local national youth agency as well as data about the museum's educational role from MUŻA's senior curator. The latter data indicated that, at the time of writing, there is an absence of educational plans for community outreach programmes.

1.2.5 Funds for New Museum Education Strategies.

Currently in Malta, 12 funding programmes are provided by Arts Council Malta with an estimated allocation of €2.4 million for 2019. The fund earmarked for the development of new strategies in museum education for community outreach is the Creative Communities Funding Programme (Arts Council Malta, 2019). The fund mainly addresses local communities and one of its aims is to encourage active participation of local communities in culture and arts. It also invests in projects which focus on developing programmes for communities and exhibitions that encourage the community's creative expression. The third project of my study was supported by this fund, which financed the involvement of artists and the organization of two exhibitions.

1.3 Research Questions

The rationale behind the research questions was to explore ways to address interests of today's young adults through the use of MUŽA's premises and collection. The questions directed the research's main aim in proposing recommendations for providing young adults with museum educational outreach. Eventually freelance educators could refer to them to fulfill MUŽA's new philosophy of serving as a community-based museum.

The main research questions are:

1. In what ways can a national art museum serve as an educational resource that embraces contemporary young adults' needs and interests?
2. What kind of public service can the staff at an art museum provide for community outreach?
3. In what ways will the new MUŽA philosophy address community outreach?

Although the three questions are interrelated, the focus is different. While the first question centres on the participants' learning experience throughout the projects, the second one focuses on approaches the museum staff could use to provide a public service. Since I am not employed at the museum, my projects did not involve outreach programmes. So far, MUŽA staff does not include museum educators. MUŽA does not offer community outreach programmes and my research results show that there are still no official plans. Thus, my study's findings could assist MUŽA to justify the provision of community outreach through the mediated effort of an interdisciplinary team consisting of freelance educators, artists and NGOs.

1.4 The Researcher's Contextual Background

The beginning of this research was ignited by my personal conviction that it will significantly contribute to the national art museum's role to provide public education outreach. In my study, 'education outreach' refers to applying strategies through which the relevance of the art museum with the public could be enhanced by relating its collection to life, such as a particular community's interests. As Burns insists "to succeed in enriching the connection people have to their world,

museums need to operate in that world” (2015: Online). In fact, my research projects aimed at reaching out to communities of young adults by engaging them with the museum’s art collection through themes they have chosen based on their own interests.

My study refers to young adult participants as those whose age ranges between 21-30 years. Meanwhile ‘youth’ in Malta is still officially categorised as “the cohort of all persons between 13 and 30 years old” (Youth Policy in Malta, 2017:8). My choice of focusing on this age-related community stemmed from reading studies (Black, 2005), which indicated the substantial gap in museum visits from those attending formal schooling to young adults once they left school. Furthermore, within the Maltese context, a survey by the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2014) conducted among 64 museums and historical sites across Malta, indicates the drastic lack of youth attendance when compared to students, children and other age-related communities. Table 5 (NSO, 2014: 4) revealed that in 2012 only 2% of youth attended museums and historical sites and in 2013 their attendance declined to 0%.

Acknowledging the fact that this research echoes my values, beliefs and insights, what follows in this section is a brief description of my background as a researcher. In 2009, at the beginning of a Masters’ Degree in Art Education, an assignment on ‘Museum Education’ was among a number of contemporary themes in Art Education. I instantly rejected this theme as it conjured images of suffocating and soulless museums, this in spite of the fact I was a frequent visitor at museums as an art educator. Instead, I opted to develop the assignment on the theme of ‘Multiculturalism in Art Education’. Though I was unfamiliar with this theme at the time, it did not seem ‘stagnant’ or ‘boring’.

The theme of multiculturalism eventually led to the topic of my Masters’ dissertation – *The Transformative Potential of Art Education through Multicultural Teaching and Learning*, which transformed my pedagogy in embracing the learners’ diversity through project-based learning. In fact, strategies like the thematic approach through self-identity, the encouragement of keeping an art journal and inviting the learners’ presentations of work in progress, have been applied once again throughout the projects undertaken for this doctoral study. Meanwhile, the readings and lectures concerning Museum Education during my Masters’ journey started transforming my

attitude towards the theme of museum education, which eventually planted the seed of my doctoral journey.

Since then, I developed a passion for visiting art museums overseas where I became immersed in often indirect holistic learning benefits. As an insatiable lifelong learner, the need to spend sufficient time in front of artworks and other museum objects led to several solo travels. I often post my overseas museum experiences on social media, sparking interest among friends and relatives who ask me for museum suggestions. A few friends also started showing interest to accompany me to art museums, trusting me to explain the historical and technical facts of the artworks.

Instead, just like I do whenever someone asks me to explain my artworks, I ask them questions about the artworks they choose as their ‘favourites’ and the ones they dislike. At first, they feel intimidated to talk about a subject which might be unfamiliar. But by guiding them through open-ended questions, I felt I can build a bridge of confidence between art and their identity, between art and their experiences, between art and their opinions on contemporary issues. This helped them relate to art, awakened by new experiences evoked by their memories. Through this, they constructed new understandings or alternatives to their usual ways of seeing things... of seeing life... of seeing themselves. Observing these friends’ responses indicated that inquiry-based guidance raises issues concerning multiple personal and contextual identities. These multiple identities recalled the main definition of ‘multiculturalism’ which I explored while reading my Masters’ degree in art education. This definition embraces the premise that since each person has multiple identities, such as racial, sexual, religious, geographic and age, each person can belong to many cultures simultaneously (Zammit, 2011).

Completed in 2011, my Masters’ thesis tackled the transformative potential of art education through multicultural teaching and learning. It served as a form of scaffolding to my doctoral journey based on a chosen theme I had rejected at the time - Museum Education. Concurrently with the doctoral journey, the Masters’ journey also examined aspects of 21st Century education and multiculturalism through community learning. The Masters’ project involved the students in a creative process of developing large artworks which send positive messages to the whole school

community. In addition, they experienced a sense of commitment to their team as they collaborated to plan, reflect, create and evaluate, thus embracing each other's strengths through multiple identities. Bearing in mind that the terms 'formal' and 'non-formal' education are unstable and can be applied across both school education and museum learning, the Masters' project happened within the formal sector of schooling. Meanwhile the doctoral study's projects happened within the non-formal education sector. Instead of engaging with one community of students who brought with them multicultural characteristics of teenagers, my doctoral experience engaged me with young adults in three different communities. This encouraged me to dig deeper into multiple identities.

The educational strategies of the doctoral projects prioritised the participants' needs before the national art museum's needs. The priority target of my study was to provide the participants with an opportunity to develop transferable skills for life through an exchange of knowledge with me as the researcher/educator vis-à-vis a reference to the museum collection.

This target evoked the learning experience of friends who ended up discussing their social/political views and life experiences with me, provoked by questions about their choices of artworks. Consequently, in this introductory chapter, I would like to underline my conviction that an art museum has the potential to act as an educational resource to promote the public's development of transferable skills for life, such as critical thinking, social skills and lifelong learning, by providing sustainable outreach programmes.

1.5 The Research's Unlimited Context

In line with my priority target, the initial part of my doctoral journey involved me going through self-discovery and transformation while dealing with three facets: the educational aspects for the 21st Century, the multicultural characteristics that young adults bring with them within the Maltese context and the concept of community.

Simultaneously, I have also been dealing with my ontological and epistemological positions which are influenced by the fluid nature of my research. Moreover, the multiple realities brought by the

participants dictated that the research has the nature of participatory action in a constant state of change. Hence, my study's epistemological approach was grounded in a relativist ontology, which, as defined by Levers (2013) depends on a subjectivist experience of reality. Despite an awareness that an external reality exists, an individual's subjective experience of knowledge only exists inside one's reflections and interpretations (Levers, 2013). Eventually the development of my study was grounded in the participants' contextual experiences and reflected my ontological beliefs in the understanding of multiple realities. This entailed consideration of meanings constructed through interaction between the interpreter and the interpreted. The participants' reflections grounded in multiple realities, together with my interpretations of them, contributed to better understanding.

In addition, I also had to face emergent knowledge in constant change brought by the transition of the local national art museum during the study. In 2014, when I started writing this dissertation, the National Museum of Fine Arts (NMFA) was still open. In September 2016, it had to close prematurely to prepare for its transition to MUŻA, which planned to open in December 2018. In response to these unexpected changes, my study's epistemology is based on contextual ontology. Acknowledging that reality is context bound, the findings of my study cannot be generalised but could be transferrable to other art museum contexts. Throughout the doctoral journey, I had the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience gained from my research projects while interacting with overseas stakeholders within international museum and educational contexts.

In 2017, I was invited to the Institute of Education, University College London (UCL), to deliver a presentation about my doctoral research process in art museum education within the Maltese context. While sharing knowledge gained from Project 1's experience with Masters' and Doctoral Museum Education students at UCL, I gained feedback and ideas concerning the international educational outreach provided by many contemporary art galleries. This paved the way to two other research projects and further relevant literature.

In January 2018, while participating at a museum education conference about visual literacy for school learners in Munich, besides engaging with curators, I also met museum educators, whose role is non-existent in Malta. In Munich I listened to issues faced by museum educators, helping me to make sense of the power-balance issues of curatorial-educational mediation, which I

previously strove to understand by reviewing literature. Moreover, I was invited to deliver a presentation about the approaches of my study's non-formal education projects. My presentation served to spark a debate about the similarities and contrasts in educational approaches which could be applied to formal as well as non-formal art museum education.

I felt the museum curators' priority was to underline the prestige of the collection by instructing the public about it to ensure its lasting legacy. This contrasts with my study's focus on prioritising the learners' needs through a reference to the museum collection. Following my presentation, I remember one of the conference participants remarking: "you talked with passion because you genuinely care about people not objects... this is what we need during these times".

The experience and knowledge gained throughout my doctoral study was also beneficial in collaborative outreach projects within museum contexts overseas. In summer 2018 I carried out a two-month internship with KU Leuven (Belgium) University, where I collaborated on the RETINA project (RETINA, 2018), together with a team of researchers from HIVA and MINTLAB, both institutions part of Leuven University.

The participatory experience of this project provided me with a learning opportunity to explore art museum outreach strategies targeting young people through the incorporation of digital technologies for visual literacy education. During this internship, I was also invited by MINTLAB to deliver a talk on art museums as spaces with potential for critical thinking, for one of their Basement Talks (MINTLAB, 2018). This talk again provoked debates about art museums as a public educational resource which can be relevant to everyone's well-being, not only those who are artistically inclined. Meanwhile, there are museums already offering public engagement initiatives for personal and social development. For instance, a survey report (Outreach Europe Project, 2007-2013) indicates that 47 museums across Europe are committed to enable better well-being and to broaden social inclusion in the arts sector.

As part of the talk, I invited the audience to look, think and talk about a projected image of an artwork ('*The Allegory of Antwerp*', Appendix 3.4) from the MUŽA collection. Although I only mentioned the title after the activity, I selected the artwork due to the connotation of its title with Antwerp in Belgium. I allowed the audience time to observe, reflect and then talk to the people next to them, before sharing their interpretation of the image with the whole audience. At first,

most of them said they did not wish to share their interpretations as they might sound irrelevant. After I reminded them that the aim was not necessarily to state historical or aesthetic facts, this made them feel at ease to communicate their thoughts on the artwork. They came up with religious connotations of ‘good and evil’ and the constant decisions one has to make in life. They also concluded that space and time allocated to reflect in front of an artwork provides such a pause with a sense of connection to oneself, to others... to life. Most participants of the research projects came up with analogous comments on the connection between art and life.

Besides finding some similarities with my projects’ findings, these international opportunities challenged my previous beliefs and encouraged me to research further especially the role of museum educators in bridging the gap. The experience also helped me to keep in mind the wider context, while zooming in on the local art museum and the young adults within the local context.

1.6 Bridging the gap

Research evidence of the museums’ responsibility to serve as a public education resource has been established within international museums by providing educational outreach programmes throughout recent years (Elkasrawi, 2016; Grant, 2015; Lane et al., 2007). To better understand the museum education scenario which could be compared to the small Maltese national art museum, I reviewed literature that explored the types of educational programmes provided by four international small Euro-Mediterranean museums: Museo Palazzo Reale di Genova (2017); Museum of Fine Arts, Seville (2017); the Ethnographic Museum in Ankara and the State Art and Sculpture Museum in Ankara (Çıldır and Karadeniz, 2014). I realised that although these four museums offer several museum educational programmes for the public, they mostly target families and school children. Only a few museums within the Euro-Mediterranean region provide community outreach for young adults. For instance, the museum Palazzo Strozzi in Florence offers activities that encourage the public (which could involve young adults) to participate in drawing activities through observation of artworks and a space for conversations about artworks (Palazzo Strozzi, 2017).

British museums, within the European context that target young people specifically are the TATE Museum and the V&A in London as they provide young people with opportunities to engage in music and fashion events and to partner up with radio stations (Lang et al., 2006). A more effective British museum that engages young people in decision-making and collaboration while curating community events and art exhibitions is the Whitechapel museum in London (Nardi, 2016). Such initiatives are lacking in the local national art museum at the time of the study.

In line with my inclination, research and informal meetings I had with local museum curators at HM, it became evident that the lack of museum educational outreach in Malta needs to be challenged. An awareness about the national museum collection as a public resource for lifelong learning needs to arise. Outreach programmes can serve to foster a culture of participation, getting the public involved in activities related to the exhibits. Freelance educators could team up with NGOs and artists to provide learning opportunities for vulnerable communities to gain meaningful experiences, where such opportunities may not otherwise be available. At the time of writing, museum education in Malta is mainly focused on school children. Rather than waiting for changes to happen after my dissertation is complete, I made sure the research projects throughout my doctoral journey could also contribute to the participants' lifelong learning.

1.7 Conceptual Framework for the Study

The research design of my study is a Participatory Action Research Methodology, embedded within a Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach as its conceptual framework. The choice of this research design stemmed from my dual position as a researcher and educator, with a strong belief in providing an educational service by facilitating the learners' own knowledge construction. Multiple research methods were employed in line with the collaborative nature of the project. This required a participatory process involving the exchange of reflections, experiences and values between the participants and myself. Further details about the research methods and tools are discussed in the Research Methodology Chapter.

The theoretical support, from which my research concern has developed, consists of a cross-referencing of critical pedagogy, constructivism and contemporary issues of mediation. More about

this is discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. As an experienced art educator, influenced by John Dewey's educational philosophy of pragmatism (Dewey, 1938), my first choice for conceptual framework was to approach research from a constructivist perspective. I was aware that constructivism acknowledges multiple realities as it depends on personal understandings and connections which museum participants construct between their lives and the collection they engage with (Hein, 1998).

While accepting the participants' opinions, without judging them as right or wrong, I often questioned their views. This sparked discussions, which according to the participants served to challenge their own prejudices and previous opinions about issues like 'spirituality and religious beliefs'. As pointed out by Creswell (2009:9), "individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences... leading the researcher to look for complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories". This affected my interpretation of the data collection. Nevertheless, whenever the participants expressed prejudices, such as negative attitudes towards different religions or races, as an educator I intervened by reminding them of tolerance and respect.

The theory of critical pedagogy structured the projects' balanced power-relationship between their role as participants and mine as the researcher-educator. By establishing a mentoring rapport, the learners of each project felt valued as contributors to meaning-making and knowledge construction. During Project 1's final interviews, P4 (Participant 4) insisted: "you allowed us the freedom to create... you only guided us but never told us to do something your way. We are the kind of people who would walk out when someone tries to impose on us". A sense of trust was established according to the participants of Project 3. Another participant said: "we felt safe to open up our experiences" (P1), while P5 stated: "we could express ideas, without fearing of being judged or ridiculed".

In line with critical pedagogy theory, the theories of contemporary issues of museum mediation served to assess the current situation of MUŽA with a view to bring about change through a set of recommendations regarding museum educational outreach strategies. In so doing, my study also explores the ways museums construct learning experiences and the power relations involved within the curatorial-educational field.

1.8 Procedures

Between July 2016 and August 2017, I carried out three community art projects, using an Action Research methodology. Each project aimed to address the specific learning needs of the three different communities of young adults participating in the projects, with reference to the museum collection. The research design used to accomplish my study, can be identified as Participatory Action Research Methodology (Reid et al., 2006), and embedded within a Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2008) approach as its conceptual framework. Throughout the Methodology chapter, references are provided to the appendices where the data-coding system is fully explained. The analysis of findings was carried out by comparing and contrasting visual and textual data.

1.9 Significance of the Study

Penelope Curtis, director of Tate Britain says that "looking at art slows us down and takes us in unexpected directions" (The Independent Online, 2014). Considering the present situation, learning in museums can be conceived as a further tool next to/after formal education. Museum education can be used to increase knowledge and understanding, to develop personal skills and to acquire new competences. Such education has the potential to strengthen the links between individuals and the reality in which they live.

Unlike the organized learning in schooling, museum education happens only occasionally for visitors who choose to engage in free-choice learning (Falk and Dierking, 2000). To provide a broad public educational benefit, it is the responsibility of a museum to also reach out to those who do not already visit museums. For this reason, I consider museum outreach programmes as essential because unfortunately many may feel intimidated by art museums as they believe that without an artistic background, they would feel out of place.

Based on his research for the J. Paul Getty Museum, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi noted that "most potential museum visitors just do not know what they are supposed to do in front of a work of art" (2000: 403) without some guidance. The participants in Project 2, despite their art background, also used to complain that at times they needed more guidance and suggested that "there should be museum guides available to assist visitors". Research shows that the absence of museum education

staff “to engage with museum visitors leads to a failure in satisfying educational needs...” (Talboys, 2011: 23) In addition, as reported by Bartlett and Kelly (2000), young adults often feel excluded from museums, perceiving them as unfriendly, focused on the past, and thus in conflict with their interest in present culture and identity. What if museum educators offer programmes that bridge the past with young adults’ contemporary interests and multicultural identities? My study’s projects could serve MUŻA as an example for its community outreach programmes to provide such bridging.

Mainly, my study’s projects concerned the engagement of young adults with the national art museum collection as they created and reflected on their own discoveries about themselves, their life and art. Appendix 3.1 explains the projects’ contexts further. While viewing the collection which was mostly from the Baroque era, the participants were encouraged to question, confirm or reject opinions about art, life, social issues or even themselves. By providing them with tasks such as choosing a theme and develop it with reference to relevant artworks, they could immerse themselves in the experience moving beyond what they considered to be ‘expected’ art-observing practices.

Throughout the process of engaging with the collection and ongoing self-reflection tasks which they documented in their art journals, they could reconsider their expectations about personal and cultural values. This in turn resulted in a re-evaluation of the relevance of the museum collection in their life. In the absence of MUŻA’s premises during the projects, although I distributed the images of the collection and projected them digitally, the participants would not have taken the initiative to refer to them unless guided by questions and tasks which demanded reference to the collection. This continued to confirm the need for young adults to be provided with guidance that bridges the museum collection with their interests and life to achieve a meaningful learning experience.

1.10 Experiencing Art vs Understanding Art

Learning is contextualised (Falk et al., 2007). While planning and observing the workshops, the following question was kept in mind: What context am I facilitating for the participants? The

engagement with the collection focused on the participants' personal context and the diverse baggage they brought with them.

I steered away from engaging the participants with the aesthetic/historical/social facts of the artworks – the target of my projects was to facilitate their learning experience without being intrusive. This was further confirmed throughout the workshops of each project as the participants never showed any curiosity in the historic or aesthetic facts of the collection. Could this be due to the Maltese school system not allocating enough time for art education, thus generating a society which does not appreciate art? People are eagerly talking about the latest TV series, football and health issues, but when it comes to art, it is mainly those who are actively involved in art who are ready to converse about it.

Meanwhile the participants of Project 2, although involved in art, still showed no interest in gaining historical information about artworks. As documented in my field-notes concerning Project 2 (3.02.2017), while discussing the NMFA, the participants remarked that the collection did not appeal to them and were it not for their final year's degree coursework, they would not refer to it. On the other hand, they mentioned that my project helped them to appreciate the collection more especially as the collection's digital images gave them more time to look at the artworks and find connections for their final year's degree coursework. Moreover, they expressed their gratitude that the workshops provided them with a space to slow down. This enabled them to look at themselves, look at artworks and come up with new ideas for their theme development while reflecting on life issues. During self-evaluation sessions, the participants acknowledged that this forum enabled them to unwind from the pressures of exams and deadlines. Quotes from participants' art journals included: "the workshop sessions are fundamental for me at the end of the B.Ed. course" (PAJ 3.02.2017); and "I don't have much time to reflect nowadays, so having this opportunity to see myself felt good" (PAJ 17.03.2017).

All participants of my study started to acknowledge their ability to look at and talk about artworks by interpreting them from their own perspectives. The fact I selected artwork images based on social issues made it easier to make the connections between art and life. With their chosen theme in mind, they could observe and interpret artworks, question their deeply-ingrained assumptions

and debate them to develop their own ideas. Thus, the strategies developed and applied throughout the projects served to create a forum where young adults could observe artworks to reflect on, interpret, and connect while debating contemporary social issues.

I am aware there is no one right way to help a broad cross-section of young adults while engaging with art and that some of the strategies explored through my projects could be ineffective in engaging those who prefer to gain art knowledge from a museum programme. I emphasise the importance of being familiar with participants' educational background and learning needs to adapt the educational strategies accordingly. I believe a museum outreach programme which involves looking at art through personal narratives could still reach out to a wide spectrum of participants.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The limitation of my study, being qualitative, is that its findings on educational strategies resulting from research projects with three particular communities, cannot be repeated to reach out to other young adult communities. On the other hand, the findings, based on experiential knowledge may provide a practical framework to develop museum outreach programmes. This involves strategies such as that of getting familiar with a community of young adults and adapting the tasks to address their learning needs and make them relevant to their interests.

1.12 Organization of the Study

In this chapter, I introduced the theoretical framework on which my study is based, outlined the development of my concern in museum education, particularly the museums' social responsibility to provide educational outreach to public communities. I provided background information about this issue within the Maltese national art museum context. Also included in this chapter is an indication of what I set out to achieve through my study and the methodology used throughout. More of this is discussed in detail in the remaining chapters, which are organised as follows.

Chapter 2 is a Literature Review, which puts the study into local and international context through related literature. Chapter 3 presents an explanation of the Research Methodology selected to carry

out the empirical research through three community outreach projects. Chapter 4 includes detailed discussions of findings from each research project supported by textual and visual documentation. Chapter 5 is an analysis of the common findings of the three projects in comparison with data collected from the interviews held with the CEO of the local youth agency and the senior curator of MUŻA. Chapter 6 concludes with recommendations of museum educational strategies for outreach programmes targeting communities of young adults.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In view of the aims listed below, this Literature Review primarily examines the public educational purpose of art museums in the 21st century. Research shows there are around 8,400 art museums among more than 54,000 museums in the world (Himmeler et al., 2012). The world's most visited art museums such as the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum have kept increasing their annual attendance figures (Art Net News, 2016). Yet, in 2011 there was a decline in art museums' visitor numbers for the first time (Kinoshita, 2014). Has such decline happened due to a lack of relevance of museums for the public in the 21st century?

Hooper-Greenhill explains that the success of a museum should be evaluated through "the experience of visitors rather than just on visitor numbers" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a:29). Similarly, Nicholas Cullinan, London's National Portrait Gallery director, insists that instead of visitor numbers, museums' achievement depends on reaching out to new visitors, as "engaging under-represented groups is core to our activity" (Cullinan, 2019:online).

This Literature Review aims to:

- consider how education theories can be applied to museum education;
- explore today's social impact of art museums;
- examine the multifaceted conditions which could stimulate the active engagement of communities with art museum collections;
- investigate the museum's role as a life-long learning resource in the 21st century;
- explore ways to bring down the power-knowledge barrier between museum educators and visitors to encourage multiplicity of readings and interpretations;
- understand how a museum collection can provide a platform for the education of young adults from culturally and socially diverse communities;
- evaluate the concept of 'mediation' through contemporary debates.

2.2 Concept

Today, museums are challenged to justify their existence in terms of their contribution to national income generation and the role they play in providing employment, education and in relieving social problems (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000b). As with most cultural organisations worldwide, art museums are facing the challenges of adapting to and influencing a new and still-shifting cultural landscape (Black, 2012). Although most leaders of the world's prominent art museums still maintain that preserving and improving their collection is the museum's priority, there is an emergent trend which gives importance to the museums' goal of reaching the public through educational programmes (Govan, 2013). Evidently, not all museums see themselves as primarily "focused on facilitating learning" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2004:153). Meanwhile, the concept that museums were naturally educational, dates back to the 18th century Enlightenment which represents the start of the modern museum and then persisted throughout the 19th century. For most of the 20th century, the educational purpose of museums was considered a secondary priority as the emphasis was on collecting artefacts (Black, 2012).

Apart from the museums' role to provide an educational service to visitors, nowadays increasing attention is being placed on the social responsibility of museums in reaching out to communities outside their premises (Watson, 2007). In a white paper dealing with discussions among art directors about the future of the art museum in a changing world, Govan (2013) states that perhaps the most dynamic debate today concerning art museum education is the two-way communication between the museum and the public.

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows that the ideal service of museum education is to provide learning experiences that engage visitors' connection to the collection while facilitating their own learning agenda and interests.

2.3 Local Context

Museums provide ideal spaces for reaching out to the public communities through informal, non-formal and formal learning. According to Hein (2004) the increasing number of museums actively planning and implementing educational programmes was a common development during the 20th century. Over the past decade, European museums have increasingly explored their engagement

with new and diverse publics such as young adults (NEMO, 2019). Yet, prior to the start of my study, the National Museum of Fine Arts (NMFA) in Malta was still not reaching out to diverse communities. The NMFA website (Heritage Malta, 2015) showed that although it offered activities for school children, it did not provide educational programmes for public community outreach. Since its official opening in 1974, the NMFA had hardly experienced any changes. Meanwhile, the art world and educational approaches have been shifting to meet the demands of today's society and art museums must "argue their value in new contexts" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000:11).

2.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Learning in museums is experiential, lifelong and holistic, involving cognitive and social transferable skills gained from "a vast reservoir of learning opportunities" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2004:168). My research arises from the hypothesis that young adults' maximum learning potential could be developed holistically by practising transferable skills, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, and social skills through non-formal museum education programmes. According to Chadwic (2000), this lifelong learning concept within the museum context is not new. Consequently, the proposed educational strategies resulting from my research might constitute an opportunity for the new national art museum to be of relevance to young adults' learning in today's continuously transforming learning society. Hence, the intention behind my study is to make a contribution to local (and possibly international) knowledge concerning art museum non-formal learning theories. It emphasises museum 'learning' which goes beyond the achievement of historic and aesthetic facts. Instead, it recognises the application of what one already knows or nearly knows while seeing objects in new relationships and actively seeking out what one chooses to know. This way, my study challenges the parameters of the narrative from which the museum collections are constructed.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of my study at a wider level, concerns 'Museum Education'. Grounded in Dewey's (1934) philosophy about the arts' role in human experience and his concept of museum education, the theoretical framework consists of a cross-referencing of:

- Critical Pedagogy

- Constructivism
- Mediation- Curating and Educating

2.6 Dewey and Contemporary Museum Education

John Dewey's major writing on aesthetics, 'Art as Experience' (1934) defines the role of art in human experience. His concept of 'continuity' between art experience and life experience, shifts the understandings of what is commonly valued about the art process. This includes the creation of the material object as a physical expression as well as the process whose essential element is the development of an 'experience' in its fullest sense. Moreover, Dewey's democratic, progressive philosophical positions were consistent with his moral and social views. He aimed to promote democratic progressive practices — tolerance, civil liberties, acceptance of immigrants, and economic reform (to reduce inequality between the rich and the poor) — through political and social action.

Art museum education often refers to Dewey's philosophies of active and experience-based learning and the promotion of museums as a potential lifelong learning space in one's education. George Hein (2012) demonstrates similarities between contemporary education theories and the importance of museums to support and progress the democratic ideals of society. He does this by quoting from progressive individuals and institutions who followed Dewey in developing the grounds for experiential learning, nowadays considered to be a best practice. Moreover, Dewey influenced museum education in general and was himself a dedicated museum visitor, including museums in his educational structure. In theory, he considered museums on a similar level to libraries as essential elements for shaping the meaning-makings gained through practical experiences. In practice, the importance given by Dewey to museums can be seen from his model laboratory school at the University of Chicago, where children's activities included daily museum visits (Hein, 2004).

With reference to other authors mentioned by Hein, Dewey's views have had an influence on contemporary museum education theory as follows:

- Cole (1995) observes that constructivism is based on Dewey's concepts due to the recognition that one's previous knowledge and experience contribute to meaning-making.
- Ansbacher (1999) concentrates mainly on Dewey's concept of Experience and Education. He insists on the importance of exhibition curators focusing on the genuine experience that visitors have with exhibitions, rather than simply observing the later result of "learning".
- Hennes (2002) focuses on Dewey's positions about inquiry and his concept of the continuity of experience, relating it to museum education, whereby the educative value of the museum experience is to be analysed as an influence which enables the learner to have further educative experiences (lifelong education).

Central to Dewey's educational philosophy of pragmatism is that people engage in the world and bring meaning into existence (Dewey, 1938). Apart from the already mentioned aspects of education provided through experience, Dewey believed that the learners are to be considered as the ones within the educational experience. Thus, rather than seeing the provision of an educational experience as a mental state within the learners, he argues that educators should keep in mind the learners' contexts because what works for one learner might not work for another (Field, 2007).

Dewey's pragmatic philosophy considers art as an extension of human experience rather than separating art from everyday life. In fact in his publication 'Art as Experience', he aimed to challenge both the dualism of 'art and life' and the metaphorical consideration of art as 'a god', having the potential for release from mundane life. In condemning the idea of putting art on a pedestal, separable from everyday life, Dewey criticises those museums which place art on a social and metaphysical pedestal above other interests and practical forms of human experience (Haskins, 1992). Meanwhile, many art museums are considered "special places, separate from the mundane world of the everyday... appreciated by cultured and sophisticated people" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000:10).

In linking learners to their contexts, Dewey emphasises that thinking is not introspective but a way for learners to make meaning by interacting with their contexts and circumstances, which are not

static but change frequently. In view of the concept of change, Hein (2012) explains that Darwinian evolutionary thinking impacted Dewey's philosophies. The perception of change came to be seen as part of natural life cycles, which serve to direct rather than disrupt one's life. Instead of the emphasis on external forces, Dewey considered change as a process resulting from the interaction between the individual and specific contexts, such as the social one.

Based on the emphasis which Dewey placed on the individual's interaction with context, between 1938 and 1941, museum director Alexander Dorner rearranged five exhibition rooms at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (RISD) in the United States. These five rooms were called 'atmosphere rooms' and exhibited works within their context of time, function and conception. This reflects the influence which Dewey's educational value of experience had on Dorner. Meanwhile, Carolyn MacDonald, the RISD supervisor appointed by Dorner, claimed she was not familiar with Dewey's pragmatism before she compared Dorner's atmosphere rooms to Dewey's philosophy. Furthermore, Dorner's 1940 manuscript 'Why Have Art Museums?' shows that some articles bear upon Dewey's pragmatism, even though at the time Dorner was unaware of it. For instance, Dorner challenged ideas about the common perception that people generally have of museums' eternal values, by emphasising experience (Germudson, 2005).

In one of his rhetorical questions concerning what museum activities offer to the public, he replies with a solution. Dorner explained that museums and society are to give up the imaginary assumption that there is anything fixed and eternal in the world and "there are many concepts in the human mind which existed before all experience" (Germudson, 2005:271). This confirms Dorner's rejection of art as having an 'eternal' prestige, leading to his disapproval of the passive white walls of museum exhibitions. In his advocacy for progressive education that can give museums a meaning for the upcoming generations, Dorner insists that museums can only become active spaces in the shaping of the future through the transmission of a cultural evolution (Germudson, 2005).

2.7 Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy, predominantly inspired by Paolo Freire (1970) is an approach to education “of liberating praxis” (Darder et al., 2016:3) encouraging “resistance to oppression” (Steiner et al., 2000:5). It is primarily concerned with understanding the power/knowledge relations bearing in mind that dominant knowledge can be “an ideological construction linked to particular interests and social relations” (McLaren, 2002:83). With power delegated to learners and workers, critical pedagogy is “anti-authoritarian, dialogical and interactive” (Steiner et al., 2000:7) process that supports the evolution of social consciousness (Mayo, 2004).

As Freire (1972) maintains, considering the political dimension of education, teaching can never be neutral. In addition, Freire’s idea of pedagogy of the oppressed, in which a struggle for justice and equality within education is of central importance, refers to the importance of educators’ decision to take a stand (Freire, 1993). Likewise, Darder and Miron (2006) insist that to counteract the inability of institutions in meeting human needs, educators need to create a new decolonizing culture within communities that cultivates human connection, intimacy, trust, and honesty. This requires educators to introduce a set of beliefs, rather than assuming their disinterested neutrality. When writing about Gramsci and Freire, Peter Mayo (in Sternfeld, 2010: online) sums up this idea in a simple rhetorical question: “On which side are we on, when we educate and teach, when we act?”

Respectively, Stuart Hall’s contributions have left an important impact on cultural politics of education that promote counter-hegemony, encouraging us to bear in mind “in whose names we teach, research, think, and act” (Roman, 201:6). This recalls Freire’s advocacy of authentic dialogue as a political act of knowing (Freire, 1973), to engage in actions of creation and recreation, negotiation and renegotiation, moments of critical discovery (Borg, 2020). Freire expresses authentic dialogue “as a shift from naïve to critical consciousness” (Steiner et al. 2000:7). It requires questions raising some theoretical-practical issues: What to know? How to know? Why should we know? In whose/what favour to know? (Freire, 1973).

Despite the ideal mission of critical pedagogy, few examples are offered as to how educators can move from critical thought to critical practice (Steiner et al., 2000). On the other hand, the lack of solutions stimulate opportunities for Freire's work to be reinvented in the contextual struggles which educators find themselves. In fact, Freire urges educators to continually reinvent "what it means to be democratic in his or her own specific cultural or historical context" (1973:308).

2.7.1 Relevance of Critical Pedagogy to my Study

Since museums are sites of cultural politics and "public pedagogy" (Giroux, 2005), representing what is historically and socio-culturally valued, educators can "utilise museums as an important space for critical pedagogy" (Borg and Mayo, 2010:36). In reinventing Freire's work, my empirical study was carried out within the contextual struggle of the need for a more democratic art museum in Malta. My projects' critical pedagogy was partly driven by the conviction that when young adults learn to meet artworks against the background of their own life, they are often moved "to want to restore some kind of order, to repair, and to heal" (Greene, 1995:379).

The application of critical pedagogy is evident in my research study which represents an example of how focus is brought to bear on non-formal education, or rather the lack of it, at the national art museum in Malta at the time of writing. My study could serve as a 'means' to bring about transformation by proposing educational strategies for museum community outreach. On considering Freire's remark that education is always political, while preparing for and facilitating my study's research projects, Peter Mayo's earlier question "on which side are we on?" has been kept in mind.

Throughout my projects, I had no subject matter to teach and no expected answers. Authority incites resistance when it "imposes an alien culture" (Shor, 1993:139). In Project 1, Shor's statement was confirmed as participants stepped back during the guided tour at the NMFA. After a few minutes, I had to whisper to the guide to stop the tour. To provide the participants with a meaningful art experience (Dewey, 1934), I involved the participants in role-play activity where they engaged actively with the collection through observation, sketching, reflection, problem-solving and questioning.

The fact that the participants were not after learning historical facts and aesthetics of the art collection, does not mean they showed habits of “resistance to learning” (Shor, 1993:137) despite their negative schooling experiences. On the contrary, the participants admitted they applied for the project because they were eager to learn. Meanwhile, as the psychologists of Projects 1 and 3 confirmed, these participants were not willing to be told what to learn. Aware of this, I could plan for resources required (images and art materials); tools for knowledge construction and generic social themes to set the atmosphere for social interaction but I did not plan content knowledge and learning outcomes. This does not mean that the participants remained at their existential level. Learning still happened as the participants reflected on their life and work-in-progress, reconstructed their ways of seeing through challenging each other’s views, while engaging with the national art collection. Moreover, my decision to draw on the participants’ interests and needs, was not a matter of hoping to lower the participants’ resistance to learning. I aimed to guide them “to learn how to learn, to question, to learn alone and in groups and to act from reflective knowledge” (Shor, 1993:143) to stimulate their own ways to use the national art museum.

Had the projects taken longer, once the participants of Projects 1 and 3 discovered that they are able to look at art and talk about art, they would have probably shown interest to explore aesthetic and historical aspects of art. Meanwhile, the participants of Project 2 used the national art collection to create virtual exhibitions (VE) aimed at engaging other young adults in further thinking about life issues. These participants, though having an art background still did not choose to stimulate viewers’ thinking with art history and aesthetics. However, they did not dismiss the possibility that viewers will be motivated to search further information about the artworks, once they were attracted and curious after interacting with the VE.

2.7.2 Power Relations

With reference to Edward Said’s “one’s concept of power is importantly shaped by the reason why one wishes to think about power in the first place” (in Guillem, 2013:199), I addressed my educator’s position of power relation. To avoid reproducing hegemonic museum education, the projects’ pedagogy was based on a fair power-relationship with the participants through an exchange of knowledge. My position served to lead the atmosphere for “the process of making

unique experience into common experience” (Williams, 1961:55) allowing art to become part of reality as participants connected art to their own life narratives. Aware of myself and the participants as enquirers and meaning-makers, I aimed to communicate that “reality depends on perspective and that its construction is never complete” (Greene, 1995:382).

Despite the democratic relations (McLaren, 1989), perceived as a mentoring rapport, involving a balance of power practised with the projects’ participants, I, as an educator/researcher was not disengaged. My authority intervened especially whenever the participants expressed prejudices. And I did this not by imposing my own ways of seeing but through inquiry-based techniques which generated further critical and constructive learning. Apart from indicating the difference between the educator and the learners, my intervention expanded their previously-held beliefs and further challenged their discussion of interpretations leading to meaning-making through social interaction.

Aware of the paradox that “freedom needs authority to become free” (Shor and Freire, 1987: 91), coupled by my ample teaching experience enabled me to balance when and how to pass authority to participants. Each group of participants and context required my adaptation of authority and freedom. The participants were free to take their own directions throughout their creative process, as there were neither expected answers nor prescribed learning outcomes. My authority involved in guiding them to adopt attitudes and tools required for independent learning such as my persistence for the creation of mind-mapping and the keeping of art journals. I challenged them with questions to discuss, reflect on and present their work-in-progress. The participants co-directed the projects based on critical reflections for their own chosen materials, techniques, relevant artworks and themes, inspired by the MUŻA collection. These emerging learning strategies echoed Mayo’s recommendation that museums “have potential for developing the kind of popular and working class knowledge” (2013:151).

Borg and Mayo suggest ways in which the MUŻA collection could be a catalyst for critical reflection on contemporary life and social issues. For instance, they refer to the way 18th and 19th century rural landscape paintings could raise debates on how the Maltese islands are “being turned into one large construction site... in a construction-driven economy” (2017:116). Moreover, they

mention ways through which the main collection, which belongs mostly to the 17th century, portraying “stoicism and the affirmation of faith through bloody deeds” could raise debates connecting past and contemporary massacres in the name of religious fanaticism (2017:117). Although Borg and Mayo’s recommendations could serve museum educators to present generic social themes for raising discussions, they cannot prejudge the conclusions which participants might reach, when debating the MUŽA collection. In fact, critical pedagogy crosses a threshold between teaching criticality and indoctrinating, if learners are not allowed to come to their own conclusions but are directed towards educators’ conclusions (Burbules and Berk, 1999).

2.8 Constructivism

Constructivism is rooted in the work of Dewey (1929), Bruner (1961), Vygotsky (1962), and Piaget (1980) and is a teaching and learning approach which considers understanding as the result of mental construction. Epistemologically, constructivism theory defines learning as “active, self-organised and biographically-determined process of knowledge constructions...” (Gojkov, 2011: 19). This theory prioritises pedagogical methods such as project-based learning and learning through discovery to encourage learning situations for independent knowledge construction. Focused on social community, this perspective acknowledges the educators’ active role in context preparation — creating stimulating environments and social situations which enable learning to be constructed through reflections and understandings, while the demands imposed by the learning situation can be tackled through problem-solving. Meanwhile, constructivism was generally criticised for ignoring the learners’ backgrounds and conditions, both of which motivate the construction of new learning, integrating it with previous knowledge and experience (Gojkov, 2011).

Since learners’ prior conceptions can be an obstacle for new levels of knowledge construction, the facilitation of learning plays a vital role in the learning process (Gojkov, 2011). Possible facilitation of learning construction can be considered within the field of my study — the museum context — when museum educators generate communities of interpretation. Hooper-Greenhill (2006) asserts that museums can become very powerful sources of constructivist learning when visitors are encouraged to share their multiple narratives’ constructions, and challenge, confirm or deepen their previous knowledge. She explains that although the reputation of museums has often relied on

reproducing narratives that privilege the powerful, museum collections carry multiple meanings which can be construed through communities of interpretation.

Constructivism shows that an active learner, constructs knowledge by connecting the new with previously acquired knowledge (Phillips, 2000), and becomes responsible for learning “if he or she is to learn anything” (Clark, 2004:167). On the other hand, regarding the learners’ responsibility, Biesta warns that the learning economy has resulted in a shift from one’s right to lifelong learning to a duty “to keep up with the demands of the global economy” (2006:176).

2.8.1 Relevance of Constructivism Theory to my Study

In line with the personal dimension of lifelong learning, the constructivism theory applied throughout my research projects aligns with the participants’ own process of lifelong learning through discovery. George Hein’s (1998) constructivist theory for museums, is increasingly being applied among museum educators (Mayer, 2005). The pedagogies based on this learning theory encourage visitors’ knowledge construction “by making connections between their lives and the objects they encounter in museums” (in Mayer, 2005:14). He asserts that even in the most informative museum exhibition, the visitors would still construct meanings based on their personal knowledge and learning intentions rather than meanings which are generated curatorially. Similarly, Hooper-Greenhill (2006) argues that museum learning happens “as visitors interpret what they see and do” (2006:238).

According to Hein, museum educators should design practices which facilitate the constructivist learning process by making the museum experience relevant. They have to actively engage participants and confirm their learning “not through external criteria of the discipline, such as art history, but through the visitors’ own sense-making mechanism” (in Mayer, 2005:14). Since my research projects provided theme-development tasks which encourage participants to make connections between the museum collection and their own lives, Hein’s constructivist museum theory was one of the principles used for bridging theory and practice throughout my study.

My empirical research explores constructive learning that moves from experience to learning, where the concept follows the action, rather than preceding it. The task of theme development

engages participants actively and socially throughout a constructive process promoting their practice of thinking, as well as their social and problem-solving skills. Through a dialogue with their peers they construct links between their meaning-making of the museum collection and the meaning-making of their own life stories. Such personal and socially constructed understandings will eventually serve them for life as they keep applying their attained knowledge and skills to other life situations. This recalls Dewey's concept that "museums should grow out of life experiences and be used to reflect back on life" (in Hein, 2014:420).

2.9 Contemporary Issues of Mediation-Curating and Educating

In contemporary times, the debate on art education, museum education and curatorial practice has become increasingly important. Vibrant discussions arising from educational programmes offered by art centres, museums and biennials led to the aims and concept definition of 'Art Mediation'. The word 'mediation' translated from the French *médiation*, refers to the commonly used museum meaning of 'interpretation'. The concept of 'mediation' indicates an action aimed at integrating parties in order to bring them to an agreement (Desvallées and Mairesse, 2010).

Within a museum context, since museums are a meeting point for various and often contradictory interests, the two main entities that require 'mediation' are the museum and the public. Hence mediation, referring to both curating and education, serves to build connections between the museum and the public. Nevertheless, due to the museum's dynamic process of people coming together, the idea of curatorial and educational mediation is not to prevent conflicts. It is to engage with and facilitate the debate between museum and public, while not shying away from potential conflict or controversy. The hierarchies and tensions emanate from the division of roles of different stakeholders such as museum educators and curators. The division between museum education and curating is often seen as the opposition between the caring for objects against caring for people, or as opposition between aesthetics and education. Although these notions of the division do not claim that curators do not care about the people or that educators do not care about aesthetics, both professions have separate responsibilities and practices which are often learned on the job (Kaitavuori, 2013).

Since the French revolution, the curatorial and educational aspects have always been linked, due to the recognition of the potential role of the modern museum as an educational institution (Sternfeld, 2010). However, the two roles were separate and different. In the 1980s, the curator was considered as the ‘advocate of the work of art’, while the educator was regarded as the ‘advocate of the people’. Since the 1990s, the fact that specialised training programmes for both roles are on the increase and becoming more established, shows a sign of the recognition of the importance of these two essential museum roles. Some programmes such as the Master’s Degree Programme on Curating, Managing, and Mediating Art at the Kassel University in Germany, led by Nora Sternfeld not only targets the two roles separately but also as a combination (Kaitavuori, 2013).

The contemporary ‘educational turn’, inspired by critical and constructivist theories mentioned above, marks a shift away from the curatorial-educational mediation. This shift led to dynamic changes in the understanding of mediation theory as new pedagogical theories lead to additional insights into educational and curatorial practices. For instance, critical pedagogy promoted the connection of education and society and the efforts to overcome the difference between an active production of knowledge and its passive reception.

The fact that education no longer deals with the transmission of standing values and attainments, affected the arena of curating which currently no longer refers to the simple task of mounting exhibitions (Sternfeld, 2010). This echoes Beatrice von Bismarck’s description of ‘the curatorial’ as “a cultural practice which goes decisively beyond the making of exhibitions”, which has “a genuine method of generating, mediating, and reflecting experience and knowledge.” (in Sternfeld, 2010:7). Similarly, Lind (2009) explains that the curatorial is not only a means to represent but also to test and question the kind of art currently being added to the world and the purpose behind such addition. Furthermore, she defines the curatorial as “a way of linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses in physical space... like an active catalyst, generating twists, turns, and tensions” (Lind, 2009:2).

According to Lind, such a curatorial approach not only encourages one to think about the artwork but also beyond it, or even against it. Consequently, she compares the curatorial approach to a force

that curators, artists, educators or editors use in order to generate arguments and drive new ideas. Meanwhile, Kaitavuori (2013) states that both the curatorial and educational practices can involve conflict in power relations due to issues of access, control, rules, knowledge production, can involve conflict in power relations due to issues of access, control, rules and knowledge production. The latter requires that knowledge is valued, that interests are listened to, and that needs are catered for. The conflicts that arise are contemporary issues of mediation.

2.9.1 Relevance of Mediating Theories to my Study

The relevance of mediating theories to my study lies in the investigation of ways in which museums construct learning experiences and the power relations involved, leading to the social impact of museum education. In her work in art museums, Knutson (2002:5) stated that “a closer examination of the curatorial framework – the intentions, strategies, and beliefs that inform the development of exhibitions may provide valuable insight into our understanding of how art museums construct learning experiences”. Thus, the mediation aspect will be further explored throughout my study while investigating the curatorial agenda of the local national art museum in planning educational programmes. Such investigation is in line with critical theory as it encourages the viewing of situations in order to change them (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 1989).

2.10 Lifelong Learning – Formal, Informal, Non-formal

While formal learning is supported by institutions and therefore typically school-based and highly structured, informal learning rests mainly in the hands of the learner. Informal learning, due to its learner-centred motivation and the knowledge that can be attained from life experience, is so broad that anything from outdoor carefree activities to structured computer simulations is included in the definition. It also includes incidental learning, which occurs naturally even though people may be unaware of it (Marsick and Watkins, 2001).

Informal education was a powerful concept in the 1960s and 1970s, demanding a new kind of education through the contribution of museums at a local level. Unlike formal education, the informal settings of museums, driven by voluntary self-directed learning, provide the possibility for communicating social and cultural information (Coffee, 2007). They also offer alternative

interpretations to misunderstandings and thus refine attitudes and thinking skills (Screven, 2002). Currently, most developed countries give value to informal lifelong learning through various agendas (Lang et al., 2006). Considering that lifelong learning is present throughout one's life (Biesta, 2006), it is worth looking more closely at these agendas.

Aspin and Chapman (2001) discuss three different agendas representing the purposes of lifelong learning. One of the functions is economic development; another is the contribution to personal development while another leads to social inclusiveness. While in the past the emphasis was on personal and democratic growth, lifelong learning is increasingly seen as contributing to "human capital and as an investment in economic development" (Biesta, 2006:169). Across the western world, the concept of 'lifelong' learning became part of the political agenda, aiming towards trained workers able to react to issues of globalisation. Over time, there have been major shifts in policies of lifelong learning by organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A global assessment was undertaken by UNESCO in particular, leading to the 1972 publication of 'Learning to Be' (Faure, 1972). The publication was a turning point, promoting its essential humanistic concern with achieving human fulfilment through recognition of informal and non-formal as well as formal learning, while introducing new curricular concerns such as well-being, cultural and environmental education. According to UNESCO's policy, learning should be lifelong and for all, rather than only tackled at school or university for the privileged few (Field, 2001). However, as Titmus (1999) noted, what Ettore Gelpi pointed out in 1984 – that there has been little advance in governments policy goals towards the "operationalization" of lifelong learning – is still valid.

Whereas in the past, lifelong learning was honoured as a personal right, marking aspects of a democratic life, nowadays it is increasingly seen as serving for the development of human capital and as an investment in economic development (Illeris, 2006). Within such a perception of a 'learning economy', lifelong learning is considered as an individual's mission rather than as a collective human development. This shift in perception has transformed lifelong learning from a right to a duty, promoting questions concerning whose democratic right it is, to set the agenda for lifelong learning. In addition, this shift also raises issues about what should motivate lifelong learning, leading to a particular dilemma as to how one engages in systems of learning while not

having a say in the learning agenda (Biesta, 2006). Research shows that adult learners are relevancy-oriented, self-directed learners, motivated by their own interests and purpose in life (Gibbs et al., 2007; Illeris, 2006).

Suchodolski argues that "motivation is the foundation and at the same time the consequence of lifelong education" (Suchodolski, 1976:72). Although education happens beyond schooling as well, most young adults, such as the participants of Project 1 and 3 still associate it with schooling. They often recalled how they used to avoid art lessons and school visits to museums because they considered them irrelevant to their life. This means that exclusion from lifelong learning "has its roots much earlier, in the disadvantages experienced in schooling" (Wain, 2000:43). In view of the projects' participants, I question: how can museums expect those particular young adults who have a negative memory of education and prejudices against art and museums, be motivated to participate in lifelong learning opportunities without being reached out to?

Lifelong learning "has never really been recognized as a welfare right" (Wain, 2000:43) and claiming it as such nowadays is illusory. As Field (1996) remarks, within the privatised open learning market, lifelong learning involves individuals who are already relatively well educated. Rather than involving people in society as active citizens, lifelong learning is ending up involving them as consumers in a business world. Moreover, it excludes those lacking financial resources and initial education to be intrinsically motivated in considering the significance of continuous learning (Wain, 2000). Is lifelong learning indirectly meant to reproduce elitism and reinforce a consumerist society?

There is a growing awareness that museums can contribute towards lifelong learning, through individual empowerment and skills development, helping excluded members of society to gain greater self-confidence and self-esteem (Harrison et al., 2002). Therefore, museums which provide access to their collections, not only in a physical sense but also from the intellectual, social, emotional and cultural dimensions, may lead individuals toward Maslow's target of self-actualization. This state of self-fulfilment — "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1970:46) can be reached through one's educational choices during life, choices which promote the feeling of having a purpose in society (Neto, 2015). This echoes what Biesta calls the "personal dimension of lifelong learning" (2006:173) which has a purpose "for personal

development and fulfilment” (Aspin and Chapman, 2001:39). It does not mean that the visitor leaves the museum knowing it all, but having an overall “feeling of having experienced something unique” which has been gained through discovery (Black, 2005:36)

The increasing awareness that jobs are no longer for life and that continuous professional development is a necessity, has led to the concept of a “learning society” (Falk and Dierking, 2002: 3) which resulted in training within the workplace. Yet, this raises an issue regarding the unemployed and those not receiving any formal training and hence, a community excluded from the learning society (Black, 2005). It follows clearly that community-based education remains an important objective.

Within the field of community-based education, there is an emerging awareness that useful learning often takes place incidentally (De Carteret, 2008) through informal learning, which is considered as taking place during leisure time (Silberman-Keller, 2003). However, Dewey argues that not every experience is educative. He insists that “experience and education cannot be directly equated with each other” (Dewey, 1938:13) and considers that any experience which stops or distorts the growth of further experience, leads to ignorance.

The American museum pioneer Charles Willson Paele promoted the museum he opened in Philadelphia during the 1780s as “a place of rational entertainment” (Kotler and Kotler, 2000:282). While museum-structured programmes guided by objectives and activities provide non-formal learning contexts, museum learning which happens outside of organized programmes, such as during a museum visit, is considered to be informal learning (Dudzinska-Przesmitzki and Grenier, 2008). Nevertheless, for informal or non-formal museum education to happen, Paele (being also a showman), understood that an audience needs to be first attracted towards, and then motivated to learn in museums during leisure time. This recalls the contemporary concept of *edutainment* — facilitating education through entertainment (Kotler and Kotler, 2000). On the other hand, Breunig asserts that “experiences that lack intention, purpose, and direction most often simply represent play” (2005:107).

Non-formal education is intentional and purposeful, often applied in community programmes, where learners participate voluntarily, taking an active role in the design process of their own skills development. Although non-formal education is an organized educational process, it is not sequential or curriculum-based like formal education and its aims are not the attainment of qualifications (Taylor et al., 2008). Hence, the skills acquired through non-formal education are not related to employment prospects (the economic dimension of lifelong learning), but contributes towards the development of social abilities and motivation for further learning (the personal dimension of lifelong learning). Unlike informal education where learning happens less consciously, such as while visiting a museum, through non-formal education the learners are often aware of the fact that they are learning (Nomikou, 2015). This is because they are involved in an organized yet flexible and participatory learning experience, applied to their life (Taylor et al., 2008). This approach is reflected throughout the projects in my study. Those who took part in these projects had a participatory learning experience, as explained further in the Analysis chapter.

2.11 Museum Education

Museum education is “constantly changing and expanding” (Hein, 2004:344) reflecting the shifting developments in contemporary society. Throughout the 20th century, museum professionals perceived the role of education as secondary to the obligation of collection and preservation (Tapia and Barrett, 2003). In the modern age, the idea of the museum as a sacred temple is becoming irrelevant, “as cultural institutions are challenged to address issues of cultural identity, representation and interpretation” (Tapia and Barrett, 2003:197). At a time when popular culture is acknowledged as a valid source of information, and people are constantly challenged with uncertainties brought about by contemporary social and environmental issues, museum professionals need to understand how, what, where and when individuals learn (Guy, 2007). This contemporary interest in providing accessibility through physical, intellectual, and cultural aspects leads museum professionals to focus on visitors, while also being sensitive to the multiple viewpoints that need to be catered for (Falk and Dierking 2000).

Museums are often considered as silent places, imposing their displays of cultural and historical objects, disconnected from real world politics (Clover and Sanford, 2016). However, museums are

first and foremost education institutions, offering several informal and non-formal lifelong learning opportunities. The way museum collections are displayed communicate stories related to the broader social world. Yet, Mayo (2012) argues that while particular stories are told, others are excluded and whereas prominence is given to certain artworks, knowledge and practices, others are forgotten or distorted. What museums include and exclude impacts a dominant order of social, cultural and political power that transmits “sexist, racist and other problematic understandings of the world” (Clover and Sanford, 2016:127). In reaction to this, I question: Are those people unaware of the existence of museums free of the transmitted dominant understandings of the world? Would life be less complex if one avoids the imposed museum narratives and sticks to one’s own life narratives? Would there be more people challenging the status quo, if less people visited museums? Are museums still transmitting the dominant socio-cultural and political power in the 21st century, worldwide?

Given that museums generate ideology, they can either cement cultural hegemony or serve as public sites of struggle, of cultural controversy and renaissance (Borg, Cauchi, and Mayo, 2003). Museums are currently challenged to justify their existence (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a). To some extent, their responsibility to renovate “lies in the struggle to renegotiate relations of hegemony” (Borg and Mayo, 2010:37). In view of this, McRobbie (2009) suggests that instead of acting as pedagogic contact zones transmitting privilege and conformity, museums can be spaces of co-created knowledge, opposition and self-reflexivity. In fact, some museums already addressed ways to “trouble identity, decolonise, mock, revisualise, tell alternative stories, reorient authoritative practice, interrogate intolerance and privilege and stimulate critical literacies” (Clover, 2015:301). Parallel to this, Mayo (2012) reminds educators to consider the potential in museums by applying pedagogies promoting social change.

According to Hooper-Greenhill, “powerful learning takes place” (in Glover Frykman, 2009:302) when visitors are encouraged to construct their own narratives throughout their meaning-making process, facilitating their understanding of life within their social-cultural context. Likewise, Borg (2020) insists that museum education is to embrace public communities’ everyday experiences and cultural expressions as “valid ways of knowing”. This is what I aimed to research throughout the pedagogy applied in my projects — the encouragement of young adults’ communication of their

own narratives as they engaged with the national art museum collection. The projects' spaces of co-created knowledge gradually transformed the prejudices of most participants who considered art and art museums as elitist and exclusionary.

2.12 International Art Museum Education

In order to understand current international approaches to art museum education, information was gathered from literature, articles and official websites of international art museums to find out the kind of educational programmes they offer. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) is very well known and provides an ideal museum scenario that can serve as a basis for the development of educational programmes internationally.

2.12.1 Metropolitan (MET) Art Museum-The Context

The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), established on April 13, 1870 in New York City, has been guided by its mission statement for over 140 years, aiming to encourage the study and the application of arts to practical life and providing public education through sharing general knowledge. The MET's origins date back to 1866 in Paris, France, when a group of Americans decided to establish a national institution and art gallery which would bring art and art education to American people. In 1938, a branch of the MET opened for the public in northern Manhattan (MET, 2015).

On January 13, 2015, the MET mission-statement was articulated as follows:

“The Metropolitan Museum of Art collects, studies, conserves, and presents significant works of art across all times and cultures in order to connect people to creativity, knowledge, and ideas” (MET Mission Statement, 2015: online).

The MET has seventeen curatorial departments that study, exhibit, and care for the objects in the museum's collection. This ranges from medieval to modern and contemporary presenting American, Eastern, African, Asian, Egyptian, European, Islamic, Greek, Roman art, including also sections dedicated to armoury, costume and musical instruments. Since its start, the MET curators have contributed to art-historical scholarship and knowledge, through constant research. In order to study and preserve the works at the MET's collection, scientists and conservators work together

with curators. By providing curatorial lectures, symposia, and publications, the MET reaches a vast and diverse public (MET, 2015).

When clicking on the tab ‘Learn’ on the MET website (<http://www.metmuseum.org/learn>), it is evident that the museum offers many ways to connect with the public through online resources, programmes, workshops, internships and events tailored for children, teens, adults, students, educators, families and visitors with disabilities. Inspired by its mission statement to educate by reaching out to diverse communities, the MET is currently carrying out projects like ‘The Multicultural Audience Development Initiative’, which aims to create ongoing relationships with many different communities that make up New York.

To pursue this goal, the MET established a Multicultural Advisory Committee including New York's African-American, South Asian, Asian-American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, LGBT, Muslim, and interreligious cultural leaders who meet regularly to organise outreach activities, including:

- tours, gallery talks, and lectures, inspired by the Museum collection’s cultural diversity;
- cultural and public events that concern the New York communities;
- partnerships with The Studio Museum in Harlem, El Museo del Barrio, The New York Historical Society, the New York Times Community Affairs Department, Museum of Chinese Art in America, and many other institutions and organizations;
- commemoration of annual heritage months.

The MET strengthens the community outreach initiative through the media to reach community newspapers, radio, television and also through social media to reach out to further communities (MET, 2015).

Since Malta and New York can never be really comparable, part of this section explores information concerning the educational services provided by museums within Malta’s geographical region, the Euro-Mediterranean. Two museums in Ankara, Turkey provide public education through interactive exhibits, inviting visitors to engage in self-directed learning. Two museums, one in Italy and another in Spain, despite their small size and being not so well-known, provide highly developed educational programmes. Despite this, the Museo Palazzo Reale di

Genova still targets school children as an audience for its educational service, and the Seville museum's educational programmes are tailored for the general public, families and groups. Thus, unlike the MET, none of these four Euro-Mediterranean museums display a concern for providing community outreach educational programmes by providing a public education service.

2.12.2 Education at the Ethnographic Museum and the State Art and Sculpture Museum in Ankara

According to a study by Çıldır and Karadeniz (2014) on museum education and visual culture promoted by Turkish museums, the Ethnographic Museum and the State Art and Sculpture Museum in Ankara, are among the museums which employ interactive educational practices. The Ethnographic Museum offers its visitors virtual ceramic and glass workshops, engaging visitors to experience the forming of cylindrical mud or glass through touchscreens installed at the museum. The museum also provides gun holograms depicting historical information on the guns used in Ottoman and Seljouk wars. By means of a stratified hologram, three-dimensional modelling displays an illusion of guns suspended in mid-air. Visitors choose the gun and get detailed information on screen regarding its historical aspect, use and raw materials. The information takes the form of several animations and three-dimensional characters.

At the entrance of the State Art and Sculpture Museum, there is a digital book, which provides public visitors with information about the history, architecture of the museum and its important art works. This museum provides an educational service to the public by displaying the digital book, containing pictures and animated narration pages, as an interactive practice. There is also a three-dimensional model of the museum, including information about the Turkish painters and the projection of national artists and art movements presented chronologically. At the museum garden, a digital binocular invites the visitors to examine the view of Ankara in the 1930s, with information about its past buildings and the new buildings which replaced them.

The above two Turkish museums do not provide educational programmes. Their public educational service is provided through interactive installations which invite visitors to self-directed learning. Since these museums have exhibitions allowing exploration but do not include interactive adult workshops, they practise what Hein (1998) identifies as the educational approach to museum discovery.

2.12.3 Education at the Palazzo Reale di Genova Art Museum

The current building of Palazzo Reale is probably the largest 17th/18th-century architectural complex in Genoa, Italy, to have conserved its original interiors, which include permanent frescoes and stuccoes as well as movable paintings, sculptures, furnishings and fittings.

The Palazzo Reale Museum offers guided visits and workshops aimed at encouraging students to learn more about history and art by engaging directly with the works on display. Educational visits are organised for school groups free of charge by specialised museum staff and workshops are aimed at infant, primary, middle and secondary schools. By encouraging students to practise their skills of observation and reasoning, the museum's educational goal is to allow students to cultivate their own methods of interpretation. Through this approach, the museum strives to provide links between the visual world that interests the new generation and the historic and artistic heritage, thus reducing the possibility of intimidation or boredom that limits one's appreciation of artworks. The museum also aims to make the visit relevant to the school curriculum. In so doing, the museum strives to eliminate the attitude which considers the museum visit as a waste of time (Palazzorealegenova, 2017). Despite its progressive informal educational goals towards schools and families, the educational services tab of the museum's website (<http://palazzorealegenova.beniculturali.it/servizi/didattica/>) does not bring up any information about the Palazzo Reale Museum's educational aims for community outreach programmes.

2.12.4 Education at the Seville Museum of Fine Arts

The Museum of Fine Arts in Seville was set up by Royal Decree in 1835 and acquired a reputation as a 'museum to display paintings' (Museum of Fine Arts, Seville, 2017). As shown through the 'Educational Programmes' tab on the museum website: (<http://www.museosdeandalucia.es/web/museodebellasartesdesevilla/programas>), the Seville Museum of Fine Arts categorises the public education programmes according to the three targeted groups, namely families, groups of more than ten people and the general public. Several resources such as ideas for visits, suggestions for familiarising oneself before the museum visit, and activities to carry out during and after the visit, are provided through the museum's website: (http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/museos/media/docs/MBASE_families-ideas.pdf).- The

programmes and visit plans for groups, which focus on different works of art are available on the museum's website

(http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/museos/media/docs/MBASE_mbase_-_guided_tours_2016_-_2017_6.pdf).

The website also includes guided tours targeting the public on a monthly basis; one comprising the permanent collection while the other deals with the temporary collection:

(http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/museos/media/docs/MBASE_mbase_-_guided_tours_2016_-_2017_5.pdf).

The family education programme is intended to encourage children and adults to participate in discussions and hands-on activities inspired by the museum collection. The Seville Museum of Fine Arts provides the public with an all year round opportunity for informal educational. Although this enables visitors to discover, share and experience art while exploring a new world together, this museum still does not provide community outreach programmes.

2.12.5 Museum Community Outreach

Based on literature showing that “there are many parts of the world where new audiences are being prioritised, often for the first time” (Lang et al., 2006:44), further research was carried out to understand the ways through which museums within the Euro-Mediterranean region offer community outreach educational programmes and events.

In London, the Victoria and Albert (V&A) museum developed community outreach programmes targeting black communities, inviting people from all backgrounds and ages to participate in break-dancing, hip-hop, graffiti and African head-wrapping demonstrations and workshops. On another occasion in 2001, a day was dedicated to black British hairstyles and nail art through “lectures, demonstrations and photoshoots of black hairstyle and nail art of participants” (Lang et al., 2006:85). Poetry writing and performances were organised for a community of mental health service users to enable them to explore their personal style and fashion (Lang et al., 2006). Such museum outreach programmes show the link between particular museum collections and particular communities. They also show how this link is never static as the interests, experiences and motivations brought by communities are multi-faceted.

In Italy, some interesting projects were stimulated by the recognition of the museum's role in fostering mutual understanding within increasingly diverse societies. According to Golding and Modest (2013) the museums in Emilia Romagna, Lombardia and Piemonte have been particularly active in projects which promote Italy's cultural diversity and offering initiatives aimed to increase the access of migrant communities to Italian culture. Meanwhile, Italian museums have been criticised as aiming merely to reinforce the dominant cultures instead of trying to assimilate migrants into the social mainstream. Nevertheless, between 2007 and 2009, Italian museum intercultural works for the project 'Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue', initiated by the Institute of Cultural Heritage and funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union, were deemed successful. The project involved partnerships with other European museums such as the British Museum in London, the Museo de America in Madrid and the Foundation for Museums and Visitors in Budapest. This European project promoted the idea of cultures which differ not only across continents but also within the same community (Golding and Modest, 2013).

2.12.6 Museum Young Adult Community Outreach

In view of the focus of my study on educational programmes at museums targeting the young adult community, this section also explores museum education opportunities for young adults. It also questions whether such educational opportunities can become lifelong targets. For instance, in order to target the needs of young adults to feel involved and to have a sense of ownership, the TATE museum and the V&A museum in London, offer opportunities aimed at young people to volunteer for music and fashion events, partnering with radio stations, magazines and promoters (Lang et al., 2006). But when museum opportunities are closely related to job-related involvement, do they really satisfy the need of young adults to feel involved and to have a sense of ownership?

2.12.7 Palazzo Strozzi Museum, Florence

In Florence, Palazzo Strozzi Museum, besides its exhibition space, serves as a workshop offering activities and events for families, young people and adults to explore new ways of relating to art. The museum provides visitors with a stimulating experience to direct their own engagement with the collection (Palazzo Strozzi, 2017).

In the 'Education section' of the museum's website (<https://www.palazzostrozzi.org/edu/>), there are several categories of communities which the museum caters for, including families, schools, universities, youth and adults and access programmes. The category dedicated to youth and adults shows three different programmes, the cost of which is included in the price of the exhibition entry fee. The 'School of Art' programme includes a cycle of six appointments which involve artists who explain in-depth artistic techniques of illustration, engraving and painting. On Wednesdays, a thirty-minute break activity entitled 'Art Break' consists of in-depth exploration of one of the great masters of the 16th century under the guidance of the Florence University's art history students. This activity also enables the university students to build up their applied experience through the exhibitions held in Palazzo Strozzi museum.

The 'Drawing Kit' is another activity at this museum. This aims to encourage interaction with art by means of drawing based on the observation of a displayed artwork, in order to practice the oldest art form of humanity. In promoting the experience of observation, youth and adults are encouraged to translate what they see using drawing to communicate their interpretation. The act of drawing is a form of giving meaning to the world. The museum also provides the participants with a space to engage in conversations while observing closely the works of art if they opt to participate in the activity 'Let's talk about'. The aim of this activity is not to show off expertise in art but to encourage the use of the critical and analytical skills of participants as an approach to art (Palazzo Strozzi, 2017).

These activities show that Palazzo Strozzi Museum offers engaging educational activities for the public through art history appreciation and art techniques. However, they do demonstrate that the museum is providing community outreach specifically to address the interests and needs of young adults. The only programme that includes some specific community outreach is the 'Art Break', where University art students, who are young adults, are given the opportunity to interact with public visitors through the museum's exhibits. This also provides young adults with a job-related learning experience (apprenticeship) but not a lifelong learning dimension for their personal development. Therefore, those young adults who are familiar with art and art museums continue to participate in programmes against a museum entry fee. But who would reach out to those young adults who lack an art background and feel that they do not belong in art museums? Would such museum programmes keep reproducing what Bourdieu (1984) identified as the transmission of

cultural capital — attitudes, knowledge and values socially constructed by the dominant social group?

2.12.8 Whitechapel Gallery, London

Whitechapel Gallery in London offers the Youth Forum programme targeting young adult communities. The gallery annually recruits thirty youths aged between 15 and 21 through partnerships with schools and youth service providers for its forum known as Duchamp & Sons, which was established in 2010 (Nardi, 2016). The participants meet twice a month at the gallery and work in collaboration with the curator and creative professionals to develop projects such as exhibitions with artists and community events. Their participation involves direct involvement in the decision-making process from the planning to the delivery stage of the programmes. This gallery therefore provides the participants with a suitable non-formal education space for thinking and learning about art and culture, by introducing new skills, practical experiences and an understanding what goes on behind-the-scenes in a contemporary art gallery. In providing them with a constant, long-term engagement with artists, gallery staff and peers, Whitechapel Gallery aims to inspire “ambitions in art education and career paths in the creative sector” (Nardi, 2016: 132). Although it seems to invite a wide range of young adults from the public by recruiting from schools and youth service providers, this museum outreach is targeting what Biesta (2006) refers to as the economic dimension of lifelong learning. With its agenda of providing job-related experiences at the gallery, it does not encourage a learning agenda with which young adults can work towards their self-development.

2.12.9 The Toledo Museum of Art

Since its founding in 1901, the Toledo Museum of Art has earned a global reputation not only for the quality of their collection, but also for their innovative and extensive educational programmes (Toledo Museum of Art, 2017). In 1903, the museum introduced free Saturday classes for children and teens. Over the years, parallel with the growth of the museum collection, the art classes grew as well, by referring to and gaining inspiration from the collection. Community outreach at the Toledo Museum of Art involves classes, programmes, and interactive experiences for people of all ages, not only to help them engage with great art but also with each other. The hands-on activities

and photographs at the entrance to the museum provide a sampling of the multi-sensory learning experiences available to public visitors.

The Toledo Museum offers a community outreach educational programme entitled 'Art After School' which partners with local youth service organisations and schools to provide free gallery and studio art experiences throughout the school year and summer months. This programme provides more than 700 young people with interactive, educational, and hands-on out of school art experiences at the museum, annually. Furthermore, considering itself an art education institution, the Toledo Museum aims to provide access to its collection by reaching out to communities. In fact, its outreach programme titled 'Teaching Visual Literacy' engages lifelong learners of all ages and provides learning experiences in a variety of formats. Its educational opportunities include workshops, tours, gallery experiences, hands-on activities, lectures, a partnership with the University of Toledo Department of Art, and a 90,000-volume art reference library. Through providing such a variety of free of charge educational opportunities without a job-related agenda, this museum aims at the public's well-being, prioritising what Biesta (2006) refers to as personal and democratic dimensions of lifelong learning.

2.13 Local Art Museum Education

2.13.1 The Context of the National Museum of Fine Arts (NMFA)

Malta's museum collections were established at a time when a sense of national identity started to be felt. In 1903 a National Museum was set up by Temi Zammit and by 1921, Vincenzo Bonello, the first curator brought together works of art which established Malta's artistic history within a European artistic scenario (Vella, 2006). In 1974, the art collection was moved to a historic building at the lower end of South Street in Valletta, the capital of Malta. During the same year, the National Museum of Fine Arts (NMFA) was officially inaugurated and since then, it has been considered Malta's most important museum for visual arts. The NMFA presented an indication of both local and international art from the late medieval period to the contemporary. Its collection consisted of

paintings, precious Maltese silverware, sculptures, fine furniture and fine majolica items (NMFA, 2015).

2.13.2 The Purpose of the NMFA

While serving as a local venue for permanent art display, allowing a historic walk through six centuries of art history, the NMFA also served as a place for temporary art exhibitions which displayed works of practising artists and thematic exhibitions from the museum's reserve collection (Vella, 2006). However, this role had diminished in recent years. On skimming through the 'Reasons to Visit' the NMFA on the Heritage Malta's official website (<http://heritagemalta.org/museums-sites/national-museum-of-fine-arts/>) and a look at its brochure, it was evident that rather than providing educational service, the main purpose of the Maltese national art museum was its collection, comprising:

1. The largest collection of works by the renowned Mattia Preti (1613-1699);
2. The finest collection of baroque art masterpieces on the island;
3. The only displayed watercolour by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) featuring Malta's Grand Harbour and unique Malta views and landscapes;
4. One of the most important 18th century high baroque staircases on the island.

Neither the official website nor the brochures of the NMFA mention any museum educational programmes. Meanwhile, the function of the museum is defined by the International Council of Museum statutes (ICOM, 2007) and Malta's Heritage Act of 2002 as a public institution that collects and exhibits for the purpose of education and appreciation of cultural heritage (Vella, 2006). Replacing the former Museums Department, Heritage Malta (HM) was set up as a national agency to work more efficiently towards achieving the aims of local museums.

HM went through drastic structural changes since its foundation in 2002, working towards its mission to promote knowledge to the public, educate and infuse appreciation and enjoyment of the cultural heritage (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, 2003). With reference to today's lifelong learning within the Maltese context, Borg and Mayo propose that Maltese cultural institutions need to be "more democratically accessible, reciprocal and socially inclusive" (2017: 112).

2.13.3 The Educational Aspect scene within local Museums

In 2002, HM set up an Education Department for about thirty museums and sites in Malta, whose main responsibilities include among others, the provision of specialised educational resources, the consolidation and creation of partnerships with local educational institutions and assistance in cultural education activities (Lusiani and Zan, 2010). The special branch, entitled YES – Youth and Youngsters Educational Services, targeted primary and secondary schools, by conducting activities in the field of arts and culture and visits to museums, with specifically created children’s workbooks and teacher’s books to facilitate teaching and learning (Art and Cultural Education at School in Europe Malta, 2007/ 2008).

Back in 2015, while researching literary sources for my study, the website of HM (<http://heritagemalta.org/museums-sites/>), showed the following options under the tab for ‘Learning’:

- School Visits (including options of guided tours)
- Educational Cultural Calendar (in 2015, caters only for ages 11-14 years)
- Educational visits/activities (for organised educational visits, including options of guided tours)
- Worksheets (only for school children)
- Resources (including information on the sites and questionnaires)

While there were various references to special programmes targeting children of different age groups as part of organised school visits in relation to their curricular studies, there was no reference to the provision of community educational outreach by the museums. Although HM’s mission statement shows it “is committed to bringing culture closer to the people” (Heritage Malta, 2015: online), no clear strategy is evident to explain how this would be achieved.

The tab for ‘Learning’ in the HM website (2015) showed that the Education Programmes Department within HM offers packages that cater for individually booked educational visits. This option is the only reference to informal education provided by local museums. At the initial time of my study, in 2015, local publications about local museums’ education community outreach did not exist. The only information which could be obtained concerning local museums’ procedures or plans for community outreach was through casual conversations with the staff at HM Education Department and with curators at some local museums, including the NMFA.

This section deals with the museum education service run by HM based on information gained through informal conversations with staff at HM Education Department in April, 2015. HM feels strongly about public accessibility to museums and sites. For the first time, in 2015, an overall Education Officer¹ and a History teacher were appointed at HM. The Education Officer serves as a reference person for the Educational Programmes of local museums and sites, while the History teacher is responsible for all Heritage Malta museums and sites. At the time, the focus of Heritage Malta education service is on school children (formal education), especially primary schools. They said that HM's focus is on them because school children are the audience who visit the museums regularly. HM education service is based on a thematic approach, eg. the Roman funerals.

In 2014, about 40,000 students visited local museums and sites, not only throughout the scholastic year but also during the summer school programmes of 'Skolasajf'. The fun aspect of learning, linked to a school curriculum is offered through visiting-tours and booklets tailored for school visits. The Heritage Malta sites and museums emphasise idea of 'edutainment'. The worksheets contain cartoons to entertain and indirectly educate the students. At the time, there were no educational resources targeting young adults and lifelong learners, however HM did offer optional events including intriguing activities, eg. a sleepover at the Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa. Tickets for this event were sold out immediately this year, mostly purchased by 20-year olds who have a passion for rock music and gothic culture. Thus, HM succeeded in attracting a public audience belonging to specific subculture, but at the risk of replacing educational value with entertaining events at cultural venues to "simply represent play" (Breunig, 2005:107).

With regards to the future plans of local museum education, HM staff mentioned that they would be providing activities for school students of ALP (Alternative Learning Programmes). They also showed willingness in tailoring programmes for people with special needs. They referred to plans for providing lifelong learning by organizing temporary exhibitions and membership-schemes with discounts, aiming at attracting the public to the museums. They said the Gozo Museums will soon be located at the Ninu Cremona School Complex in Gozo, as an extension of the school. They believed that this extension catering for schools will provide better links to local museums.

¹ Vanessa Ciantar was appointed as Senior Education Officer for all Heritage Malta museums and sites.

The conversations held with local museums curators, also in 2015 added further information regarding the history and plans for local museum education. They mentioned that local museums started prioritising education only when HM took over. In the past, the main purpose of the local museums was to collect and display, thus preserving ‘national identity’. The curators revealed that after the Second World War, the priority of museums (all held under one roof, in front of St John’s Cathedral) was the restoration of works. A lot of items were in Auberge d’Italie from the 1920s until 1942. In the 1950s, the museums developed into two main museums – ‘Archaeology’ and ‘Fine Arts’ which were later separated into two different buildings (the Archaeology and the Admiral House) in 1974. From then on, other museums started to emerge.

Since HM took over the local museums, their educational policies have been, and are still, curriculum-structured and focused mainly on school children — an example of formal education. The HM curatorial team is more focused on discipline and its concerns are more academic than sociological. While conversing, the museum curators insisted this is the required shift nowadays— “curating with space rather than objects”. They revealed they were not involved in policy making, but were often consulted on the organisation of certain cultural events taking place throughout the year. When asked, the curators said that they are not aware of any form of assessment of the educational strategies of HM museums ever taking place. The current educational programmes at the museums are not designed by HM but by lecturers who teach students at higher levels of education, e.g. MCAST, Higher Secondary and Degree Plus.

The curators said the personnel responsible for HM museum tours are the front-of-house/ ticket-officers, who are not qualified in pedagogy. They pointed out that no qualifications are required for this position as after one year working as ticket officers, they become familiar with the museum and are thus automatically entrusted to hold the museum tours. The curators declared that due to the lack of audiences with 16+ ages, no resources were tailored for museum visitors beyond schooling age. At this point they asked a rhetorical question “is it worth investing Heritage Malta funds in resources which will not be used?” HM curators argued that qualified staff and funds are required for proper museum education events. In spite of several initiatives currently underway with events targeting the public at large, due to lack of interest in visiting museums, unless events involve food, the main audience so far is made up of tourists.

Besides the information gathered through the few published materials, some information was also gathered through an informal conversation with the NMFA curators, held in April 2015. This automatically steered towards the future planned educational strategies of NMFA-MUŻA. The curators insisted that the museum is an educational institution whose focus is not limited to schooling. Information was gained about the museum education provided at the time. They mentioned that the NMFA offers the ‘cool-funky’ tour model, through questioning and fun comments, while it still offers the traditional tour model, which is based on historical narratives. With regards to school children the NMFA curators said that usually the NMFA tour is typically 30 to 45 minutes long and is based on highlights, for example comparing Venetian and Florentine Art or the importance of Mattia Preti’s works. As such the tour is therefore still based on art history. The curators revealed that currently the NMFA front-of-house officers who hold the museum tours are being trained to select and adapt tours according to the audience.

2.13.4 Rethinking the Collection

In December 2018, the NMFA was upgraded into a new museum typology branded as ‘MUŻA’. In one of his publications, Sandro Debono, the senior curator and MUŻA project leader at the time, referred to MUŻA not only as a vision of the new national museum of art in Malta but also as “one of the flagship projects for Valletta’s capital city of culture title in 2018” (Debono, 2014: 312). In addition, Debono insists that the task of MUŻA is to rethink the collection as a resource rather than simply a collection of valuable possessions. It has been decided that the physical space within MUŻA would be organised along four chosen narrative themes and related objects, namely to emphasise the Mediterranean, Europe, Empire and the Artist (Debono, 2014).

The NMFA curators claimed that MUŻA is to be considered as a tool designed in response to the right of citizens to have access to museum education taking into consideration their contexts and needs. This shows that MUŻA, in striving to address the diversity of communities within society will have a more complex role than merely that which ICOM defines simply as a right of society. The curators maintained that the access to cultural heritage is a right of citizens. Hence, when discussing the future plans of the NMFA- MUŻA, the curators asserted the need for a shift in museum design, where the museum does not simply fulfill a right, but acts in response to the

citizens' needs. Through such a design, they anticipate that a culture would develop in which the public visits the museums 'to ask' about what is of interest, rather than just to listen. Rather than providing worksheets, leaflets and resources, the museum plans to empower the audience for independent lifelong learning. For instance, the audience can observe displayed works while having the option to choose, using the available devices (e.g. touchscreens, captions, mobile apps, etc.) to understand what is in front of them.

The senior curator insisted that the future museums have to integrate all aspects, e.g. community outreach, formal, non-formal education, while he asked a rhetoric question: "How are the museums going to reach the needs of the new generation?" The curators admitted that the process of managing MUŻA is a continuous one and involves first the identification of the flaws of the museum, and then the determination of the work required. An interview held with the senior curator in 2017, revealed that MUŻA still did not have concrete educational plans. This issue will be elaborated further in the Analysis Chapter.

2.14 Assessing the Impact of Museum Education

According to Taylor (2013), in order to evaluate the impact of museum education strategies, traditional assessment approaches adopted by museums often included:

- the increase/reduction in ticket sales;
- the sale of museum memberships;
- the number of visiting school groups;
- the increase/reduction in general programme attendance;
- attendance at exhibitions;
- the number of hits on the museum's website;
- media coverage;
- increased educators' involvement.

While serving to underscore their value to visitors through quantifiable measures, such assessment approaches do not truly evaluate the outreach efforts and can hardly be considered as effective museum learning outcomes (Taylor, 2013). This could stem from the trend that museums are increasingly being analysed like other market concerns. In their struggle to increase their visitors' turnout, museums are obliged to give increasing importance to commercial interest in consumption and entertainment, such as that provided by museum shops and blockbuster exhibitions (Hanquinet and Savage, 2012).

In view of my study's focus on community outreach, Holden (2004) maintains that the economic value of the arts as a cultural sector is considered by the community as being only partially important. Since museums have benefited society by promoting social wellbeing through addressing and challenging social issues, such as climate change and drug issues, they leave a social impact on their immediate communities and eventually on the wider society (Kelly 2006a). Thus, recognising museums' social impact provides a more holistic understanding of how the arts and culture contribute to communities (Kelly 2006b).

In the United Kingdom, during the years 2001 and 2003, museums, libraries and archives (MLA) funded a project called 'The Learning Impact Research Project' (LIRP), to create a system for outlining and assessing the nature and impact of education happening within museums, libraries and archives. The LIRP aimed to achieve a substantial recognition of the definition of learning which was not limited to the traditional educational framework (Black, 2005). For a start, it acknowledged learning as a process of active engagement with experience, while making sense of the world, which may contribute to an increase in skills, knowledge, understanding, values and reflection. It also confirmed that the effectiveness of learning would lead to transformation and the desire for lifelong learning (MLA, 2001a).

Assessing the impact of museum education reflected the need to define learning outcomes, which led to the identification of five 'Generic Learning Outcomes' (GLOs), constructed on the definition mentioned earlier. The GLOs, demonstrated by Fig.1, consist of a series of sub-headings which can be applied when evaluating the comments of visitors (Black, 2005).



Fig.1. Generic Learning Outcomes (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007b:52)

GLOs can offer museums a systematic approach for carrying out assessments of museum education, to identify and to encourage improvements where necessary. The series of sub-headings for each GLO are enlisted as shown in Table 1 (adapted from Black, 2005:154).

Table 1: GLOs and Sub-headings

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING
Making meaning about something
Acquiring facts or evidence that can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a detailed issue • interdisciplinary / thematic • about museums • concerning oneself, family, community, the world
Developing understanding
Discovering how museums function
Naming things, people or places

Links and relating between things
Applying previous knowledge in innovative ways
SKILLS
Being able to create something
Intellectual skills, e.g. reading, critical and analytical thinking, judging
Basic skills, e.g. numeracy, literacy, use of ICT, learning how to learn
Information management skills, e.g. discovering, using and evaluating information
Social skills, e.g. sharing, team-working, introducing others, being concerned about others' interests
Emotional skills, e.g. identifying the feelings of others, dealing with intense feelings, directing energy into creative results
Communication skills, e.g. writing, speaking, listening
Physical skills, e.g. manipulation, making
ATTITUDES AND VALUES
Emotional states and awareness
Attitudes towards oneself, e.g. self-esteem
Empathy, ability for tolerance (or lack of these) towards others
Attitudes towards the museums
Increased motivation
Positive and negative attitudes related to an experience
Reasons for actions or personal viewpoints
ENJOYMENT, INSPIRATION AND CREATIVITY
Being entertained
Being amazed
Having innovative thoughts
Being creative
Exploring, experimenting and making

Being inspired
ACTION, BEHAVIOUR, PROGRESSION
What participants do
The participants' intention to act or do
What participants have done
A modification in the way that participants cope with their lives, including work, family and community contexts
Perceived and described actions
Transformation in behaviour
Development towards further learning and new skills

GLOs serve to address the fact that museum visits should no longer be considered in isolation, but within the wider context of life. This was emphasised by Falk (2002) when stating that “any effort to understand the visitor experience, let alone the visitor learning, needs to be conceptualised within the larger context of individuals’ lives” (in Black, 2005:155). The implementation of the GLOs approach aims to encourage museums to focus not only on measuring the impact of learning but also on using the assessment process as a means to embed museum learning effectively (Black, 2005).

It is important to note that the earlier mentioned LIRP project focused on people taking part in museum projects, over a period of time, thus making it possible to observe and evaluate transformation and development. Hence, its findings and the assessment approaches of GLOs are not meant to be applied to understand the impact of museum education on irregular casual visitors. In view of this Literature Review, the GLOs assessment approaches served to structure my study’s research projects since they involved observations and evaluations of museum educational strategies over a period of time.

2.15 Youth Culture

Museum audience researcher Halee Sommer (2018) maintains that when the 21st century museums' shifted mindset and focused on public audiences, they identified the millennial generation (those born between 1986 and 2000) as the dominant museum audience. Currently, many museums strive to understand how to remain relevant to this generation, which is often considered as the most educated and diverse in history, and yet one which "remains an under-served audience among museums" (Somers, 2018:2).

Since my study targets museum education focusing on millennials, or young adult communities, another main research aspect of this Literature Review emphasises 'Youth Culture'. Apart from referring to them as 'millennials', the participants of my research projects, aged 21-30 are also referred to as 'youth' within the Maltese context, as "youth is the cohort of all persons between 13 and 30 years old" (Youth Policy in Malta, 2017:8). Therefore, the terms 'youth' and 'young adults' in this section are used interchangeably.

2.15.1 *The Context of Local Youth in Malta.*

According to the Maltese Draft National Youth Policy Framework (2015-2020), some of the characteristics that distinguish youth are:

- socio-economic background;
- age-group;
- gender;
- religious beliefs;
- cultural background;
- ethnicity;
- sexual orientation.

Hence, young adults require different means of support and resources based on their different characteristics, aspirations and needs. A Maltese study (Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, 2012), reveals that the themes that often interest the youth in Malta are as follows:

- emotions and behaviours;
- family life and relationships;
- health and well-being;

- their attitudes to the people, professions and institutions which influence their lives;
- the impact of new communication technologies;
- leisure.

The same study indicates that some characteristics are common among the broad spectrum of youth in Malta, for instance, the general inclination of Maltese youth to be law-abiding and of good conduct. Although they do not consider LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) people as constituting families, the study indicates that youth in Malta tend to be tolerant towards them. Other characteristics of the youth in Malta include their need to communicate and foster human relationships, their constant display of being supportive of others and their strong family relationships.

Along these lines, additional characteristics of the youth in Malta were mentioned in the Maltese Draft National Youth Policy Framework (2015-2020). These include their regular interest and participation in religion. Although they show less interest in politics, youth in Malta present the highest levels of youth participation in NGOs in the EU. Meanwhile, they tend to trust individuals more than the institutionalised religion and political parties. The typical young adults in Malta often have computers/laptops, mobile phones and access to the internet and spend half their money on recreation, shopping and travel.

The Maltese Draft National Youth Policy Framework (2015-2020) indicates the high importance that youth in Malta give to communication technology – the internet and mobile phones. Further characteristics show that their leisure time is often spent with family and friends, watching television, cinema, concert attendance, surfing the internet, social networking, daily reading (preferred in English rather than in Maltese), phoning and texting friends.

The same document points out some of the challenges presented by youth in Malta, as follows:

- obesity;
- lack of physical exercise;
- high frequency of alcohol use;
- illegal drug use;
- unmarried/unemployed young parents having a low socio-economic status;
- highest rate of early school leavers in the EU;

- highest rate of at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion among young people aged 18-24 in the EU;
- low level of commitment to cultural, sporting activities and artistic pursuits.

According to an analytical report—‘Youth on the Move’ (European Commission, 2011), Malta has one of the lowest rates in the EU of young adults visiting museums, art galleries and attending theatrical, dance or opera performances.

2.15.2 The Establishment of a Maltese Youth Agency

In 2011, the Maltese youth agency ‘Aġenzija Żgħażaġh’ (AŻ) was founded to promote youth interests while providing support for youth and youth organisations in attaining their potential. Aiming at dealing with youth-related issues and developing youth services, AŻ enables further investment in youth, providing a clear, consistent and integrated government approach, to address youths’ needs (Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, 2019).

2.16 Youth Identity

Identities are not only linked to cultural heritage, but also to work places, leisure activities and consumption patterns. Young adults strive to make sense of their identity and to develop a sense of belonging through understanding and engaging with issues concerning the wider world (Bourn, 2008). Moreover, due to their unique set of multiple needs, young adults are “a difficult group for museums to cultivate” (Sommers, 2018:15). My three research projects showed evidence of the young participants’ fluctuating identities, which influenced changes in their theme development and choices of artworks. Due to this age-group’s shifting identities and the fluid contemporary times we live in, understanding young adult identities is problematic. One can only grasp the inevitability of change when aiming at providing museum education that caters for multiculturalism.

The multicultural identities that today’s young adults inhabit are constantly shaped by globalisation, increased migration, social pluralism, race, religion, gender, friendship groups, their usage of internet (especially social networking) and wider cultural influences on their lifestyles. In fact, the impact of globalisation seen in constant social changes, is the key factor influencing the

lives of young adults in modern society. Globalisation is directly linked to their uncertainty about identity and their sense of place in the world. This makes them constantly re-think and revise their concept of identity, influenced by new trends, be they cultural, technological or social (Bourn, 2008).

A clear manifestation of the need of young adults to feel connected to others around them is their frequent presence at the heart of campaigns, e.g. 'Make Poverty History' and protests concerning climate change (Hickey-Moody, 2013). Meanwhile, a characteristic of Maltese youth is that they do not participate much in politics. Indeed they show less interest in politics than they do in institutionalised religion (Maltese Draft National Youth Policy Framework, 2015-2020).

Today's young adults have a significant role in bringing about changes in technology, economy and politics. Whether they are prepared for the task is another question, based on society's views and actions toward youth cultures (Delgado, 2002). For instance, if societies promote youths' participation in public art projects, where they automatically send messages about their cultures based on their own meanings of everyday life and social context, it may serve to challenge the popular characterisation of young people as 'being at risk'. Consequently, this may lead adult citizens to develop a critical awareness about young adult communities. Hence, the engagement of young adults in experiential education through a participatory project may have a positive ripple effect on the wider community, leading to bridge the gap that exists between the youth community and wider society (Hickey-Moody, 2013).

When the wider community perceives young adults as today's active citizens with a potential to contribute to society, youth are perceived as an asset to the wider community. Hence, instead of only focusing on young adults as tomorrow's adult citizens, they are regarded as those currently in a position to help rather than receive assistance through youth organisations. This may lead to a shift of focus away from problems often associated with youth, such as drugs, abuse and crime, to one of enhancing potential. Such a powerful shift can only be possible if the wider community embraces the goal of treating young adults as equal partners (Delgado, 2002).

Unlike formal education, the impact of my study's community projects on young adults was not measured through achievement tests but through visible signs. These signs included observations of their motivation to learn through thinking, creating, collaborating and their recognition that their shared contribution of knowledge and experiences matter. In line with this, Hickey-Moody (2013) states that youth participatory projects should aim at generating young adults' social qualities in the present, while leading them to become caring and contributing adult citizens in the future. This recalls Biesta's (2006) personal and democratic dimensions of lifelong learning.

2.17 Working with Young Adults in Museums

Both NEA's report (2015) and Sommers' survey (2018) indicate that traditional museum education and museum tours do not appeal to young adults. Thus, Wyrick (2014) advises that one has to consider the ever-changing needs of youth while echoing the "massive cultural turn towards experiences... participatory, social, informal, user-generated, and challenging to traditional hierarchical models of learning" (Wyrick, 2014:232).

According to Bourn (2008), experiential education through an informal approach, starting from young adults' everyday experiences may encourage positive action for change. For instance, in order to support young adults' understanding of the world around them, educators may stimulate discussions concerning global issues. Working with young adults becomes practical when exploring links between the complexity of identities influenced by social, cultural, political issues and the ways they react to such complexity through their sense of belonging. In fact, young adults tend to construct their identity – their own sense of who they are — in response to local, national and global influences (Bourn, 2008).

Wyrick (2014) maintains that educational initiatives such as museum educational programmes are required to reflect on contemporary life and social issues, aiming to bring not only cultures and communities together but to provide relevant opportunities to learn about 'the other'. In shedding light on the role of identities and sense of belonging, young adults are enabled to make meaning of the world in which they live. Thus, relevant museum educational programmes can serve to "build

critical thinkers... as active, healthy participants in the broader world and cultural landscape” (Wyrick, 2014:234).

2.17.1 Motivating the Non-Motivated

Motivation is not only required for youth participation in educational programmes but it is a crucial issue for young adults’ well-being in today’s complex global society. The types of problems and opportunities they encounter as they reach adulthood require constant motivation to keep learning and problem solving (Larson, 2011). However, it has been shown that as one grows up, intrinsic motivation for learning naturally declines (Eccles and Roeser, 2009).

For educators working with young adults, dealing with the non-motivated ones is quite challenging, especially when efforts to encourage motivation seem to be counterproductive. The dilemma lies in the fact that for young adults to become intrinsically motivated, transformation depends on themselves (Larson and Dawes, 2011). Although literary sources cannot provide formulas to solve this dilemma, research does provide suggested principles (Larson and Rusk, 2011:112). Intrinsic motivation is more likely to occur when young adults:

- experience relationships of trust and support;
- are in settings that provide opportunities for experiencing competency and developing skills;
- experience options in meaningful activities;
- can experience gradations of increasingly difficult challenges in activities;
- experience clear goals and models of action (techniques, guidelines, rules) for reaching those goals;
- gain knowledge, skills, and positive emotional links to the activity or content area;
- are provided with an activity connected to their personal values, life goals, and identities;
- receive accurate and authentic feedback on product and process of work;
- are engaged by challenges that match their skills;
- have their development of skills for managing motivation facilitated.

2.17.2 Motivating without Dominating

Cargo et al. (2003) recommend that when planning museum educational programmes, thoughtfulness is required to facilitate young adults’ engagement without dominating their understandings. This includes nurturing their ideas, considering the voice of every young adult and

guiding their creative energy. Adults need to transfer decision-making gradually over time. In turn, young adults need time and support to learn how to effectively face responsibilities they did not previously have. The role of adults needs to be balanced by providing opportunities to develop competency in planning and handling responsibilities for implementation. They have to be active organisers in planning an implementation of putting into practice “rather than being the 'well-intentioned practitioner' doing for youth” (Cargo et al., 2003:70). Thus, the role of adult project-leaders is to create and maintain a balance - providing support but without domination. Adults can do this by being available, providing guidance and support only when needed. This encourages young adults to take on new responsibilities, try out new ideas, reach out into the community, and start making important decisions on behalf of the group (Cargo et al., 2003). Aligned with this, Freire (1970) warns that when teachers are positioned as authorities, the students’ sense of ownership, creativity and authentic learning will be undermined. Therefore, the more young adults are encouraged to be in control of their learning, the more they learn.

2.18 The Community Aspect

Investigating the ways museums construct educational experiences sheds light on the chosen mediation approaches between museums and their communities. To investigate this, the third aspect of this Literature Review concerns the notion of ‘Community’.

Due to its diverse usage, the notion of ‘Community’, though commonly used is often vague (Mulligan, 2006). Its understanding can be limited to traditional rules and common needs for social structure. The term ‘Community’ is also politically manipulated, indicating an opposing position to globalisation, while on the other hand it provides a backing to cultivate good citizenship (Atherley, 2006). Furthermore, it also refers to a group relationship among individuals who experience their identity through a sense of belonging which gathers responsibilities involving active participation (Ife and Tesoriero, 2006). On assuming personal agency, which is often considered as threatened by globalisation, the latter notion of ‘community’ due to its emphasis on active participation, receives more attention in lifelong learning and community development literature. This is because participation within a community enables “people to become active producers of that culture rather than passive consumers” (Ife and Tesoriero, 2006:98). As my

projects focus on young adults as active lifelong learners with a common sense of belonging due to their age-group, this chapter refers to the latter notion of community.

2.19 Museums and the Notion of Community

The awareness of the need for museums to take account of a range of communities is not new. The radical politics of the 1960s encouraged museum professionals to be more aware of museums' social purpose (Watson, 2007). Although a museum may categorise particular members of the large community as 'target audience', a community "which depends on the eye of the participant is not a 'target audience', nor is it 'the public', within which there may be many different communities" (Watson, 2007:4).

The public belongs to different communities, some by choice, while others are a result of people's perception of particular members of the large communities. The communities that people belong to, depend on certain settings, and are constantly fluid as they change over time. Similarly, museums are living institutions, constantly changing and regularly revisiting their purpose. According to their selected purpose, museums have the potential to shape community values and social understandings. To some extent, such 'shaping' depends on the visitors' individual sense of themselves, prior knowledge, perspectives, values and their understandings of the communities to which they belong. However, fundamentally, such 'shaping' depends on the attitudes of those who work in museums towards the communities they serve (Watson, 2007).

The perceived worth of a museum is currently undergoing a shift from being valued according to its internal collections, to being valued through "an external consideration of the benefits it provides to the individuals and communities it seeks to serve" (Weil, 2003:42). This shift affects the museum professionals' current attitudes. In the United Kingdom, most museums do not have access to funds unless they demonstrate their measurable benefits to the public, in other words their ability to make positive differences to the lives of individuals and communities (Watson, 2007).

2.19.1 Community Curation

This section concerns the proposed aspects of MUŻA's community curation based on an essay (Debono, 2014) by Sandro Debono (the NMFA senior curator and MUŻA Project Lead) and a critique essay (Grech, 2015) in response to it by John Grech (a resident academic and educator of contemporary art and culture, including museology, at the University of Malta).

In his essay, besides revealing ambitious targets for the new national art museum in Malta, Debono proposes that the vision for the MUŻA project will be based on the model of 'community curating', thus serving both 'community' and generally 'pedagogy'. In order to reach the International Committee of Museum's definition of "being at the service of society" (Debono, 2014:313) the MUŻA project seeks to develop a constant connection with the community. Actually, as Debono (2014) reveals, the project opts to replace the terms of 'nation' and 'audience' with the terms 'community' and 'participants'. Meanwhile, Grech (2015) notes that despite the apparently diminished importance of notions of nationalism, Debono continues to use the term 'national' to explain and anticipate the function of the new museum.

According to Debono (2014), the shift brought by the term 'community' replacing that of 'nation', indicates that regardless of what they share in common, the community is an ever-changing group of relationships and identities which are in constant flux. Grech (2015) suggests that a more plural sense of communities is required especially since MUŻA is obliged to territorialise something as indefinite and immeasurable as art. To face this challenge, Grech suggests that acts of self-reflection and critical thinking must be applied to questions such as:

"How are various communities defined, who's defining them and who is doing the talking? What values are assumed those communities hold, who/what do the values represent, and who presumes to identify and articulate them? Which sectors, what actors, whose interests, and which constituents of what communities will the creative/artistic works on display reflect and represent? Who and what gets privileged in these discourses, who/what is denied, and how are these made subject to the museological processes being proposed?" (Grech, 2015:174-5)

The second shift promoted by use of the term 'participants' instead of 'audience', demands attention to how museums provide engagement of the public to participate in the museum experience and giving them a sense of collective ownership. In fact, MUŻA aims to develop a

culture habitat that leads to the transformation from the public's role of passive viewers to active agents, through constantly engaging the public in contributing, collaborating, co-creating and hosting. These two major shifts defining new habitat and values based on 'community' and 'participants' will eventually affect the role and characteristics of MUŻA's community curation, based on the museum's democratic process of empowering the community.

MUŻA's plans to achieve community curation involve non-formal educational programmes, addressing the continuously evolving narrative of the collection and the philosophy guiding the interpretation approach, which would be developed together with the community (Debono, 2014). In view of this, Grech (2015) argues that if MUŻA's ambitious new museology is to be put into practice, it should offer a critical and yet inclusive space for public conversations about art and its meaning, across a range of different communities that make up Maltese society.

According to Debono (2014), the ever-increasing engagement between the museum collection and the public viewers requires the primary role of MUŻA's curators to be that of mediator between the art history narratives of the museum collection and the community's accepted narratives. In view of this, apart from academia and art history qualifications, MUŻA's curatorial role will additionally require the acquisition and practice of negotiation skills, diplomacy and public interface. Hence, MUŻA's curators will be responsible for curating a public space that facilitates participation by communities which are open and inclusive so that narratives are constantly scripted and reviewed (Debono, 2014). Meanwhile, Grech (2015) insists that rather than theoretical statements about MUŻA's community curation, a critical approach is required which articulates the roles of the museum staff in achieving the envisioned aims and describes the actual participation of every interested individual involved. Grech remarks that such details are required in MUŻA's proposals to realise the inclusion of different voices and to carry out evaluations of the museum's efforts, successes and failures in targeting the practical strategies for community curation.

Grech (2015) considers that the root of the problem in Debono's essay is the lack of the 'hows and whys' of his well-intentioned efforts to theoretically place MUŻA in contemporary museological practice. Grech reveals that Debono's essay represents ideas about new museology. This is basically a method for museum curation and direction that has been followed by progressive museums

worldwide for more than thirty years. For this reason, Grech criticises Debono's essay as theoretical, as it does not provide much practical strategies or references to actual museum site-visits in order to suggest how the proposed intentions of MUŻA's new typology would be realised. Furthermore, Grech recommends that even a brief analysis of the experience in new museological methods used in museums of countries like Australia, Canada and the US, would have provided enough material for the consideration of MUŻA's development and implementation of new museology strategies (Grech, 2015). To this I ask: can an analysis based on the museums in large countries be practical for an art museum in a small island context?

In his critique essay, Grech (2015) advocates that MUŻA's pedagogical process of 'community curation' would involve challenging and extending the community's meaning-making about themes and ideas, rather than simply exposing people to what they already know. However, he insists that for MUŻA to successfully direct such a pedagogical process, it has to acknowledge the needs, limits, history and other qualities of the communities it strives to target. Such acknowledgement recalls the previously mentioned notion of cultural capital described by Bourdieu.

2.19.2 Potential Communities

In the light of the absence of details in Debono's description of 'the community' concept, Grech proposes potential communities that could be attracted and targeted by MUŻA. He also suggests questions about the nature of different communities and appeals for MUŻA's strategies to encourage the participation of these communities. As the first community, since MUŻA is located in Valletta, Grech (2015) proposed that the museum attracts Valletta residents to understand their expectations of the national art museum. Next, he proposes that MUŻA targets school students (and their teachers) studying art, culture, society, and history and to explore the level of knowledge and the experience of art appreciation and social issues they bring along. This proposal is nothing new. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, school students have already been a target audience by Heritage Malta and the NMFA through the provision of worksheets and museum tours.

As a third proposed community, Grech raises the issues of the way MUŻA plans to tackle members of the wider Maltese community involved in art and culture. Would Maltese migrants be included or will this community only be limited to Malta's physical geography? Grech asks about MUŻA's ways of assessing and addressing this community's several levels of art appreciation, understanding and awareness. As a fourth community, Grech advises MUŻA to serve the artists, including those from the past as well as contemporary ones. He raises an issue about MUŻA's intentions in dealing with contemporary artists to address their particular needs. Another issue raised in Grech's critique concerns his fifth proposed community, namely minority groups such as the expatriate ethnic communities living in Malta, who often have very sophisticated understanding and appreciation of art acquired from the art practices in other countries.

Grech mentions the issue of MUŻA's provision of 'community outreach', by proposing the sixth community comprising those people who currently are not interested in art. He asks whether MUŻA will address the need to overcome this community's lack of interest and education in art. When referring to this phenomenon, Grech seems to indicate that communities involved in museums are expected to be interested and educated in art. This goes against the philosophy of the "participatory museum model, to which MUŻA aspires" (Debono, 2017:6). In fact, the aim of MUŻA's provision of community outreach is to reach out to people from all walks of life, encouraging them to find their own ways of engaging with art. The project 'Naqsam il-MUŻA', mentioned earlier, already attempts to satisfy this objective (MUŻA, 2017).

Another concern in Grech's critical essay concerns the decision-making processes by which MUŻA would identify and direct its historical art practices and whether there will also be decisions taken about displaying difficult and contemporary works, despite the fact they may be less appreciated by Maltese society. He then raises the issue of power-relations, asking about the communities which will be invited to participate in such decision-making and whether such communities will involve curators, art historians, managers and accountants. Grech asks whether these communities will be open to outdated or unrecognised types of artistic practice and which community will have the opportunity to influence MUŻA's decision-making.

The final community proposed by Grech focuses on tourists, with all their diversities, considering the fact that foreigners will be an important segment and probably the main contributors to MUŻA's funds. He asks about strategies for the community of tourists to be involved in MUŻA's discussions so that they could contribute to bring about change to the museum's imagined sense of community and to eventually update MUŻA's curators and the policies they adopt regarding the museum collections. Grech concludes that despite being philosophically significant, Debono's essay fails to address a number of important questions and suggestions, as summarised above, and which require considerable diligence on the part of MUŻA if its promise of 'community curation' is to be genuinely realised.

2.20 Young adults and Museums' Digital Realm

Sommer's (2018) survey indicates that the majority of young adults (72%) rely on the internet and social media to learn about community events and programmes. With the rise of digital technologies as the dominant means of communication, museums can reach out through both physical and digital realms (Sommers, 2018). Wyrick (2014) explains that the digital realm provides a museum participation model of its own, since it leads to the possibility that young adults use their ability to engage in an ongoing process of self-directed and self-selected inquiry, where they actively create, own their ideas and share online. This self-directed learning leads to the youths' own knowledge construction, naturally stimulated through an efficient blend of art and digital technology, such as the experience provided at the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), USA. The CMA reinstalled and reinterpreted all its permanent collection in new and refurbished gallery spaces, in order to provide a self-directed learning experience through a highly innovative blend of art, technology and design (Wyrick, 2014).

At the CMA, active participation is encouraged, and connections with the art collection are provided through exploration and creativity. For instance, multi-touch screens embedded in the gallery space invite close examination, encouraging interpretation and digital investigation of the displayed artworks. Through such interactive technological tools, each artwork can be interpreted using storytelling hotspots with opportunities to explore artworks visually through magnification and rotation, and to discover their original context and location. Each interface has a series of "games" inviting visitors to engage with the displayed artworks through experiences and questions like: What is it, and what do you see? How is it made? Why was it made? Furthermore, to deepen

their experience visitors may also download ‘ArtLens’ for free — CMA’s new iPad App. This is designed for three visitor behaviours (Alexander et al., 2013):

1. The ‘Near You Now’ function allows visitors to browse and find digital interpretation of works of art they like based on the nearest distance. Rather than committing to a long, linear narrative, the content is designed in short segments of audio and video, allowing visitors to choose what they want.
2. The ‘Tours’ function offers visitors the option to have a more structured experience in the galleries, taking a tour curated according to their available time, either by walking through the galleries with CMA’s director or by following a thematic approach.
3. The ‘Scan’ function uses image recognition to allow visitors to scan two-dimensional art objects to prompt texts or videos to pop up on the iPad screen, which encourages visitors to explore the app more deeply in order to learn more about a work of art.

The CMA’s technology approach transforms the visitor experience to construct knowledge of the collection, opening new perspectives on visual arts and moving away from the conventional narratives, based on art history, as the only portal into the collection (Alexander et al., 2013). With the inclusion of digital technology, models of museum participation have taken new direction. Museums increasingly embrace the digital world due to their potential to take museum conversations beyond the museum, opening up visitor participation beyond the exchanges of interactive and hands-on technologies (Black, 2010). Model examples of these approaches to media are the creation and contribution of content to online exhibitions, co-curating exhibitions on ‘YouTube’ and the building of community relationships based on blogs, or collection management on ‘Flickr’ (Russo et al., 2008).

In 2007, the involvement of young adults in curation and production of art-interpretations was launched in the ‘U.L.K’. (Danish abbreviation for Young Peoples Laboratories for Art) at the Danish national gallery, Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK). In 2010, such involvement was also launched in the Unge Kunstnere Astrup Fearnley (UKAF) at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of

Modern Art in Norway. In both the Danish and Norwegian projects, young ‘art pilots’ took part by writing art blogs and producing online resources for their peers. Studies of the ‘U.L.K’ project indicate that the community-based approach with young adults was successful in bringing their voices and their views on art history into the museum (Nielsen and Nygaard 2008).

2.21 Knowledge Exchange

Community-based museum education — both that occurring inside the museum walls as well as that which takes place in outreach activities — can be considered as a way to expand opportunities for knowledge and power sharing, and to increase the relevance of museums to public communities. The process of such museum practice does not automatically shift knowledge and power-sharing to the community, but requires solutions to practical as well as theoretical problems. Reflection about the knowledge and power sharing within the context of museum education influences thinking about the way museums function as social institutions. Here, the reference to knowledge is not about the formal content knowledge deriving from the museum collection, but the physical aspects of the making of the exhibition and the museum’s attempts to understand communities. Thus, reflections about the exchange of knowledge within museum programmes, leads to the understanding of the complex relationship which exists between museums and their communities (Watson, 2007).

When planning museum educational programmes for communities, Fig.2, a diagram based on educational theories (Hein, 2001), may serve as reference for the reflection on the knowledge exchange power issue. Educational theories can be divided in two extremes and classified under one of four headings indicating learning theories and theories of knowledge — epistemologies. On the left, the diagram demonstrates that whenever the learner is considered passive, the pedagogical approach aims at organising the subject matter and presenting its content to be absorbed by the visitor. On the right, when the visitor is considered to have an active mind, a concern for the particular ‘mind’ of the learner is required. Thus, one has to take into account all possible factors which may influence learning such as; development, culture, previous knowledge, and the current environment.

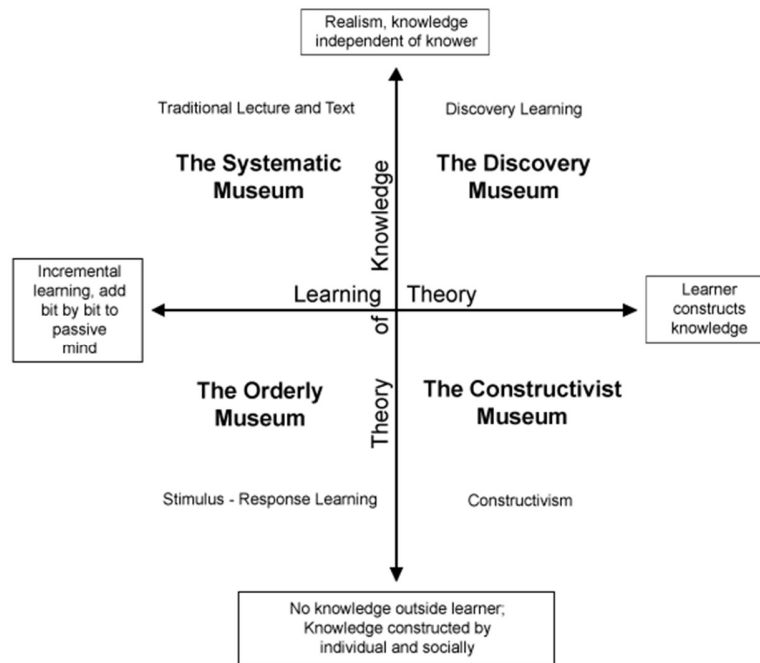


Fig.2 Theories of Education (Hein, 2001:10)

2.22 Transferable Skills in Museums

At a time of economic, environmental, and social challenges, to achieve their full potential young adults need to learn the use and application of skills to adapt to changing situations — a process called ‘transfer’ in cognitive psychology (National Research Council, 2012:15). Thus, another target of current museum education can involve supporting young adults’ development of transferable skills such as creative and critical thinking, problem solving and collaborative skills.

Although creative thinking and critical thinking are different capacities, they are inter-related as they work together. Creative thinking requires critical thinking to choose between the results during a creative process and take decisions on its results, e.g. evaluating, selecting and developing new ideas. On the other hand, critical thinking needs creative thinking for problem-solving or for proposing arguments while sharing alternative explanations and thinking outside the box (Tenreiro-Vieira and Vieira, 2000). Hence, through acquiring these cognitive and social skills, young adults would be able to construct knowledge through negotiation and assigning meanings from different

points of views within the museum context. This recalls Hooper-Greenhill's (2007b) notion of interpretative communities where reinterpretation of museum objects encourages new narratives.

Museum educators can inspire and prompt thinking skills through exploring, using an inquiry-based approach. Although this approach has often been used in formal settings, it is increasingly being applied in museum education, allowing visitors to create their own conclusions based on their discoveries, thus encouraging transferable skills related to collaborative tasks, critical thinking and communication (Hepworth and Walton, 2009). Research shows that an inquiry-based approach, when used in museum educational programmes, can assist students with their understanding of national identities (Biggs, 2011). In their study, Kreuzer and Dreesmann (2016) found that learners attain satisfaction when the approach involves inquiry and activity-based learning tasks related to the collection.

In view of constructivist education theory, active learners discover knowledge by observing, thinking and deciding in various ways when they see the same object displayed in a museum (Cooperstein and Kocevac-Widinger, 2004). An educator that values only the 'right' answers inhibits creative and critical thinking skills. An educator that acts as a facilitator, rather than an expert, avoids judging the feedback of participants and accepts different answers, thus promoting the production of critical and creative thinking (Gartenhaus, 1997). Hence, museum professionals who employ a constructivist education approach by encouraging participants to think divergently, ask questions, interpret, make decisions and problem-solve, will contribute towards turning museums into spaces with the potential of providing young adults' practice of transferable skills.

My projects' emphasis was neither on a pre-structured art content knowledge nor on the attainment of transferrable skills. It was interesting to note that most participants lacked awareness that they already owned transferable skills such as 'creative thinking'. During Project 1's final interviews, a participant declared: "I learned... I discovered I have several abilities" (P3). Eventually, observing the participants' practice (not necessarily the attainment) of transferable skills, served to explore the nature and impact of educational strategies. The documented self-evaluations and the final interview replies indicate that through their participation in the workshops the participants felt that they had acquired certain abilities which will be useful in life. For instance, during Project 3, P4

admitted: “I learned how to think deeper, how to listen fully to others, how to express myself clearly... all these skills are important for life”.

2.23 Conclusion

The considerations raised in this Literature Review provided justification to plan empirical research through projects which explore and identify holistic educational strategies targeting three different young adults’ communities in the context of the local art museum. The four targets below include points of departure for the three projects.

2.23.1 Addressing Young Adults’ Interests and Needs:

- To keep in mind characteristics, challenges and topics of interests for young adults in Malta, as reviewed in the Maltese study (Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, 2012) and in the Maltese Draft National Youth Policy Framework (2015-2020).
- To interview the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and keep updated with the latest youth trends and outreach methods.
- To consider the general aspects related to young adults obtained from literature review and from the CEO interview only as a basis to explore and get familiar with the multicultural identities of the participants of the three projects.
- To establish a good relationship with young adult participants of the three different projects. This can be done by clarifying that my role, besides that of guiding the project activities, is also that of a learner through knowledge exchange with them. Emphasis is placed on the role of the participants as knowledge creators throughout the project, and on the learning process which is shaped according to their interests and learning needs.

2.23.2 Cultivating Young Adults’ Culture of Learning Process:

- To address the self-development of young adults by encouraging their recognition of positive identities, and their commitment to reflect on observations while collaborating with the

projects' decision making. This also entails being open to the participants' multiple viewpoints.

- To use an inquiry-based approach to stimulate creative and critical thinking skills through eliciting the participants' own meaning-making, while applying Larson and Rusk's (2011) principles for cultivating intrinsic motivation where necessary.
- To avoid 'adulthood', by challenging the participants with problem-solving tasks, encouraging their active role in leading their own learning and collaborate with others to reflect on observations, experiences and ideas and eventually construct meaningful museum learning experiences.

2.23.3 Structuring and Evaluating the Research Projects:

- To consider the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) when structuring and evaluating the projects' workshops, through an appropriate set of criteria which reflect the impact left on the participants.
- To explore ways in which to assess the museum's impact on transferable skills.
- To investigate ways through which the digital realm can enable participants to engage in meaningful interactions with the museum collection.

2.23.4 Keeping up-to-date:

- To monitor the progress of the NMFA/ MUŻA curatorial agenda, through upcoming journals, articles and other publications concerning MUŻA.
- To stay updated with MUŻA's plans for museum educational outreach programmes by interviewing the senior curator.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological issues involved in carrying out the research design, supporting my study's purpose to explore ways through which a national art museum may serve as an educational resource for young adults. This is set by focusing on the design and analysis of three research projects held with young adults in connection with the national art museum collection in Malta (NMFA, at the time of the projects).

The first section of this chapter focuses on the challenges of the main research questions, followed by an explanation of the three projects, which involve multiple research methods. The next section is a description of the research design of my study, identified as [Action Research \(AR\)](#) methodology, embedded within a Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) approach as its conceptual framework. Fig.3.1 indicates the structure of the research methodology design. Another section establishes the researcher's position which entails a dual role of educator and researcher, followed by an explanation of the research tools. This explanation is relevant to both data collection and analysis. The final part of this chapter focuses on aspects of qualitative data analysis, thus setting the scene for the Discussion of Findings.

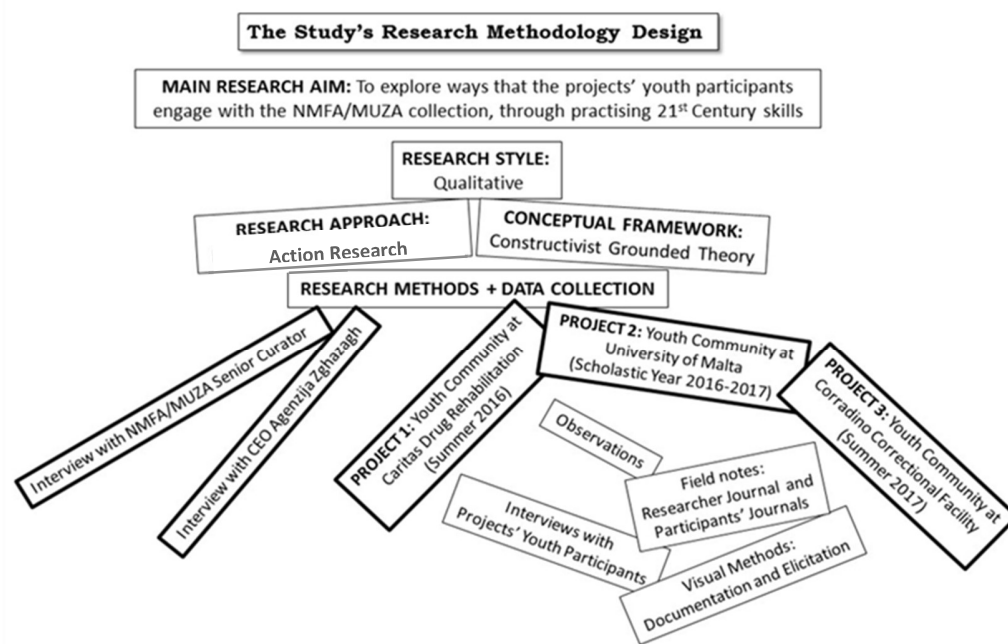


Fig. 3.1 The Research Methodology Design

3.2 The Research Questions

The questions raised through my study address the way the national art museum can reach out to the interests of today's young adults. The main research questions are as follows:

1. In what ways can a national art museum serve as an educational resource that embraces the interests of young adults today?
2. What kind of public service can the staff at an art museum provide for community outreach?
3. In what ways will the new MUZA philosophy address these challenges?

The first research question aims at generating findings focusing on the participants' holistic learning experience via the national art museum collection. The second research question aims at shedding light on methods which museum professionals could use to provide public outreach for

young adult communities. The third research question explores MUŻA's new values in addressing community outreach for young adults.

3.3 Challenges

One of the challenges of the research stemmed from the fact that there were no museum educational programmes providing community outreach in Malta. Therefore, the research data was collected solely from research projects and there was no opportunity to compare and evaluate with earlier local museum outreach programmes. Meanwhile, the development of the projects from scratch provided my research participants with a constructive role in decision-making, shaping and evaluation of the projects.

Other challenges were the early unexpected closure of the NMFA and the fact that contemporary works from the reserved collection had already been stored at the time when the projects started. During the two years transition to MUŻA my projects relied on the use of digital references to the NMFA collection rather than the actual museum premises and collection. Young adults who felt unfamiliar with the notions of art and museums, were reluctant to participate. Moreover, with respect to ethical procedures, the project's application and consent form included the word 'research'. This deterred young adults who misinterpreted the idea, thinking they would be used for a scientific experiment.

3.4 Research Projects

The three research projects proposed for my study, of which contexts are explained further in Appendix 3.1, were shaped together with the young adult participants. The projects' workshops were designed to provide minds-on and hands-on learning experiences including visual art problem-solving tasks encouraging the direct and virtual engagement with the collection of the NMFA. Primarily, the projects aimed to address the needs of young adults in general including their need to be actively listened to, their sense of belonging and relating by connecting to others and their need to make meaning out of life. By focusing on their needs as a point of departure, throughout the projects, the participants identified and communicated their multiple interests and learning needs.

Through being involved in the problem-solving task of theme development, the participants experienced a holistic learning process while engaging with the NMFA collection. They reflected on their own learning and interacted with each other to challenge and construct meanings of art and life. This led them to practise transferable skills such as critical and creative thinking, flexible problem solving and collaborative skills. These skills are not only required for the projects' learning experience but also for life.

3.5 Research Methods

Since my study involved a participatory approach, the three projects called for multiple research methods which eventually led to sources of multi-level data collection. Stemming from my study's commitment to the development of community outreach strategies grounded in participatory processes, the data collection depended on the collaboration, action and reflection exchanged between the participants and myself as the researcher. Hence, the development of educational strategies complements the development of the study, gathered from multiple sources of data provided by a combination of research tools. These tools included: participant observations; interviews with participants before and after the projects; visual elicitation and documentation; art journals kept by the participants including mind-mapping and self-evaluations, and finally my own research journal including field notes.

Fig.3.2a; 3.2b; 3.2c illustrate the process followed to establish the research methods of each project. Apart from the interviews carried out with the projects' participants, an in-depth interview was carried out with the CEO of local youth agency *Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (AŻ)* and another with the NMFA/MUŻA Senior Curator. The research tools are explained later in the chapter.

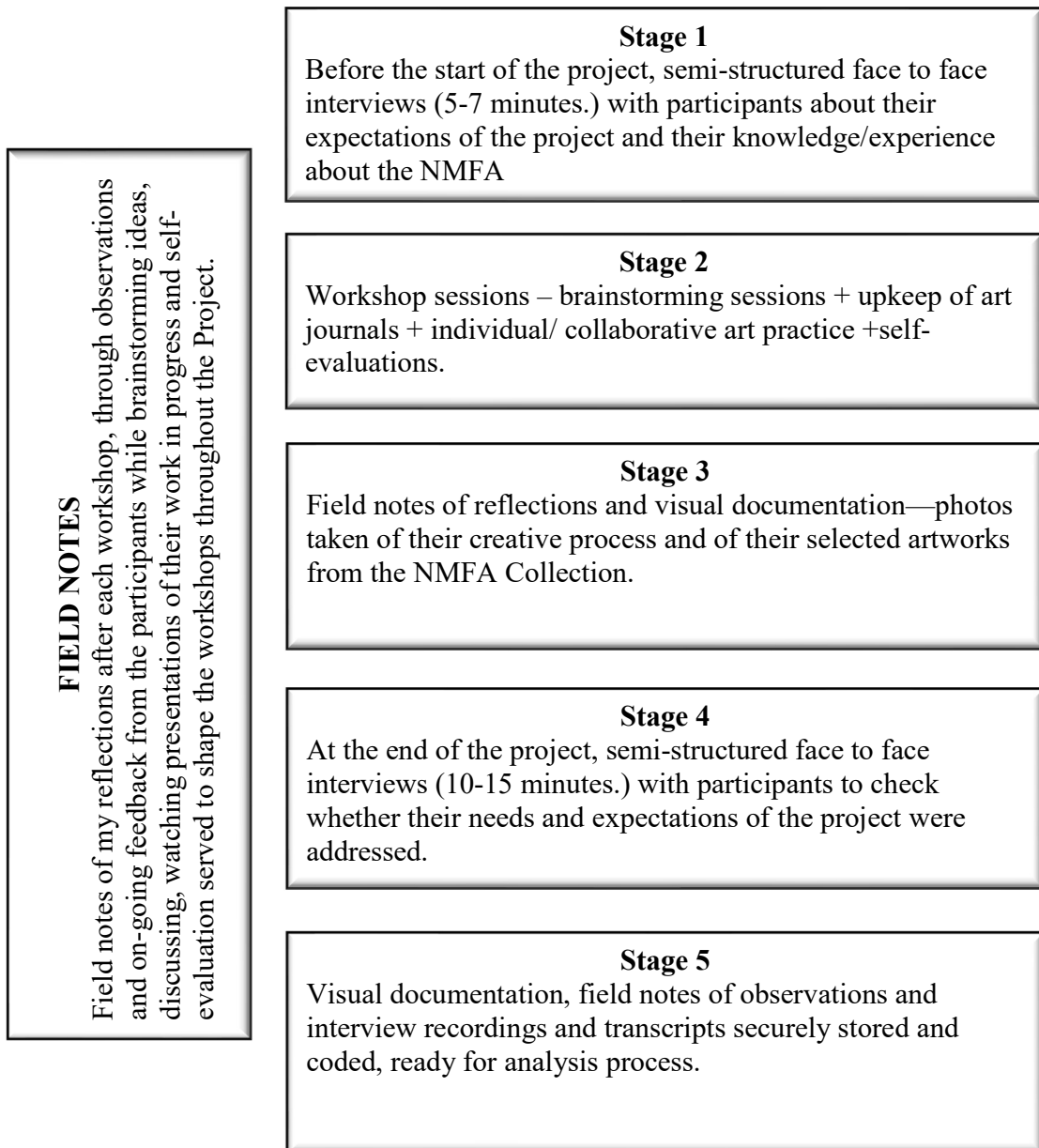


Fig.3.2a The Research Method Process: PROJECT 1 with a Young Adults’ Community-residents at CARITAS, San Blas Drug Rehabilitation, Malta.

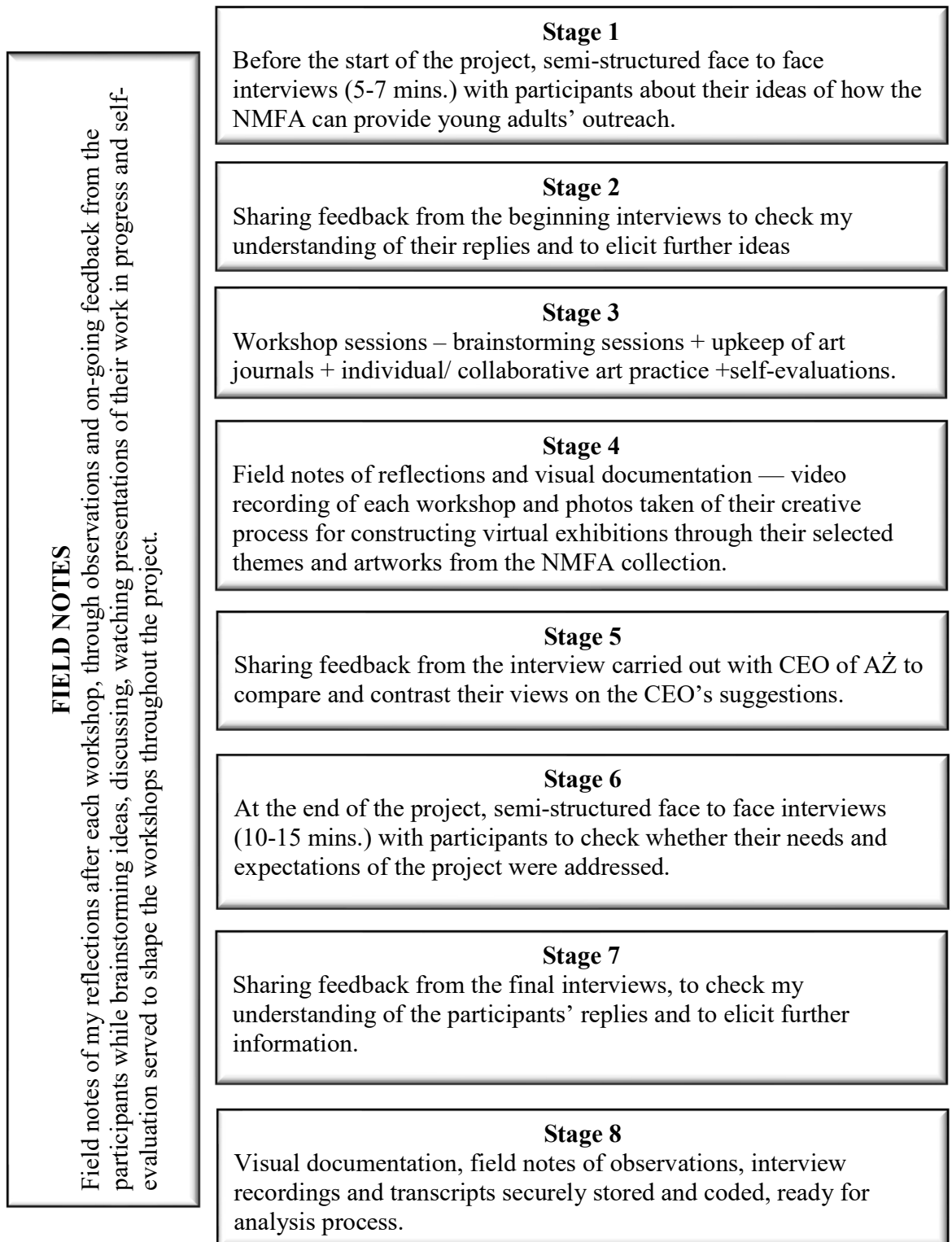


Fig.3.2b The Research Method Process: PROJECT 2 with a young adults' community - 4th Year B.Ed. Art students at University of Malta.

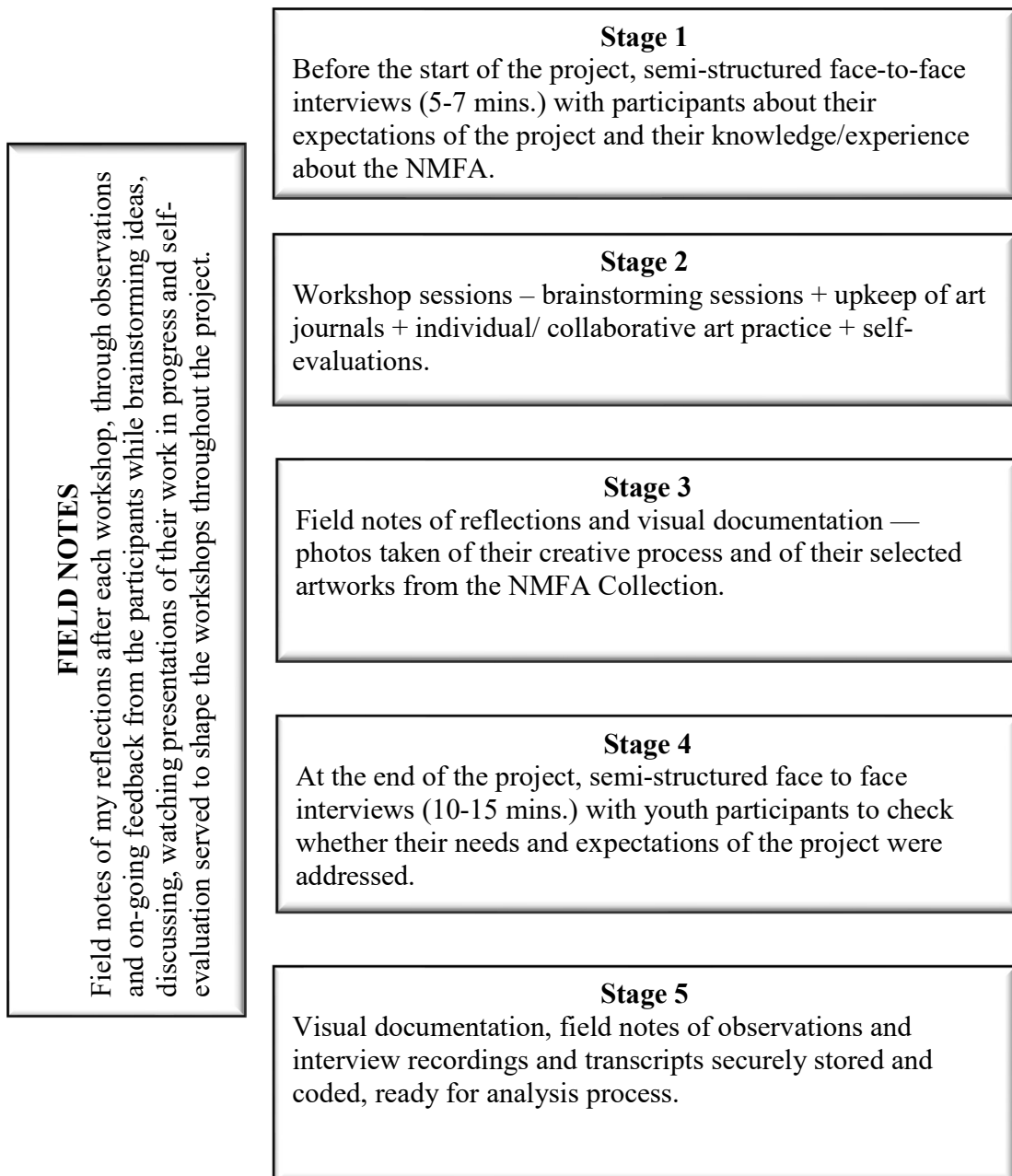


Fig.3.2c The Research Method Process: PROJECT 3 with a young adults' community of inmates at Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF), Malta.

3.6 Research Design

Bearing in mind that “to ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality” (Mills et al., 2006:1) my study aimed for a research design that fits with my dual position as a researcher and educator. In engaging with multiple cultural contexts and situations while working with three different communities, I intended to explore the participants’ multiple attitudes and interests when they interact with the national art museum collection.

3.6.1 Participatory Approach

Considering that the research projects aimed at “generating knowledge and producing action” (Park, 1999:142), together with young adult communities who benefitted from the research by participating in its process, my study called for a participatory approach. Focusing on collaboration, the researcher’s locus of control shifted to involve participants as co-researchers (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Meanwhile, the participatory research approach has been criticised for being ambiguous in its research objectives, and in the relationship between the researcher and the participants. It has also been criticised for lacking a clear method of data collection and in determining what, when and who decides the research outcomes (Brown, 2005). Hence, further participatory methodologies were explored. These are explained in the next sections.

3.6.2 Action Research Approach

Action Research (AR) was considered an appropriate methodology for my study as it embraces a participatory learning process to create social change for and with communities (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). AR is both a call and a challenge to cultivate with others the possibilities for bringing a new world into being (Mertler, 2019). Aware that my intervention with others cannot change the world, my research, through AR, provided me with an opportunity to plant a seed of change. Inspired by the concept of the butterfly effect (Lorenz, 1972), I also kept in mind that such efforts do not change everything at once.

Primarily my study aimed at collaborating with young adults coming from different social backgrounds to understand their ways of making meaning out of life with reference to MUŻA collection. My study was not intended to understand and develop solutions to injustices that the projects' participants were facing. The underlying concept of my study is that ordinary people can make meaning and transform their own lives through inquiry, education and action. This concept is open to the possibility of gradual change in the personal and/or social dimensions of the participants' lives. The projects did not aim at providing art therapy, being "liberating processes in themselves" (Gutierrez, 2016:61) as priority was given to the community's knowledge agenda, interests and needs. Nevertheless the projects could still have led to transformations.

AR process interrupts usual practices by exploring and inspiring innovative options together with key stakeholders. With respect to the diversity in context and aims, there is no "one size fits all" in action research (Metler, 2019). Despite their diversity, the three projects were based on the same principles to inform their action research. These principles included the active involvement of participants in the design and ongoing development of museum learning strategies which emerged through dialogue, action, and reflection.

Rather than expecting results at the end of the projects, my investigation has undergone modification through what Kindon et al. (2007) describes as an ongoing process cycle of planning, action and evaluation. Keeping the planned workshop activities flexible, the learning strategies were generated in response to the participants' interests and needs. Thus, the participants were co-creators expressing and documenting their own viewpoints to generate creative potentials in collaboration with each other and with me as the researcher/educator. In line with Kolb's definition of experiential learning as the transformation of experience through reflection and conceptualization (1984), the research for my study was grounded in the participants' action. This involved my intervention in nurturing relationships enabling them to engage in essential learning challenges inherent in life (Claxton, 2002) through active experimentation while interacting with the museum collection and each other. This "relationship building among stakeholders is central in bringing the results for the stakeholders" (Mertler, 2019:10).

Depending on the nature of the participants' learning needs, the strategies were either shaped up immediately or in the subsequent workshops. For instance, during Project 1, my plan was to apply mind maps to explore themes. When participants appeared to be unfamiliar with mind-mapping, I facilitated its introduction by applying strategies such as eliciting, demonstrating and practising the creation of the mind map. Once familiar, the participants shared their use of mind maps for their life situations which helped them clarify their thoughts. On another occasion when the participants showed unfamiliarity with using common software to create a virtual exhibition (in Project 2), I took note and facilitated their learning in the following workshop. Eventually, with a simple demonstration using common software, the participants ventured into experimenting and co-exploring more sophisticated software to create their virtual exhibitions. Hence, exploring the educational strategies was based on flexible planning. These strategies required evaluation throughout the projects, with appropriate action taken according to the learning needs and interests of participants.

3.6.3 Limitations of an Action Research Approach

Besides its already mentioned strengths, AR has its flaws. Its disadvantages include: subjectivity, vulnerability to pressure and time consumption. Due to a tendency for a researcher to be over-involved, personal biases may come into play in the analysis of findings. Thus, AR results risk being burdened with subjectivity (Kock, 2004). I was aware of this drawback and did my best to compare my own field notes with the participants' journals and interview replies to reduce personal biases. Another drawback in adopting an AR approach is that researchers are often subordinates in an organizational setting. Power relations and distinctions may complicate behaviours, making researchers feel pressured to change the findings to suit organizational objectives (Noffke and Somekh, 2005). In my case I did not work at the national art museum or in any organization involved in my projects. Thus, I did not feel pressured to adapt my findings to suit them. The third disadvantage of AR is time consumption (Walter, 2009). Aware that effective learning takes time, my research not only depended on the cyclical process aiming at understanding and taking action, but it also depended on participants' actions – to trust each other and to observe practice, to consider changes, try new approaches, document and reflect.

At the start of my empirical research, I was still uncertain of which methodology would be most suitable for my study. The AR cycles of constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action (Coghlan and Brannick 2014), allowed me to begin generating data throughout Project 1. The main research question gradually changed from an educator's perspective to the learners' point of view, so the AR fluid approach added to time consumption. The redefinition of the research question made the entire research process exhaustive and complex. As my understanding of the empirical research developed through readings and reflections, as well as experiencing Project 1, I was in a better position to explore further methodologies which could be combined with AR.

3.6.4 Grounded Theory for Data Collection and Analysis

Initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and primarily used for qualitative research, Grounded Theory (GT) develops theory from empirical data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Given that the basic premise of my study is that theory and practice nourish each other, GT seemed to provide the main analytical strategy, as grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006:2). It is considered to be an appropriate method for emergent research areas, due to its support in developing concepts grounded in data (Allan, 2007). Consequently, it fit well into the research methods of my study which are similarly grounded in empirical data through parallel data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Furthermore, GT is embedded in phenomenology, by focusing on the ways in which individuals interpret their lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006). This is not only the all-embracing epistemology within which my study is established but also the underlying philosophy of the three research projects. It aligns with theories of Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs), based on the concept that reality is constructed through human activity (RCMG, 2003). The GLOs methods (discussed later) recognise that learning is a social process carried out by individuals engaged in social activities, most often in a physical setting, where knowledge is culturally and socially constructed. This constructed knowledge develops over time, moreover it shapes, and is also shaped by, the learners' previous knowledge (RCMG, 2003). Similar to GLOs theories, a GT analysis emerges over time

through a continuous constructive process of inquiry and investigation, evaluation, transformation and improved learning.

3.6.5 Limitations of Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) classical GT did not suggest rules for data collection procedures (Clarke, 2014). Meanwhile, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) detailed framework of data analysis, emphasised constant validation and a combination of induction and deduction (Heath and Cowley, 2004), and also demanded a step-by-step procedure for an effective GT (Bryant, 2009). According to Charmaz (2013), due to its objectivist foundations, GT promotes the idea of an external reality that a researcher in his/her detached role can discover and report about. Contrastingly, my study's approach considers the participants as co-researchers, contributing throughout the projects by means of their own discoveries and through reporting on their own learning strategies in the national art museum. Therefore, as explained later, I explored GT's constructive approach – Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT).

3.6.6 Conceptual Framework for Museum Learning Research

The approach of contemporary museums has shifted towards learning that is relative and constructive in process. The approach is influenced by contextual aspects which may be personal, socio-cultural and physical (Adams et al., 2003). Consequently, as my research approach is based on the contemporary recognition that museum visitors construct their own meaning, it is appropriate to make use of a constructivist conceptual framework model. Epistemologically, constructivism emphasises the subjective inter-relationship between the researcher and the participant, and their co-construction of meaning (Mills et al., 2006).

3.6.7 Constructivist Grounded Theory

In the case of methodologies embedded in a GT approach, the focus of data collection and analysis is on 'what' participants do, 'how' they do it and 'why' they do it. The researcher interacts with the physical setting of the research, with the data and with the participants (Charmaz, 2008). On seeking to collect data and construct theory about issues of importance in peoples' lives, GT is inductive in nature, as the researcher plunges into the research with no preconceived ideas which

need to be validated or invalidated. Issues of importance to participants emerge from the narratives which they bring about while focusing on an area of interest that they have in common with the researcher (Morse, 2001). In view of my study's projects, exploring ways of engaging with the national art museum collection through the participants' own narratives was the area of interest they had in common with me as a researcher.

The data analysis provided by GT, through the constant comparison of analysis of data from different sources, develops into further comparisons. Once translated into categories it provides the necessary grounding for the researchers' final theorisation of the participants' experiences (Mills et al. 2006). However, the validity of the GT approach, due to being a form of naturalistic inquiry, has been criticised by post-modernist critiques, such as Clough (1992). Its strategies have been judged as "epistemologically naïve, voyeuristic and intrusive in the lives of the research participants" (Charmaz, 2008:401). Furthermore, the original intent of GT to develop theory from data has been thoroughly critiqued (e.g. Boychuk Duchscher and Morgan, 2004).

Rejecting a positivistic position, the founding fathers of GT, Strauss and Corbin (1994) believed that the discovery of the truth is enacted rather than emerging from data which represents pre-existing reality. A chapter in their book concerning the relationship of theory to reality and truth, positions them as relativist realists, since they maintain that "theories are embedded 'in history' — in other words historical epochs, eras and moments are to be taken into account in the creation, judgement, revision and reformulation of theories" (Strauss and Corbin, 1994:280). Meanwhile, their work demonstrates a combination of post-positivism and constructivism, advocating the position that a researcher should assume in relation to the participants and the data. They assert that it is impossible for researchers to be completely free of bias.

Throughout the evolution of GT, Strauss and Corbin (1994), recognised the importance of a multiplicity of perspectives and truths. This has "extended and emphasised the range of theoretically sensitising concepts that must be attended to in the analysis of human action/interaction" (MacDonald, 2001:137). It allows an analysis of data and a reconstruction of theory that is more reflective of the context in which participants are situated. Strauss and Corbin

explain that since the participants' work is interpretive "interpretations must include the perspectives and voice of the people who we study" (1994:274).

Meanwhile, Kathy Charmaz, the leading protagonist of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) argued that due to their development of analytic questions, hypotheses and methodological applications, Strauss and Corbin in fact assume the existence of an external reality and thus their work does not reflect constructivism (Mills et al., 2006). Charmaz's CGT approach combines the strategies of classic grounded theory within a constructivist paradigm and as a result rejects concepts of objectivity. Since the mid-1990s, Charmaz has promoted the potential and necessary addition of a constructivist approach to grounded theory. Therefore, data does not reflect reality but "rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts" (Charmaz, 2000:524). This approach echoes the way in which my projects encourage the participants' narratives, embracing their personal, social and cultural contexts within their particular communities.

CGT acknowledges participants as active co-constructors of knowledge together with the researcher (Mills et al., 2007; Charmaz, 2014). CGT pragmatist basics encourage the construction of an interpretive representation of the phenomena researched rather than an outsider's report of events (Charmaz, 2014). On the other hand, the emphasis which CGT places on knowledge as a subjective interpretive representation might limit the opportunities to obtain funding for research projects, such as European Commission research funding programmes, which emphasise outstanding societal challenges (Timonen et al. 2018).

In challenging the criticisms of CGT, Charmaz (2006) argues that CGT methods provide constructive ways to proceed with the activity of theorising. Furthermore, the research problem and the researcher's unfolding interests serve to shape the content of theorising, not the method. In the context of my study, since the area of museum education at the NMFA and Heritage Malta have been underdeveloped and under researched, aligned with CGT principles, my study remained open to unanticipated findings while co-constructing, together with the participants, theories of museum learning strategies.

3.7 Shaping the Content of Theorizing

Through a CGT approach, acknowledging the participants as co-constructors, my study included their meaning-makings and their concerns about the national art museum as a public educational service. CGT results in the construction of revealing interpretations of the world of study (Charmaz, 2006). Hence, in applying this approach, the young adults were recognised as experts and active participants in the research process.

My research focused particularly on actions, interactions and social processes of young adult communities participating in the three projects. In so doing, it revealed how particular participants made sense of their situations vis-à-vis the phenomenon under study. Following CGT principles (Charmaz, 2005), my study's data analysis and collection happened simultaneously, each informing and directing the other, while the specific focus of the research developed as the analysis progressed. Throughout an open exchange of ideas and negotiation, researchers also have the opportunity to express and reflect upon their viewpoints (Mills et al., 2006). In my study, ideas were gradually developed from participants' meanings while attention was given to processes conceptually determined from my own interpretations of the data. For this reason, rather than simply describing the collected data, CGT required "conceptualising it in analytical frameworks" (Charmaz 2006:xii).

Following the principles of a CGT approach, the data and analysis of the participants' opinions and understandings were created through shared experiences and relationships. Meanwhile, my research explored ways and reasons through which the participants constructed meanings and actions in relation to the phenomenon under study. This was achieved by being as close to "the inside of experience as possible" (Charmaz 2006:130). At the same time I kept in mind that it was not possible to replicate the participants' experiences.

3.8 Combining Action Research and Grounded Theory

My study applied a combination of AR and CGT, both of which emphasise the researcher's collaborative approach with participants. This section discusses the rationale of combining them through exploring the key features of their roots - Action Research (AR) and Grounded Theory

(GT). The concept behind the combination of AR and GT methodologies has been embraced as a methodological approach by several researchers (Dick, 2003; Simmons and Gregory, 2003; Butterfield, 2009).

Since AR methodology accumulates understanding gradually as the study proceeds (Dick, 2003), this methodology served to constantly shape up the tentative workshop plans and learning outcomes as each project proceeded. Different authors have described the dual cycle of AR as consisting of action and critical reflection (Dick, 2003), where each cycle comprises processes of planning-action and observing-reflecting (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988) or looking-thinking-acting (Stringer, 1999) or experiencing concretely-observing mindfully-generalising-experimenting (Kolb, 1986). Basically, they all define the purpose of AR methodology as involving a flexible action plan so that through observation and critical reflection, the research theory and action process can be refined gradually.

Meanwhile, the purpose of GT methodology has been defined as comprising developing theories that work in practice, as long as they are grounded in information and are relevant to the investigated situations (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Similar to AR, GT also goes through a cycle which requires four activities – data-collection, note taking, coding and memoing – to be carried on at the same time, before theory is written up. Therefore, the theory is built up gradually during the same time while carrying out the study, so that it keeps being refined through action and critical reflection (Dick, 2003).

AR and GT seem different in their approaches, mainly because unlike GT where action tends to be left to participants but then theorised by the researcher alone, AR emphasizes the collaborative action cycle between the researcher and the participants (Dick, 2003). While AR is more efficient in collecting and interpreting, indicating how understanding informs action and theory is constructed through experience, GT is clearer about the way theory is constructed through evidence and constructed theory is grounded in data (Dick, 2007). However, the two methodologies share important similarities. Both are evolving-based practices where their understanding and research processes are formed gradually through an iterative approach. Both methodologies develop a study through a gradual progression of growing theory, shaping the methods being used and refining

them over time. Briefly, one can define the similarity between the two methodologies in their mutual use of the dual-cycle process of action and critical reflection (Dick, 2003).

Whereas Beilin and Boxelaar (2001) claim that in AR, theory sometimes takes second place in searching for action, Dick insists “it would be possible to use grounded theory as a theory development process within an action research cycle” (2003:6). He also suggests that since the two methodologies are complementary, they can be combined in several ways to enhance each other’s approaches. According to Dick (2003), the AR cycle can be embedded in a GT study by replacing the process with coding and memoing, which allows easier participation.

Following these suggestions, I applied meta-methodology for my study where AR cycle initiated the data-collection process through planning, observing and reflecting critically on the action of each project’s workshops. Meanwhile the GT approach served for the interpretation and analysis of data through the practices of coding and memoing. The combination of the two methodologies tapped their advantages, using GT as a theory development process within an AR practice.

3.9 The Researcher Position

Due to the fact that participatory research is emancipatory, a researcher is in a position to adopt whatever methodology is required, so that together with the participants, knowledge is used “to pursue well-being rather than truth” (Cohen et al., 2011:37). The research itself becomes educative, where he/she respects the knowledge that resides in members of the communities. By avoiding to claim expertise or control in the project, the researcher encourages the participants to be active in the research rather than be its passive subjects (Pinto, 2000). My position of an educator researcher was that of a facilitator, guiding the projects’ participants to reflect on art and life through knowledge which they themselves constructed while engaging with the NMFA collection. In encouraging co-constructive learning, an exchange of knowledge with the participants was generated throughout the three projects.

3.10 The Sampling of Participants

My projects were intended to explore communities' learning in the art museum and not to make statistical implications in relation to the wider population. Focusing on small sample-communities, the rationale of my choice in the sampling plan was based on non-probability sampling (Yin, 2003) to understand the phenomenon under study. To explore young adults' learning strategies initially I applied the sampling criterion – where participants meet pre-defined criteria (Mose and Korstjens, 2018). The prominent criterion of the three communities was their age-group — that of being young adults 21-30 years. Due to being “similar in terms of ages”, homogenous purposive sampling was applicable as well (Etikan et al., 2016:3). Purposive sampling was applied for the interviews held with the CEO of AŽ and the MUŽA senior curator. Purposive sampling uses the researcher's judgement on potential participants who can contribute most information concerning the phenomenon under study (Polit and Beck, 2017).

The initial sampling of participants for Project 1 was based on the selection of a group of up to 12 young adult participants through a public call for applications. The selection criteria was based on age (beyond compulsory schooling age), but was applied randomly on a first come first served basis. Despite three months of promoting a free of charge project during Summer 2016 via social media and the national youth agency AŽ, there were only four applicants. Furthermore, these applicants were still not able to commit to attend the workshops mainly due to job-seeking or being already committed to their studies. This led me to search for young adults who formed part of an organization and who would most likely benefit from non-formal learning opportunities. Hence, although initially the participants' sampling was criterion-based on pre-defined criteria (age), convenience sampling was later applied, due to finding communities “that are easily accessible to the researcher” (Etikan et al., 2016:2).

The communities for my study were selected from three different organisations, two of which consisted of vulnerable groups; one from the Caritas Drug Rehabilitation and another from the Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF). Before applying for participation in the project, both communities were informed there was no need to be specialised in art. The aim of carrying out the projects with vulnerable young adult communities was to explore and understand their ways of engaging with the museum collection and the ways through which they benefit from holistic

educational approaches provided by the projects. In contrast, I was aware that the community of University students specialising in art education were already interested in art, museums and education. Their participation involved them in applying their expertise to create engaging approaches for other young adults in the national art museum. Hence, purposive sampling was applied for the selection of this community of participants involving identification of groups of individuals who are knowledgeable on the research phenomenon (Cresswell and Plano, 2011).

Although convenient sampling was commonly used for the three communities, the recruitment of participants still depended on the individuals' decision. For Project 1, Caritas Drug Rehabilitation directors asked their residents aged between 21-30 years whether they would be interested in taking part in an art project instead of their weekly two-hour spiritual sessions. After I carried out an information session with the interested ones, ten of them signed the consent forms confirming their participation. Similarly, for Project 2, a group of seven university students following the 4th Year B.Ed. Art course in 2016 were asked whether they would be interested in participating.

Following an information session on the project's aims and benefits, aligned with their course study, they all confirmed their participation by signing the consent forms. The sampling method for the third project used a call for application for young adults aged between 21-30 years at the male section of the CCF. The young adults at the female section could not be eligible as there were only four aged between 21-30 years and due to CCF regulations I could not recruit mixed genders of participants. Since the applications were oversubscribed, the CCF directors selected around fourteen inmates on a first come first served basis. These attended an information session and the twelve who signed the consent form confirmed their participation.

3.11 Sorting Data

Charmaz contended that the basic CGT guidelines, such as coding, memo-writing, and sampling, can be combined with "21st century methodological assumptions and approaches" (Charmaz 2006:9). Aligned with this, my study applied CGT procedures to code data. These involved open coding, constant comparison, memo writing, and theoretical coding through which it was finally possible to achieve theoretical saturation (Allan, 2007).

3.11.1 Coding

The purpose of coding is conceptualization that is helping to identify the themes worth investigating from the mass of data, generating hypothesis rather than findings (Glaser, 2001). To start the analytic process of the data collected for my study, I sorted data by categorizing all textual data and then coding it. This practice followed Holton's (2010) recommendation stating that in GT, researchers do their own coding as its process constantly encourages conceptual ideas. Moreover, coding is considered "a major feature of qualitative data analysis" (Cohen et al., 2011:559) where the researcher uses codes by labelling a section of text that contains an idea or some information. In dealing with the challenge of data reduction, the coding procedure was applied to categorize the amounts of written data that emerged from interview transcripts, from participants' journals and from my field notes. In order to be truthful to the data, the codes were not created pre-ordinately but resulted from the data responsively. Appendix 3.2 shows a detailed explanation of the coding system applied to sort the textual data of each research project.

Coding felt awkward at first, as I felt uncertain about labelling the codes. According to Holton (2010:25), "at this initial stage of open coding the inexperienced grounded theorist may feel especially challenged and insecure", but rushing to selective coding may result in coding confusion. The different kinds of coding systems, such as *Open Coding*, *Analytic Coding*, *Axial Coding* and *Selective Coding*, all of which operate at different levels are not necessarily applied sequentially (Flick, 2009). Meanwhile, Gibbs (2007) argues that when codes are structured into hierarchies, they are kept in order and considered part of the data analysis itself as the researcher gives meanings to the data.

The Open Coding is a descriptive label which may derive from the researcher's own creation or from the words spoken by participants which catch the essence of the text in question. This is often the earliest initial form of coding carried out by the researcher (Cohen, et. al. 2011). Analytic Coding moves on from a descriptive to an interpretive process which often stems from the research topic (Gibbs, 2007) to explain and analyse the meaning of a group of descriptive codes. Axial Coding categorizes texts by recombining a group of formerly fragmented descriptive codes which are similar in meaning. Axial coding connects related codes to a larger community of common meaning. It works through causal conditions which lead to the phenomena being studied. It takes

into consideration the context of these phenomena and “their intervening conditions and the actions and interactions of, and the consequences for, the actors in situations” (Cohen et al., 2011:562). Similar to axial coding, selective coding also combines categories of text data. However, selective coding integrates categories at a greater level of abstraction in order to form a theory.

Following the analysis of suitability of different kinds of coding systems, the coding of textual data for my study was mainly carried out in two stages – ‘initial’ and ‘focused’ coding, based on the processes described by Charmaz (2006). The following sections outline the processes that were used:

- open coding;
- initial memo writing raised up codes to tentative categories;
- further data collection and focused coding;
- advanced memos refining conceptual categories – adopting certain categories as theoretical concepts.

The open coding of the data as it emerged, and was collected, from each ongoing project allowed me to identify the phenomena found in text and categorise the data. Initially this was done through line-by-line coding, which required exploring text in each transcript of the initial and ending interviews, as well as text of my observations through field notes. The initial line-by-line coding process of the transcribed interviews was carried out manually, which led to comparisons and created links.

The questions guiding the line-by-line open coding process included: *‘what is the main concern being faced by the participants?’*; *‘what category applies for the participants’ experience?’*; *‘what is being referenced by the participants here?’* These questions facilitated the process of going beyond descriptive details to generate relevant codes to the central area under study. Line-by-line coding was a fluid and iterative process, where some ideas which were initially discarded would be revisited at a later stage. The process of re-reading the transcripts’ initial coding provided clarity of findings. This led to sorting and re-sorting of tentative categories and “the beginning conceptualisation of ideas” (Charmaz, 2006:11).

Categories were developed to make sense of what the participants said, and were interpreted in the light of the situation, and in the light of other interviews as well as the emerging theory. According

to Charmaz, “categories explicate ideas, events, or processes in the data” (2006:91). Consistent with GT method, the early categories were considered temporary in order to remain open to further analytic possibilities.

3.11.2 Memo writing

Memos provide the researcher with an analytic tool throughout the GT process which involves an iterative exchange of data collection and analyses (Charmaz, 2006). Additionally, Glaser (1978) considers memo writing as a tool providing freedom to reflect on data, and which eventually generates ideas. In fact, memo writing helped me to explore comparisons and contrasts in the data collection as well as while writing drafts. According to Charmaz (2006), through memo writing, researchers stop and analyse their ideas about their codes and emerging categories. Throughout the process of open coding of my data, early memoing occurred, which allowing me to explore the participants’ responses deeply. Later, while exploring conceptual analysis through theoretical coding, advanced memoing proceeded to higher levels of conceptual abstraction as the coding progressed to theoretical saturation (when main categories developed). At a later stage, the sorting of these memos enabled me to generate theoretical concepts for my study.

3.11.3 Saturation/ Theoretical Sufficiency

Charmaz (2006) defines saturation as the point when new data stops generating new theoretical insights, and no further properties of core theoretical categories are revealed. According to the same author, although sample sizes for some studies may be rather small, the concept of saturation of categories overtakes that of sample sizes. Huge amounts of data collection are unnecessary for a grounded theory study because, if overwhelmed by volumes of data, a researcher risks ignoring the central processes within the area of study (Stern, 2007).

The concept of saturation and whether it is at all attainable has been challenged and replaced by the term ‘theoretical sufficiency’, which indicates the appropriateness of data and the completeness of coding (Dey, 2007). In reality, categories are produced through partial rather than in-depth coding, and categories are suggested, rather than saturated, by the data. Moreover, Dey (2007) argues that coding is not achieved for all data.

3.11.4 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling involves the search for and collection of data which explains and improves the categories in an evolving GT. Unlike initial sampling, where criteria are established before entering the field of study and purposeful sampling, which seeks a representative sample, theoretical sampling starts with data and then investigates these ideas through further empirical enquiry. Based on the theoretical analysis of the data and its conceptual development, theoretical sampling serves to direct researchers, both in establishing categories and in deciding on the further development of the process. The process of theoretical sampling attains increased understanding and strengthens the analytic categories. (Charmaz, 2006).

In my study, theoretical sampling was undertaken by carrying out interviews at the beginning and at the end of each research project. The interviews for Project 2 included follow-up focus-group discussions with the participants. These follow-up discussions not only added further feedback from participants but also served to clarify the data whenever the participants felt that their spontaneous replies during the interview were expressed hurriedly or even misinterpreted. The possibility of organizing follow-up interviews to facilitate theoretical sampling and address conceptual issues is a strategy identified by Charmaz (2006). Theoretical sampling encouraged me to check my emerging concepts against empirical realities, moving to and fro between categories and data. This served to identify gaps in the data and come up with specific questions around perceptions that required further clarification.

3.11.5 Theoretical Sorting

Inter-related processes of sorting, diagramming and integration of memos were required to provide the means for creating and refining theoretical links, the theoretical integration and the comparison of categories. Since the sorting process was not clear-cut, I followed the process suggested by Charmaz (2006:117):

- sort memos by the title of each category;
- compare categories;
- use the categories carefully;

- consider how their order reflects the studied experience;
- think how their order fits the logic of the categories;
- create the best possible balance between the studied experience, the categories and the theoretical statements about them.

3.11.6 Conceptualisation

Charmaz insists that once researchers identify the categories that carried “substantial analytic weight” (2006: 139), these become theoretical concepts. Thus, theorising is achieved by moving beyond the coding stage of analysis and raising the main categories to concepts. Similarly, Bowen claims that “a conceptual framework links concepts and serves as an impetus for the formulation of a theory” (Bowen, 2006: 3). The main conceptual categories are identified from the initial coding categories, by noticing those categories which emerge with high frequency of mention and are connected to many other categories (Charmaz, 2006). In discussing the elevation of categories to concepts, Charmaz argues that while in classic GT, theoretical concepts serve as essential variables, in CGT, concepts serve as “interpretive frames and offer abstract understanding of relationships” (Charmaz, 2006:140).

3.11.7 Theorising

The expected purpose of grounded theory research is theorising, where the emphasis is on understanding the studied experience rather than a simple explanation. Charmaz (2009) argues that the constructivist approach leads to ‘situated knowledge’. This challenges the expectations of creating general abstract theories. Since theorising requires the practical activity of stopping, contemplating and rethinking anew, abstract concepts are developed and relations between them are identified (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

Locke (2007:575) states that “ambiguity and uncertainty are part of the process of theorising” and suggests that in order to theorise data, researchers are to ask: *what is going on here?* The researchers need to move through practices of engagement and interaction with data leading to unexpected processes of theorizing. With reference to my study, the practices of talking and listening to participants, reading the notes on their art journals and observing their actions, provided an

interaction with data. Theorising developed from the process of interpreting and analyzing how and why the participants constructed meanings and actions. Since the understandings have been derived from empirical research co-constructed with the participants, the theory developed is a substantive theory. Unlike formal theories that explain a set of phenomena with a broad applicability across several areas, substantive theories refer to a set of explanations that account for phenomena within a specific and practical area (Charmaz, 2009).

3.12 Documenting Informal Learning

Due to museums' 'free-choice' nature of learning based on visitors' self-directed decisions about the content and their motivations for learning, in the past researchers found it nearly impossible to document evidence of informal learning in museums. Research in free-choice museum learning has been addressed by the Institute of Learning Innovation, through a constructivist-relativist perspective. According to the institute, research is used to generate theory about learning and about the museum experience, whereby theory informs practice that, eventually informs theory again. In addition, for the institute, theories built on research findings are also used to inform and generate new research methods (Falk and Dierking, 2000).

The following set of five research methodology characteristics was developed by the researchers at the institute, aiming at yielding more meaningful and faithful evidence of the depth and complexity of free-choice learning experiences (Adams et al., 2003):

- 1) validity is emphasized over reliability;
- 2) the visitors' agenda is allowed to develop;
- 3) the effect of time on learning is considered;
- 4) situated and contextualized learning is respected;
- 5) a wide range of outcomes is encouraged.

3.12.1 Validity over Reliability

While a balance between reliability and validity should be negotiated as they are both important components (Adams et al., 2003), the research design of my study leans towards validity. The emphasis on validity over reliability stems out of the fact that my study's aim is not after getting the same results from repeated projects as in the case of statistics obtained through surveys and

standardised tests. In adopting a constructivist-relativist perspective, unlike a behaviourist-positive methodology, my study focuses on establishing meaning. Consequently, the emphasis of my study's research is on the component of validity, as it is "the degree to which measures actually measure something meaningful to measure". (Adams et al., 2003:19).

3.12.2 The Participants' Agenda

Throughout my study, rather than imposing the NMFA curators' agenda or my views as researcher, evidence of meaning validity was captured from the multiple perspectives and constructs provided by the projects' participants. In so doing, according to Adams et al. (2003), the visitors' agenda emanating from their prior knowledge, experiences and interests are allowed to develop and are used for the stages of data collection and analysis. Eventually, by applying this methodology throughout my study's projects, validity was provided in the meanings captured about the diversity of ways in which the participants engaged and connected with the NMFA collection.

3.12.3 The Effect of Time on Learning

Unlike historical data collection (Adams et al., 2003), my research was not limited to the investigation of museum learning from visitors/ participants inside the physical and temporal borders of the NMFA building. Since the projects embraced the value of learning as an ongoing process that requires time, the data collection did not simply focus on the participants' immediate exit responses after the museum visit or the virtual viewing of the museum collection. Contrastingly, the assessment of learning documented in my study was constructed in relation to the participants' construction of knowledge and experiences both inside and beyond the NMFA premises throughout the projects' duration. In line with this, Falk and Dierking (2000) insist on the new nature of learning requiring to extend the timeline as a new method for documenting learning. Beyond the NMFA premises, the participants' learning experiences could be understood gradually through their theme development involving discussions, presentations of work in progress, peer criticism, art making and the self-evaluation of their learning process as recorded in their art journals.

3.12.4 Situated and Contextualized Learning

The context of the participants of my study's projects, where workshops were held, consisted of communities' usual environment (Appendix 3.1). Meanwhile, the documented learning outcomes cannot be generalised, neither for the three communities in my study nor for other young adult communities elsewhere. Throughout the three projects, efforts were made to combine data collection with the participants' experiences. Consideration was given to their specific needs as these arose during the workshops, as well as the particular context of each project. This data collection approach involved the participants in an exchange of knowledge with the researcher, built gradually through a relationship of trust. Adams et al. (2003) maintain that putting emphasis of such relationship between the participants and the researcher where they share mutual teaching and learning roles, reduces the participants' feeling of being tested. In the case of my study's projects, the participants were made aware of this knowledge-exchange relationship not only in the introduction session but also throughout the projects. Additionally, the workshops were carried out through social dimensions of learning where the participants exchanged knowledge and experiences among each other through discussions.

3.13 A Wide Range of Outcomes

In the traditional model of subject-based outcomes, the expectations of museum learning were categorised as belonging to cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, assigning particular value to the cognitive learning (Adams et al., 2003). On the other hand, my study's research methods were more open to consider a wide range of outcomes. Rather than limiting my study's learning assessment to evidence of the participants' learning of knowledge concerning the techniques, the historical facts and the styles of the NMFA collection, expecting such learning to inspire them to create art, other learning dimensions were recognised and sought. After all, "museums exist to offer us something that we can't find anywhere else: an encounter, whether with an object or idea" (Kimmelman, 2001, quoted in Xanthoudaki, 2003:21).

Museum experiences may eventually result in the participants' transformation of thoughts, attitudes and behaviours (Adams et al., 2003). Due to the social interactions that occurred while the participants engaged themselves in viewing and discussing socio-cultural aspects transmitted

by the contents of the NMFA collection, the learning outcomes of my projects were driven more by socio-cultural dimensions.

3.14 Educational Research Ethics

Ethical issues emerge in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Bush, 2002). Consequently, for the observations, interviews and visual methods, my study followed key areas of educational research ethics, described in the guidelines for the University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee (UREC, 2015). In addition, Pring's (2002) principles of confidentiality in conducting research were also considered, through opting to keep the names of the participants anonymous. Further details of ethical considerations are given for each research method tool described throughout this chapter.

3.15 Observation

Observation, a fundamental and highly important research tool in all qualitative inquiry, involves a great responsibility. This responsibility includes identifying the big picture by finely observing huge amounts of fast-moving and complex behaviours, while constantly dealing with uncomfortable ethical dilemmas and a fairly unobtrusive role (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006). Unlike questionnaires or interviews, observations do not depend on the respondents' opinions, but entail "explicit evidence through the eyes of the observer..." (Moyle, 2002:172). This research tool requires the taking of 'field notes' which involve an accumulation of non-judgmental, concrete descriptions of events and behaviours in the social contexts chosen for the study.

The observation method considers participants' behaviour as purposeful and expressive of deeper values and beliefs (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006). For my study's projects, a researcher journal was kept up to date with field notes after every workshop session, including descriptions and emerging analytic insights about the participants' behaviour and responses as well as their attitudes towards the project's procedures. In addition, the participants of each project documented observations and evaluations of their learning process in their art journals, which served as participant observations for my study. To remind participants to document observations in their journals, I often prompted with guiding questions such as: *'With reference to your selected theme*

and a work of art, how did you develop your work today?'; 'Make a note about how you collaborated with others to continue to develop your work today'; 'What did you find challenging in today's workshop?' I also often asked the participants to refer to their art journals while presenting and discussing their work-in-progress.

3.15.1 Participant Observation

The participant observation method serves both as an overall approach to inquiry and also for data collection (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006). By adopting an educator-researcher position and being immersed in the research venue to experience reality as the participants do, I was allowed “to be part of the natural setting” (Moyles, 2002:177). This active engagement in monitoring the participants’ creative process, provided the opportunity to ask informal questions about their own beliefs, thus investigating the reasons behind their selection of the NMFA artworks and social themes.

Cohen et al., (2011) maintain that in participant observations, since researchers engage in the very activities they set out to observe, often their cover is so complete that they become simply one of the group. Meanwhile, the same authors argue that the observation of a situation may be too subjective and researchers may deliberately or inadvertently distort information, or be highly selective, as they rely on greater levels of interpretation. While caution was required to ensure correct interpretation of observations on the other hand, “observer bias is difficult to avoid totally” (Moyles, 2002:179) because the observer’s judgement is based on the interpretation of what they choose to see, influenced by their own opinions, culture and values.

To avoid observational bias through selective memory, brief notes were at times kept on my journal during the projects’ workshops. Detailed observation notes were written as soon as a workshop session ended. Consequently, together with interviews and visual methods (photo-documentation and photo elicitation), my field notes and the participants’ art journals served for triangulation purposes. Remarks in our journals acquired through observations, combined with photo-documentation and interviews’ replies, contributed to answer the research questions. For instance, replies from the curator’s and the participants’ interviews coupled up with field notes, contributed

to evidence of how MUZA could serve as an educational resource embracing the interests and needs of contemporary young adults. Furthermore, the interviews with the curators and with the Youth Agency CEO, in combination with field notes and photo-elicitation of the workshops, contributed to suggestions regarding MUZA's provision of young adult community outreach.

3.15.2 The Ethical Aspect of Observation

In art education, researchers often engage actively with their respondents, considered as a “strength in terms of getting on the inside of the observed phenomena” (Hickman, 2008:18). Introducing myself as an educator-researcher coordinating art projects which serve not only for my study but also to engage young adults in life-long learning, provided me with confidential access to carry out research observations. On the other hand, insider researchers are limited by the fact that their presence may influence the participants' attitudes and limit sincere contributions (Bush, 2002). Therefore all participants were assured that throughout the study, “they will have anonymity and confidentiality” (Burgess, 1989, quoted in Coleman and Briggs, 2002:180).

Following the explanation of the purpose of the research projects, the participants showed eagerness to contribute by sharing knowledge, writing observation notes in their journals and discussing their findings and self-evaluations throughout each workshop. Right from the first session, tasks such as ‘*Think about why you chose that particular theme and construct a mind-map*’, encouraged the use of the journal for recording their observations. The outcome of the tasks was then discussed and shared with the rest of the group. Hence, observation notes in their journals resulted from tasks and questions, and reminded the participants of the benefits of reflecting and being aware of what, how and why they are choosing the steps to develop their chosen theme vis-à-vis their chosen NMFA work/s. In so doing, the participants' contribution piloted the researcher's observations of the validity of the educational strategies. These strategies took shape in accordance with the interests and needs of the participants.

3.15.3 Piloting Observations

In order to “achieve inter-observer reliability” (Moyle, 2002:188), piloting of informal observations was undertaken by discussing the journal field-notes with the participants at the end,

and sometimes at the beginning, of the workshops. Throughout the projects, this also served to take note of any important suggestions, as well as to modify my subjective misinterpretations. Moreover, as Moyles recommends, discussing with others is indispensable “to ensure the validity of the outcomes” (2002:179).

3.15.4 Validity and Reliability of Observations

In participant observation-based research, there are two types of validity; internal and external. The internal validity depends on the influence that the observer’s involvement in the group has on the findings, while the external validity depends on the applicability of the research findings to other situations (Cohen, et. al., 2011). To minimise threats to validity and reliability of observations, Denzin (1989, quoted in Cohen, et al., 2011) suggests triangulation of data sources and methodologies. Thus, besides the visual methods which are referred to later on in the chapter, my study combined observations with an interviewing research tool. This provided the opportunity for my study’s findings to be validated through triangulation (Moyles, 2002).

3.16 Interviews

An interview involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. This contrasts with questionnaires, where the respondent is required to write down answers to set questions (Cohen et al., 2011).

The aim of my study is neither to reach a wide audience who answer numerous questions (as in questionnaires), nor to receive a spontaneous reply. My study aims to explore the participants’ learning experience and the meanings they make of that experience. Thus, the interview technique was chosen as one of the research tools, because it provides “a perfectly natural means of communication and enquiry” (Wragg, 2002:143). According to Marshall and Gretchen, “qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing” (2006:101) and when combined with the research tool of observation, interviews allow the researcher to understand the participants’ meanings made out of the activities. While the same authors describe the interviewing tool as a dialogue with an aim, Patton (2002) categorises interviews into (a) the informal/conversational; (b) the general interview guide approach, and (c) the open-ended approach.

3.16.1 Interviews with Participants

Before the start of each project, each participant, after having read the information sheet and signed the consent form, was called for an individual face to face semi-structured interview which lasted approximately 3-5 minutes. These interviews primarily aimed to explore the participants' initial views about the use of the NMFA as an educational resource. At the end of each project, the participants were called again for an individual final face to face semi-structured interview lasting approximately 7-10 minutes. The main purpose of the final interviews was to explore their views on how the national art museum could reach out to young adult communities.

Both in the initial and final interviews, the participants were allowed some time to go through the list of questions either in Maltese or English. During the interviews, the questions were not followed strictly sequentially but adjusted according to the nature of the participants' replies. Before starting the interviews, it was emphasized that the interviews will only serve to inform and shape the study, and that any answers will only be quoted anonymously. Unlike the interviews for the first and the second projects which were audio-recorded and later transcribed, the interviews for the third project could not be audio-recorded, due to the legal policies of CCF. For the first and second projects, the participants were informed that the audio-recorded data gathered in the interviews would be securely stored and retained beyond the term of the study, to be used only in the event of post-doctoral research.

3.16.2 The Interview Questions Design

In order to decide the format of the interview questions, prior thought was given to the three main research questions of the study. The following aspects were extracted from a wide-range of factors enlisted in Cohen et al. (2011:415):

- the purposes of the interviews;
- whether the interviews require facts/opinions or attitudes;
- whether detailed information or depth is sought;
- the interviewees' level of education;
- the kind of relationship developed between the interviewer and the interviewees.

Throughout my study, informal interviews were held, using the non-specific question format, as the intent was not to obtain precise details but to gain a deeper insight. Cohen et al. (2011) maintain that unlike direct, specific questions which require factual answers that may cause tension in interviewees, non-specific questions tend to elicit more honest opinions. One of the purposes of the interviews with participants was to check whether the project met their expectations. Another purpose was to listen to their suggestions concerning ways in which they think the national art museum could reach out to young adult communities.

In view of AR methodology, the projects presented situations where both the participants and I, as the researcher, responded to what emerged. This made the purposes of the interviews quite uncertain and uncategorised. Although semi-structured, the interviews were carried out in a conversational manner, enabling an understanding of why the interviewees said what they said. Although I guided participants to express their views where necessary, at the same time they could structure their replies as they deemed fit. Reminding them that the interviews, just like their participation in the projects, were an exchange of knowledge, and as a researcher I was also learning from them, helped them feel confident that their views are valuable and useful. In line with this approach, the knowledge exchanged between humans through conversations made the interviews neither exclusively subjective nor objective but rather what Cohen et al. term as “intersubjective” (2011:409).

3.16.3 In-depth Interviews

Marshall and Gretchen (2006) mention specialised approaches of generic in-depth interviewing, eg. ethnographic, phenomenological, elite and focus-group. Apart from the interviews carried out with the projects’ participants, in-depth interviews were held separately with the MUŻA senior curator and with the CEO of the local youth agency AŻ on separate occasions. After reading information sheets and signing consent forms, each interview, which lasted around 45-60 minutes, was carried out in a conversational manner. Both officials are used to being publicly interviewed to give their opinions based on their vast experience and expertise in their fields. Nevertheless I emphasised that their interviews will only serve to inform and shape the study. Furthermore, since they are well known in Malta as the MUŻA senior curator and the CEO of the local youth agency

AŽ, I informed them that although they will be quoted anonymously in my study, they can still be recognised.

Since these two interviews focused on particular persons, “selected on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research” (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006:105), the ‘elite’ method of in-depth interviewing was applied. The challenges of this method, including the need to contact busy people operating under demanding time constraints was kept in mind. Besides this, being aware that these persons are accustomed to meeting the public and the press, and tend to turn the interview around to control it, open-ended questions were used to allow them freedom to express their knowledge and expertise.

3.16.4 The Challenges of the Interviewing Research Tool

The most pertinent challenge of the interviewing research tool is the bias of the interviewees, who are conditioned by the ego-defensive process, and which due to the nature of the interview, are generally likely to show such bias. Bush (2002:66) supports this point when he states that “the main potential source of invalidity in interviews is bias”. This bias is difficult to eliminate especially in semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Moreover, Wragg (2002) explains that since interviews may cover sensitive ground and lack privacy, most people tend to avoid giving honest replies.

During the interviews of my study, I was careful to avoid such bias. The fact that my role was that of educator as well as researcher, probably reduced the inherent bias as a relationship of trust was built through the workshops. The participants were aware of the ethical considerations of the research. They believed that their honest replies would help my study, and that their views would serve to create further projects targeting young adults. Although I adopted a semi-structured interview approach, I was ready to deviate from the sequence of the planned questions, following any lead which the interviewees chose to give. Therefore, the list of questions only identified the main points of departure. Meanwhile, the schedule consisted of general topics towards which I wished to steer the interview.

Another challenge of the interview research tool is its dependence on the researcher's interpersonal skills which involve personal interaction, where cooperation between the interviewer and the interviewees would be an asset. Some interviewees may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing what the interviewer hopes to explore. Moreover, the interviewer might lack good listening and personal interaction skills and thus may not properly understand the implications of certain questions. The interviewer may also lack skills in framing the questions and in engaging with the interviewee to elicit more detailed responses (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006). Since interviews seem to be like natural conversations, interviewers may use them insensitively and in an under-theorised manner, somehow trusting implicitly that the interviewee is providing "an unproblematic window on psychological or social realities" (Wengraf, 2001:1).

While carrying out the interviews for my study, I could notice the difference in the communication between the first and the final interviews with project participants. The initial interviews, held prior to the start of the project, served as a sort of ice-breaker. The relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants was still not built up at that time. The feeling of awkwardness between the interviewees and myself as the interviewer could have hindered the disclosure of honest information.

During the first interviews, due to what might have been their fear of the unknown, I noticed that some participants stammered when replying. Some asked me to repeat the question several times to make sure they have understood it. Although it was not my first experience conducting research interviews, the context of each project made a difference to the way I applied my questioning skills to frame questions and engaging conversationally to guide the participants. For instance, given that Project 1 involved interviews with a group of drug-rehab males under medication, I was more careful to avoid stressing them out than I was with the University students who participated in Project 2. On the other hand, aware that the University students in Project 2 were likely to interpret interview questions as a test of their knowledge, I constantly reminded them that the interview replies were anonymous and that the responses would be used only for the purpose of the study.

Due to the relationship of trust built throughout the workshops, the participants of each project were more at ease during the final interviews and this led to better communication. After having

participated in the workshops where they experienced intriguing discussions emerging from self-evaluations, the participants trusted that I was in search of the meaning-making related to their learning experiences and not after their accumulation of knowledge content.

An additional challenge of the research tool of the interviews is that its data-analysis is time-consuming due to the potentially large volumes of data that can be generated (Marshall and Gretchen, 2006). Cohen et al. (2011) claim that since the interview method involves a social encounter, rather than simply a data collection tool, the transcription of the interviews' recorded data may lead to massive data loss and distortion. The transcription is formed by translating from an oral interpersonal system to the written language system, where the researcher cannot tell everything that took place in the interview. Therefore, there can be no single 'correct' transcription, and the challenge is "whether, to what extent and how a transcription is useful for a research" (Cohen et al., 2011:426). Being an example of qualitative research, the data analysis of the transcripts of the interviews is interpretive, embracing a reflexive, reactive interaction with participants, not an accurate representation as would be required in a quantitative research.

3.16.5 Validity and Reliability of the Interviews

Conflict is generated by the interviews research tool between traditional concepts of validity and reliability because of the fact that the enhancement of reliability through the control of the interviews' elements is likely to reduce their validity. Kitwood (1977, quoted in Cohen et al., 2011:207) says that "the distinctively human element in the interview is necessary to its validity". On the other hand, the reliability of interviews depends on how well-structured are the preparations to carry them out and analyse the results (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, the inevitable issue of transcriber selectivity mentioned in the previous paragraph, depends on the researcher's overall purpose of conducting the interviews and the importance given to the achievement of complete reliability.

For my study, to check and establish the validity of the information, "respondent triangulation" (Bush, 2002:68) was used, which involved interviewing participants from two different communities (Projects 1 and 3) using the same set of questions targeted at their specific group. In

case of Project 2, another set of questions were used as the participants were the only community with an art education background.

3.16.6 Ethical Issues in the Interviews

Ethical guidelines expect researchers to ensure that the research participants are aware of the risks involved so that they can freely choose whether or not to take part (Busher, 2002). For my study, through pre-interview explanations about the purpose and target of the research, where confidentiality was assured, the participants' approval was officially obtained by their signatures on consent forms, following the guidelines of the UREC (2015).

The protection of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality are considered important ethical procedures (Busher, 2002). Prior to the start of each projects, ethical procedures were briefly explained through a slide-show presentation. This explained the consent form, clarifying the project's aims, the data collection methods and the use of the transcribed quotes gathered. With the exception of Project 3, where the context of Corradino Correctional Facilities did not permit any form of recording, the participants of the first two projects, the CEO of AŽ and the NMFA senior curator, were also informed that the interviews will be carried out through audio recordings. Throughout the projects, ethical considerations were upheld, whereby it was made clear to participants that they were free to quit the study at any time. The conditions were read, explained and any queries were answered. This assured the participants that they chose to take part in the research voluntarily.

3.16.7 Transcribing Interviews

Besides other data collection tools, the interviews carried out with the participants of the three projects, with the CEO of AŽ and with the MUŽA senior curator served as sources of data for my study. The data collected through the interviews in the light of the literature review, the participants' art journals, my field notes and the visual data collection, contributed to the understandings and to theorising about the participants' ways of using the national art museum collection.

Digitally recorded interviews of the first two projects were entirely transcribed verbatim by me to avoid the risk of losing information which might later be recognised as significant. Although time consuming, by transcribing the interview recordings myself and re-reading them, I gradually became familiar with the contextual meanings of the participants' words. The process of transcribing required a degree of sensitivity to the process of transforming oral language to written text format.

3.17 Visual Methods

Besides the fact that my study concerns visual art, bearing in mind that we are constantly surrounded by visual data and that “anything we see, watch or look at, counts as a visual image” (Cohen et al., 2011:528), visual media was used as part of the development of the data collected. The visual media that my research drew upon were: photographs, video, pictures of the MUŻA collection, artefacts, drawings and sketches. These visual media needed to be categorized according to what Prosser and Loxley (2008:5) identified as ‘found data’; ‘researcher-created data’; ‘respondent-created data’ and ‘representations’.

Due to ethical concerns related to the organisations of the communities I was working with, not all visual media mentioned could be applied for each project. During Project 1, held with the community at the Drug Rehabilitation, photography was limited to images taken showing the works of participants and images of them from the back. Video-taking was not allowed for Project 1 and Project 3. During Project 3, photography was limited to showing the participants' works. These could only be uploaded on my laptop following approval from the CCF staff. Meanwhile, in the case of Project 2 held with the community at the University of Malta, all the relevant visual media were used. The limitations and approvals related to the inclusion of visual media in the three projects affected the overall constructions of interpretations of the visual data.

Gillian (2006) argues that the interpretation of images is not an easy task and the readers still need some guidance on how to treat the images not to risk them being ignored. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2011) insist that visual media is not neutral as it sends direct and indirect messages. Moreover visual media can be interpreted in several ways, influenced by socio-political constructions. In addition, since both the researchers and the researched bear their own values and cultural

backgrounds (Rose, 2007), images cannot be viewed outside the socio-cultural contexts of image production. Since visual media is not neutral, it is exposed to multiple interpretations and thus it not only reproduces reality but presents it as interpreted by the viewers (Flick, 2009).

3.17.1 The NMFA Collection as Visual Data

Visual data can be influenced in different ways by social and cultural contexts due to what Berger (1972) calls ‘ways of seeing’. Since visual data consists of meanings and presentations of reality as interpreted by the viewers, it is open to multiple interpretations (Cohen et al., 2011). With regards to artefacts displayed at the NMFA and images of these artefacts, the constructions of interpretations concerning these images depended on the participants’ “own values, biographies, cultures and background” (Rose, 2007:11). This was kept in mind while observing the ways in which each of the communities of my projects interacted with the NMFA collection. During Project 3, since the NMFA premises were closed down, the participants were presented with good quality printed photographs of a selection of the NMFA collection. The selection of 76 images of artworks was a combination of classic, modern and contemporary 2-D and 3-D art. These represented social aspects based on the generic themes presented to the participants at the start of each project.

As participants in Project 1 and Project 3 were prohibited from using their own cameras, Project 2 was the only occasion where some visual data could be created by the participants who were asked to take images of what captured their attention during their NMFA visit. This was an occasion to practise a research method that uses images through “both collaborative and participatory in involving participants as partners in the creation, production and discussion of images” (Cohen et al., 2011:529). Such collaboration, which entailed the participants bringing the images themselves, required them to make their own selective observation. This helped to balance out not only the “dichotomy between the observed and the observer, the researcher and participants” (Cohen et al., 2011:529), but also the power-relation between the educator and the students.

3.17.2 Photo-Elicitation and Photo-Documentation Approaches

Although applied in different manners according to the policy on photography for that particular community, two approaches to visual research methods were used throughout the three projects; Photo-Documentation and Photo-Elicitation. The photo-documentation approach was applied by taking photos of the participants' creative process, including images of their selected artworks from the MUŽA collection and images of their art journals' contents. Photo-Elicitation was applied by using the images of their selected artworks to evoke discussion during the workshops.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), it may be that the researcher uses photos of artworks to stimulate discussion. In case of my study, during Project 3 when the NMFA premises were no longer available in 2017, this photo-elicitation was the main visual method used. This was necessary because my study depended on researching the participants' own ways of engaging with the NMFA's collection.

A research can be both collaborative and participatory when participants are involved in the taking of images (Flick, 2009), thus treating them as knowledge constructors through the creation, production and discussion of images. In Project 1, where the participants were not allowed to use cameras, a participatory approach to visual methods could not be used. Meanwhile, since the use of cameras by participants was allowed for Project 2, university students could be asked to bring images they had taken themselves of their selected works from the NMFA collection. This served as photo-elicitation (Harper, 2000), where consideration was given to the selection of images and the data interpreted from the images of the selected NMFA artworks.

For Project 2, due to their style in capturing the particular selections of the NMFA artworks in response to the research questions the visual images of this project, both those taken by the participants and by me, could be considered as "a story telling – a discourse, rather than a singular objective reality" (Cohen et al., 2011:529). These visual narratives then served for triangulation at the data analysis stage with the earlier mentioned research methods.

Besides the advantage of evoking conversations, photos help in exploring the project participants' viewpoints, thus enabling a comparison with the researchers' own views and experience (Knowles

and Cole, 2008). Photos are less time-consuming than filming or video and “more researcher-efficient, as they can convey far more in a single image than many pages of text” (Cohen et al., 2011:530). For my study, digital photos of the participants’ learning progress throughout the projects’ workshops, images of their selected artworks from the NMFA collection, images of their art journals’ contents and the artworks they developed were all considered as potentially valid material for photo-documentation.

3.17.3 Photo-Documentation

Apart from photo-elicitation, another visual method approach that was applied in my study was Photo-Documentation. To avoid influencing the participants regarding what could be valid for my study, particularly how and when photographs ought to be taken, I carried out the photo-documentation myself. My decisions on what could be documented visually were based on my research questions, and were shaped by observation of the participants’ own ways of engaging with the collection. Had I involved the participants in photo-documentation, their engagement with the collection would have been prejudiced into answering specific research questions.

The photos taken during the observation of the research projects were arranged in an orderly approach according to the categories used for the data analysis. This was carried out using computer software ‘Microsoft Office Picture Manager’ to upload and organise photos in appropriate folders according to the observation date and the category, e.g. *Project 1, 2nd Workshop, 1st September 2016 – Brainstorming and Exploring Social Themes*.

Using the computer software mentioned, by which the photographs were archived automatically, thus each image was labelled for the purpose of coding. The codes were created according to the criteria stemming from the textual coding, based on the research questions, such as: Mind-mapping the Selected Theme; Collaborative Work; Reference to the NMFA Collection. By inserting data using a table format in a Word Document, a systematic arrangement of the coded photos and folders for the three projects was created, as shown in Appendix 3.3. Presented with explanatory captions, the photos included in the *Discussion of Findings* Chapter enable validation of the research analysis.

3.17.4 Selective and Natural Visual Data

Although different from selective observation, where the researcher plans what is to be observed before the actual observation, images are still selective, because the researcher decides what to include and what to leave out when viewing the taken photographs (Cohen et al., 2011). In the case of Project 3, this ‘selectivity’ was doubled because the images also needed approval by a CCF staff member. To reduce issues of visual data overload, selectivity and manageability, the visual data was combined with written and observational data which then served for analysis by means of data triangulation.

Although photographs are less-time consuming to analyse, video was also used as a visual data method even though its use was only allowed during Project 2. While the selected images included in my study represent a narrative based on my research agenda and research questions, the fixed video-camera used throughout the workshops of Project 2 left “the natural situation undisturbed” (Cohen et al., 2011:529). On the other hand, Cohen et al. (2011) say that due to the predetermined field and focus, a fixed camera in a classroom is not neutral.

3.17.5 Video medium

The purpose of video-taking as a data collection method during the workshops of Project 2 was to document the non-verbal social practices of the participants. A fixed camera was used for recording their learning progress and interactions. Besides the fact that non-verbal aspects such as facial expressions could easily be missed during observation, the video medium provided the opportunity for “repeated viewing and checking” (Cohen et al., 2011:529). The criteria for selecting the clips of moving images clips for analysis were based specifically on the captured occurrences of the participants’ practice of transferable skills during the two-hour duration of each workshop. Such occurrences included the observed behaviours as the participants developed their work applying collaborative skills, higher order thinking skills and innovative skills.

Although the method of video data collection is rich in detail, it presented me with challenges due to the time-consuming nature of the data analysis required. Despite the advantage of the fixed camera being non-intrusive on the participants, another challenge was that at times the participants

moved in and out of focus. Once again, the video data collection method was used as part of triangulation with the previously mentioned methods, and it was “part of a wider database and methods rather than being stand-alone” (Flick, 2009:252).

3.17.6 Artefacts as Visual Data

Artefacts ranging from ornaments, display materials, pictures, maps, and so on, have been considered as beneficial in educational research (Francis, 2010), because “objects/ artefacts can convey messages” (Cohen et al., 2011:531). Since the NMFA collection served as inspiration and reference for the participants’ interpretation and construction of visual messages throughout the projects, my study considered the NMFA collection and its images were considered as a visual data method. Additionally, images of art journals, mind maps and works of art constructed by the participants were also considered as visual data. Since multiple interpretations can be made of the same artefacts, these were examined in combination with previously mentioned research data sources. For this reason, the images of artefacts created during each project were grouped into categories according to the research questions, eg. mind- maps, art journals, and collaborative-work. Later, these were examined in combination with the coding of the textual data gathered from the field notes and interview questions of that project. Appendix 3.3 indicates the ways in which this coding for images was structured.

3.17.7 Sampling and selecting the Artefacts:

Considering the view of Cohen et al. (2011:533) namely that “the researcher should specify and justify the selection made for the artefacts included”, this section presents my justification for the chosen artefacts. In deciding which artefacts to use for my study, the sampling criteria worked in two ways: researcher-provided artefacts (images of the NMFA collection) and participant-provided artefacts (the artefacts created by the participants). With regards to the images of the NMFA collection as artefacts, once the NMFA premises were no longer available, the selection criteria was based on portraying social concerns matching the generic themes discussed in each project. Eventually, they inspired the participants to develop their own chosen social theme. In the case of the artefacts created by the participants, in deciding which images could be selected for visual data collection and analysis, combined with the textual data, the following questions were considered:

- how did the creative process of the artefacts (eg. the mind-map; virtual exhibition; drawings) facilitate the participants' connection to the NMFA and to life?;
- which participants' interests and needs motivated their creative process of artefacts?;
- how were the context and location of the created artefacts limiting or helpful for the participants ?;
- what materials did the participants prefer/ had to use? why?;
- was enough time allocated for the participants' creative process of the artefacts?

3.17.8 The Place of Data Generation

The data generation in my research stemmed from researching in action the participants' meaning making while interpreting the NMFA collection, combined with their creative output to develop their chosen theme. Although all participants had a common task-oriented project, namely to develop a theme with reference to the NMFA collection, each group used different media to create art. The artworks created by Project 1's participants were mainly carried out in picture collages, while the participants of Project 3 mostly used drawing. These participants' use of media sheds light on their ways of engaging with the NMFA collection to communicate their personal struggles and narratives. Meanwhile the participants of Project 2, in shifting from personal to social concerns, used digital media to create virtual exhibitions aimed at engaging other young adults with the NMFA collection. Thus the participants' use of different media in the three projects also generated data.

3.17.9 Ethical Considerations on Visual Methods

When compared to numerical and text-based research, the ethical aspects of visual research are less developed (Prosser et al., 2008). Permission for the visual data collected and presented in my study concerned not only the actual taking and filming of the participants' artefacts and their interactions during workshops. It also concerned the reproduction of visual data, indicating the use of the images solely for the study's purposes. For the first and second projects, the approval of the participants and the officials of each project's community were sought and obtained through signed consent forms, which indicated information about the permitted use of images and video-recordings.

Prosser et al. (2008) maintain that issues of identification and obscuring of individuals are not only matters of ethical concerns but also of legal regulation of data protection. Due to the nature of vulnerable communities with whom I held workshops for two research projects, I faced challenges to gain informed consent regarding visual data. While for Project 1, I was allowed to take photos but not to video-record, the images taken and reproduced do not show the participants' faces, as required by the policy of Drug Rehabilitation. During the workshops, following Prosser et al. (2008)'s suggested ways of anonymising images, images were taken to show only the back of the participants. Meanwhile, any reproduced images that somehow still showed identifying features of the participants were blurred using photo-manipulation software. For Project 3, the policies of CCF were followed and video-recording was not allowed, while images were not allowed to show human figures. Images could only be taken of participants' works and these still required the officer's approval.

To ensure that the visual methods applied for my research were ethical, permission to take photographs of the interaction between project participants, the contents of their art journals and permission to reproduce photographs were obtained from the organisations' directors and from the participants. The directors were asked to sign an approval letter while participants were asked to sign a consent form concerning photo-taking.

Like words, images can be used to twist, distort and mislead. Hence, not all images are equally effective and valid (Prosser et al., 2008). As for the research tools mentioned in my study, the research ethics guidelines provided by the UREC (2015) were considered, and were adapted for the visual methods used in my study as follows:

- In all three projects, permission was obtained from the communities' directors after they were informed about the purposes, methods, reproduction and the intended possible uses of the images;
- Participants were informed about the purposes, methods, reproduction and the intended possible uses of the images. These were explained in an induction session before the start of each project through an information sheet and a power-point slideshow presentation;

- Wherever the organisation's policy allowed photographs to be taken, the consent forms had ticking boxes so that it was still up to the participant to accept or refuse to be photographed;
- Wherever the organisation's policy was to refrain from showing participants from the front, the participants were guaranteed that photos will show their learning process only through the contents of their art journals and artworks. Any photo showing their collaborative approach was taken such that faces were not identifiable.

Although there is no set of rules to guarantee ethical visual research, the four approaches, suggested by Pink (2006), illustrated in Fig.3.3 were used in my study.

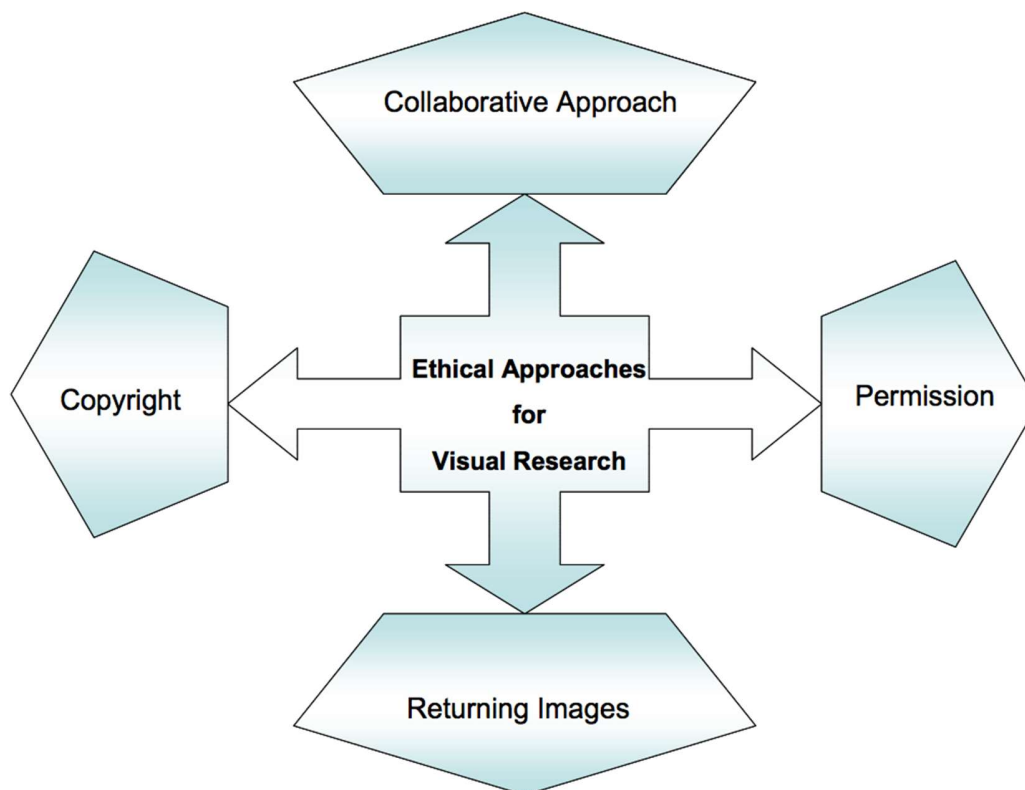


Fig. 3.3 Ethical Approaches for Visual Research

3.17.10 Collaborative Approach

Through “a collaborative approach to visual research” (Pink, 2006:55), unnecessary anxiety and harm to participants can be avoided. Throughout the projects and based on PAR and CGT approaches, collaborative research was carried out, cooperating with participants, rather than carrying out research on them. During the project workshops and the interviews, the participants’ opinions and evaluations on the photos were acknowledged and negotiated, thus they could also affect the research.

3.17.11 Copyright

In the case of my study, since I took the photos myself as the researcher, I am also the copyright owner and therefore can use them as required.

3.18 Qualitative Data Interpretation and Analysis

This section sets the scene for the qualitative data interpretation and analysis of my study, which will be further dealt with in the Analysis Chapter. Based on the conceptual framework of CGT, the data analysis includes descriptions of the participants’ situations and their interactions with their personal perceptions of the projects. The treatment of the collected data and analytical outcomes follow Charmaz’s (2000) explanation of how researchers undertake studies using CGT. Charmaz (2000) maintains that researchers need to engage themselves in the data in a way that embeds the participants’ narratives in the final research result. In the case of my projects, the observations of the participants’ narratives and interactions were noted both in my field notes and in images taken from the participants’ art journals. Data analysis made use of documentation which recorded the participants’ voice and meaning-making. The style of such analytic writing is more literary than scientific, reminiscent of the participants’ experiences.

There is “no single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data; how one does it should abide by the issue of fitness for purpose” (Cohen et al., 2011:537). My study’s analysis involves different approaches parallel to the various research method tools mentioned earlier, to organise the multiple interpretations. These interpretations emerged from data constructed through the

participants' own meaning makings and from my own observations, being also a participant in the projects.

According to Gibbs (2007) qualitative data analysis is merged with data collection and interpretation, resulting in analysis which promotes data which eventually requires further analysis. In the case of my study, this merging was applied through the several mentioned research tools and methodologies which result in data sources, namely:

- audio-recordings and transcribed interviews;
- field notes in journals (both the participants' and the researcher's);
- images and photographs (brought by Project 2's participants and researcher for visual elicitation);
- photos and video (Project 2) taken by researcher for visual documentation;
- artefacts

According to Jones (2002), the researcher must recognize the significant role of participants as contributors to the study, and must maintain a balance between analytical findings and the data from which they were derived, while making the connections clear. Furthermore, such efforts in presenting data would eventually meet the researcher's ethical obligation to "describe the experiences of others in the most faithful way possible" (Munhall, 2001:540). Consequently, in adopting the CGT researcher position, one of the challenges for data analysis was in balancing out the tension between developing a conceptual analysis of participants' narratives while still constructing a sense of their presence.

3.18.1 Challenges of Qualitative Data Analysis

Due to the variety of research tools adopted in my study, the data analysis presents several challenges due to the need for ongoing decisions, and the issues of subjectivity and objectivity. Due to the large volume of rich data generated by the research methods, which involved continuous selection and organisation, this might have introduced some personal bias. While striving to report the analysis objectively, there was still the challenge due to uncertainty of the data.

The data collected from the projects was bound to social actions and based on social interaction in an exchange of knowledge between the participants and myself, as the researcher. Therefore, the reported data in my own words (as a researcher), resulted from my understanding of the participants' interpretation of data. This is what Giddens (1976) terms as "a double hermeneutic process" (in Cohen et al., 2011:540). For this reason, the analysis chapter is written in the first person, rather than in the third person. This is supported by Whyte (1993, in Cohen et al., 2011) who advocates that AR provides a bridge between professional researchers and the members of the communities involved in a study. Whyte insists that it is "the right of the researcher to publish conclusions and interpretations as he or she sees them" (1993:362, in Cohen et al., 2011:541).

3.18.2 Reporting the Data Analysis

Computer software for qualitative data analysis might be useful to structure the work required given the massive amount of data collection. However the data analysis for my study was based on research thinking skills to make meaning. Data analysis was carried out through a manual coding process, identifying similarities and differences within each project's data and then comparing and contrasting between the data of the three projects. My decision to adopt this analysis approach corresponds with Flick (2009) who insists that data entry, coding and retrieval through computer software might undermine the actual responsibilities of researchers which includes hermeneutically understanding, reflecting and explaining the meanings of their research. In addition, Gibbs (2007) maintains that the emphasis placed on digital coding and its applications may strip out some important context of the research. Parallel to this, Crowley et al. (2002) argue that computer software would be the one doing the analysis instead of the researcher.

3.18.3 The GLOs as a Data Analysis Method

The aim of the Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP) commissioned as part of the "Inspiring Learning for All" vision, was to develop a method of measuring the impact of learning in museums, archives and libraries (RCMG, 2003). This led to the LIRP's creation of GLOs providing "museums, archives and libraries a means of understanding, analysing and talking

about learning – the development of a conceptual framework” (RCMG, 2003: 7), identified as the five GLOs (Black, 2005) namely:

- knowledge and understanding;
- skills (thinking; physical; basic; informational; social; emotional; communication);
- attitudes and values;
- enjoyment, inspiration and creativity;
- action, behaviour, progression

The five GLOs echo the practice of transferable skills with which the projects in my study were also concerned. Therefore the application of the GLOs was not merely aimed to measure the learning impacts. Combined with the coding process, the GLOs also facilitated the evaluation process of the workshops as a structure, embedding learning holistically throughout the projects. The GLOs thus served my study as one of its research methods both for data collection and analysis procedures.

The first GLO served to seek and collect data about the ways in which the participants used their previous knowledge to connect and make meaning out of the NMFA collection, while developing their chosen theme. The second GLO targeted information about the participants’ critical and analytical thinking skills while they made judgements to choose the theme and the NMFA artworks they found relevant to it. Their basic skills and information management skills could also be detected through the second GLO, which indicates the participants’ literacy and their skill in learning how to learn through the use of mind mapping, self-evaluation and documentation in their art journals. The second GLO also served to point out the participants’ social, communication and emotional skills as they discussed, shared and challenged each other’s views and ideas.

The third GLO served to indicate the participants’ expression of empathy, attitudes towards themselves and others, the project’s workshops and the NMFA, increased motivation to learn, their reasons behind their choices of the theme, ideas and artworks from the NMFA collection. The participants’ abilities to enjoy the learning process, find inspiration and come up with innovative ideas were pointed out through the fourth GLO. The fifth GLO served to seek evidence of the intention behind the actions of participants, or a modification in their attitude towards life and learning development.

Research shows that rather than evaluating museum education in isolation, the GLOs serve to recognize the wider context of life in the 21st century, where “any effort to understand the visitor experience, let alone the visitor learning, needs to be conceptualised within the larger context of individuals’ lives” (Falk, 2002:xii, quoted in Black, 2005:155). Meanwhile, based on AR and CGT approaches, my study’s analysis was not only limited to GLOs. In acknowledging the participants’ own contributions to the study, my study allowed the analysis of other dimensions of learning to arise as discussed in the next chapters.

3.19 Conclusion

The research methods used in my study fit the research aims. The use of AR methods facilitated participation by young adults and increased their sense of control throughout the research process. The forms of questioning used in the interviews, including the use of prompts, direct questioning and scaffolding assisted in eliciting the participants’ meanings. The participants’ drawings and the annotations in their art journals during the projects served to further understand the meanings which they constantly constructed and reflected on. The visual methods in the forms of photography, video, artefacts and art journals served both for elicitation and documentation of the participants’ learning process.

My own observations through field-notes provided another source of data which explained the participants’ learning process in engaging with the NMFA, a process which adapted to the participants’ interests and needs. The CGT method provided the framework to guide the complex analysis process. The GLOs embedded in the coding process of the data collection served both for evaluation and analysis of the ways in which the three communities engaged with the NMFA collection. In providing an account of the steps taken in the research process of my study, this chapter supports the validity of the findings by demonstrating the firmness of the research activity. The next chapter presents the discussion of findings and the theoretical insights that resulted.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

After organising the collected visual and textual data into categories and coded tables (Appendix 3.2), I analysed and interpreted the data as a whole, while keeping my main research target in mind - *to explore young adults' holistic learning through the national art museum collection.*

This chapter presents the study's findings through comparison, discussion and analysis. Where possible, conclusions were drawn from the data obtained from the investigations. The analysis focuses on the perceptions of the research projects' participants, on my own perceptions of the projects combined with insights gained from the CEO of the local youth agency and from the senior curator of the national art museum. Various quotes extracted from the interviews are included within the discussion of findings, providing added value to the study. The interviewees' replies are compared with each other and with the observation results through field notes, the participants' art journals and collected visual data. At the end of the chapter, all the discussed findings are interpreted, through comparisons, in the light of the theoretical principles explained in the literature review.

Through a coding system (explained in Appendix 3.2) I could connect similar and repetitive categories emerging from different data sources, which allowed me to recognise related, overlapping and consistent findings.

The observation of the young adult participants follows the action research approach of the study. The analysis of the three projects applies an on-going constructive grounded approach, based on their engagement with the collection and their theme development. In the following section I will discuss the interpretation of the coded textual data (Appendix 3.2) and the visual data (Appendix 3.3) resulting from the observations, experiences and educational strategies of Project 1.

4.1.1 Purpose of Project 1

The purpose of Project 1 was to investigate museum educational strategies which reach out to a community of ten young adults, who at the time, in 2016, were following a drug rehabilitation programme (Project context in Appendix 3.1). Project 1 set the participants on a series of holistic educational workshops with reference to the national art museum collection, including a museum visit and an interactive session with MUŻA's senior curator.

4.1.2 The Participants' Identity

The participants, aged 21-30, resided at the drug rehabilitation facility run by Caritas in San Blas, Malta. Some of the participants were illiterate. They admitted they never felt engaged by mainstream schooling when they were younger and avoided art lessons, because they were not good at drawing. The Caritas' directors warned me that the participants were not easy to please, had a short attention span and had already dropped out of other educational projects they considered to be irrelevant.

One of the participants was a foreigner (Russian), who did not understand Maltese and barely spoke, but could write in English. Later in the project, another foreigner (Somali) joined. Although he understood Maltese, he could not write and therefore showed his interpretation of work by attaching pictures. During the first two sessions, I noticed that some participants were eager to have their say but were not ready to listen to each other. Some of them were eager to provoke and fight with each other. Appendix 3.1 (Project 1) provides further details on the participants' identity and context.

4.1.3 Main Findings

As shown in Fig.4.1, the following six main categories of findings have emerged from the combined coded data of Project 1.

- Meeting the Project's Expectations
- The Project's Holistic Learning Process

- Practising Transferable skills for Life
- Relevance of the NMFA
- Challenges of the Project
- Effective Educational Strategies as a result of the Project

Further on, each category is discussed in detail.

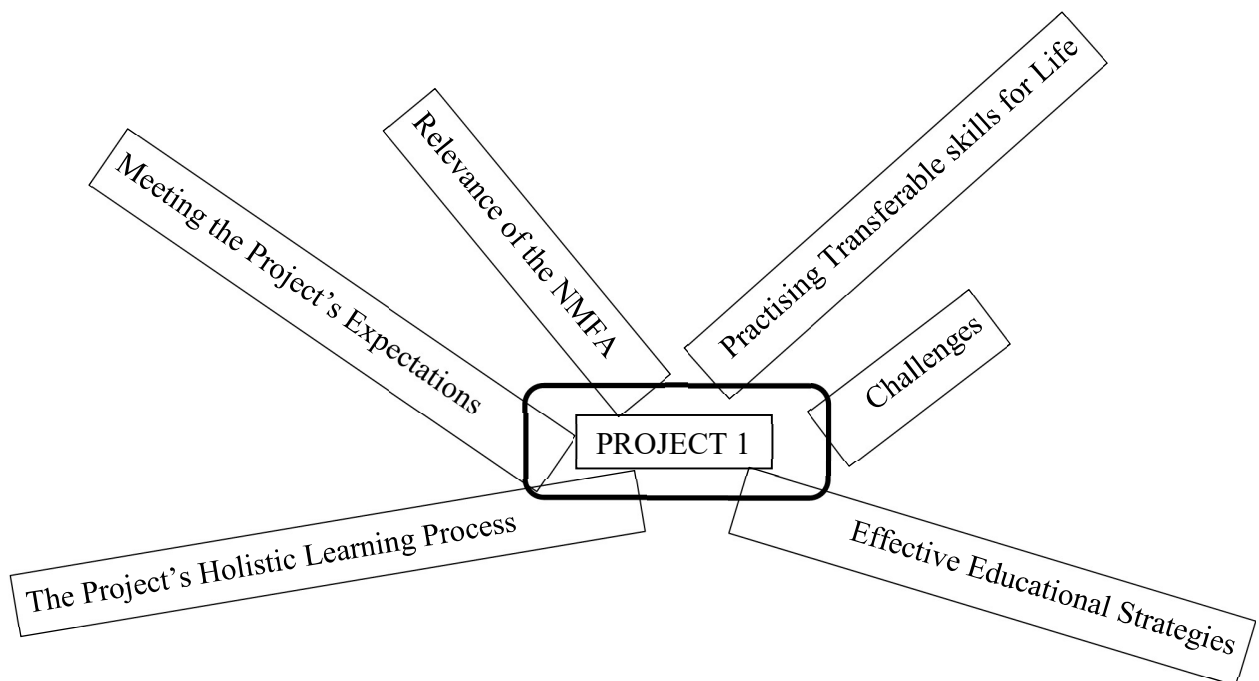


Fig.4.1 Project 1's Six Main Categories of Findings

4.1.4 Meeting the Participants' Expectations

(P – Participant)

Before the start of the initial interviews for Project 1, in a brief introduction session, the Caritas director introduced the participants to me as the educator/researcher of the project. The participants consisted of residents who showed interest in applying for the project. A few weeks earlier, the project was promoted by word of mouth giving only a few details, indicating only that it would concern art. Following this introduction, I held another short session to explain the project's schedule, the role of participants and the purpose of consent forms, without going into details to avoid influencing the participants' interview replies.

During the initial interviews, when asked about their expectations of the project, the replies of P1 and P10 were that they “do not know what to expect”, while P2 in a way also admitted he had no expectations but was open “to learn whatever was prepared for them”. Although P3, P7 and P8 declared they expected to learn new things, they did not specify what these might be. Meanwhile, P7 and P9 referred to life while describing what they expected to learn from the project. P7 remarked “I expect to learn new knowledge just like I learn through new life experiences” and P9 said “I expect to remove some bad issues in my life”. P6 replied “I have never done well at school but I expect to learn something, even though I am not good at art”. His reply indicates he still compares learning with schooling and that his expectation of learning *art* depended on the achievement of art's technical skills.

Such replies to the question concerning their project's expectations indicated that the majority of participants joined the project because they felt the need to learn. However, none of them had a clear expectation what the learning would consist of. Yuan et al., (2013) mentioned factors that affect the motivation to learn such as future benefit, personal development, challenges, and fun. In addition, Belanger et al. (2013), indicated that learners' motivation could be based on lifelong learning with no particular expectations for completion or achievement. The fact that participants showed their motivation to learn counter-balanced my initial worries concerning the issues raised by the Caritas director, namely their short attention span and their ‘hard to please’ nature. The

project's findings show that the participants remained motivated throughout the project. They were allowed to choose the theme to be developed vis-à-vis artworks they chose themselves, which made them realise they were in control of their own learning. They felt the transferable skills they practised while thinking, discussing, problem-solving and creating through art materials, art journals, mind-maps, and the museum collection. All these connected to their life while they discovered their own ways to connect. Thus, the participants acknowledged that their "discovery learning moved from experience to learning, not the other way around" (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:141).

The coded initial and final interviews reveal that all participants expressed their awareness of having learned more than they expected before the start of the project. In the initial interviews, most participants said they expected the project to provide new learning experiences and artistic techniques (Appendix 3.2). In the final interviews, most of them mentioned they have discovered new abilities or rather abilities they felt were never tapped. They also mentioned their new awareness that art education can include many dimensions of learning, which are not the commonly expected technical aspects such as drawing and painting. The participants' acknowledgement of personal development while learning through the museum collection, to finding life's meaning implies the project's achievement in what Biesta (2006:173) calls "the personal dimension of lifelong learning".

The coded final interviews (Appendix 3.2) indicate the project's holistic learning benefits as experienced by the participants: thinking and social skills; feeling useful and valued; ways to prevent loneliness; clarification of thoughts; art's development through a creative process, life-wide and lifelong learning (Appendix 3.2:7). Although P9 during the initial interviews said he expected to eliminate bad issues from his life through the project, in the final interviews he mentioned having gained lifelong learning values. He insisted, "my expectations of the project have been met... to keep working in a creative process... this will serve for life for sure". Here, he was referring to the similarity he saw between the creative process, which requires moments of reflection throughout the project, and the need to allow time for reflection throughout life.

A few participants declared that their 'art illiteracy' led to them having unknown expectations of the project. They said the project unexpectedly served to change their mind about art, now that they discovered their ability to look at art and talk about it. For instance, P1 said "I learned about art as I was never into it before", while P2 admitted that "...personally, I needed such a project to learn to look at art". Similarly, P5 insisted he has "learned much more than expected through the project. I did not understand art before" This shows that the project's tasks encouraging the participants to look at art so as to make meaning out of what they were seeing, which in turn helped them gain confidence in looking and talking about art. Influenced by the concept coming from their time at school, namely of art education dominated by the acquisition of practical skills, the project served to transform the participants' preconceptions about art. While engaging with the art collection and their own art using "the skill of interpretation as a tool to negotiate our world of visual complexity" (Charman and Ross, 2004:2) the participants experienced art as "a source of ideas and meaning" (Charman and Ross, 2004:3).

One participant mentioned his unexpected discovery of his creative ability through the project stating that he "was encouraged to try", which in turn made him notice "how much I succeeded in creating things I never imagined I was able to do before" (P3). Comments like this, pointing to my encouragement of participants to give it a try, recall an educator's constructivist approach of intervening "only as required to guide students in the appropriate direction" (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142). Three participants mentioned the acquisition of transferable skills as unexpected learning benefits of the project, such as the opportunity of practising thinking and social skills. For instance, P6 said "we learned to use our brains throughout the project" and P8 confessed that "going through the project helped to clarify confused thoughts", while P7 revealed his accomplished sense of worth through practising collaborative skills. He confessed that "when they asked me for help or suggestions... it made me feel I am capable... that others could notice my worth". This shows how the project was beneficial in its encouragement of social interaction, addressing the expected need of most participants of the approval of others and one's own sense of self-worth.

4.1.5 Recognition of the Project's Holistic Learning Process

During the initial interviews, when asked about the way they consider a project, which includes a reference to the national art museum, could be relevant to them, most participants pointed out that its relevance would be in leading them “to learn a lot” (P1, P2), “to learn new things” (P3, P5) and “to get inspired by the museum artworks” (P3).

The coded initial interviews reveal that all participants applied for the project due to their craving for learning, irrespective of the nature of the project. Could this be due to an intrinsic motivation to crave an education they rejected during their compulsory schooling age? Could this be due to a need to distract themselves from drug withdrawal symptoms, as a form of ‘escapism’? This sparked my interest to observe how they would be shaping their own learning and whether in so doing, their intrinsic craving for learning would continue, increase or diminish during a project which is based on a holistic approach. On the other hand, the participants’ appetite to learn indicates that although some young adults are unaware of learning opportunities beyond schooling and would unlikely take initiative to search for them, if they are reached out to, they would be keen to participate. Hence, if HM were to offer lifelong learning programmes through MUŻA and promotes them at various institutions where young adults reside such as the drug rehabilitation residence, it could attract new audiences of young adults.

The coded final interviews indicate that participants were aware of having experienced a holistic education through the project. When asked what they felt they learned from the project, P2 and P9 said they learned self-expression through observing and creating art, while P3 insisted his learning involved “the discovery of creative abilities” of which he was previously unaware. Similarly, P5 said that although at first he felt like giving up, he discovered he felt encouraged to use his abilities. Moreover, P7 said the project encouraged him to believe in himself and P8 said he discovered “abilities within and the reasons for making certain choices instead of others”. Such replies showed ways in which the project encouraged most participants to discover abilities they already had but which had been left untapped due to their insecurities. Other examples of the project’s holistic aspect were noted by P4 who replied to several questions stating that the project taught him “to

give it a try in order to start somewhere”, provided him with “the consistency of not giving up” and “the commitment to continue what has been started”.

During the final workshop the participants asked me about the possibility for such a project to be offered for Drug Rehab residents all year round. They were aware they had no say in choosing what the Drug Rehab programme should involve. They also knew my project was replacing their usual allocated two hours for spiritual sessions, only for a short period. However, as agreed with them, I suggested this to the Caritas directors. Furthermore, using the same words, both P3 and P4 insisted that “such a project should be included in schools”. P4 added that “from a young age... when I was at school, we had an art subject, but it was never this way”. This continued to indicate the need for museum education outreach that can offer holistic learning experiences. Educational strategies based on a holistic learning approach serve to stimulate the practice of intellectual, emotional, social and creative abilities, well suited to multiple processes of meaning-making in the museum context (Hopper-Greenhill, 2007).

4.1.6 Practising Transferable Skills for Life

A few days after the end of the project, I received an email from the Caritas psychologist. He said he had discussed the experience of the project with the participants during lunch, and so their feedback was quite informal. There were no negative comments about the project and he forwarded the comments as follows:

“This was much more than art. It was about creative skills and thinking skills that I can use with other things in my life”.

“Initially, I thought it was just about drawing, but it was more. It was about creativity and creative thinking”.

Curator of strategy and development at Wits Art Museum in South Africa, Lesley Cohen (2019), insists that learning through art museums equips young people with several transferable skills such as visual literacy and critical thinking which can be applied in other areas of life. Likewise, as the project aimed at exploring holistic educational strategies, the workshop tasks encouraged the participants to practice transferable skills. For instance, since the tasks were held through inquiry-based approaches, the participants engaged in visual thinking, critical thinking to reflect on their

selections, decision-making and problem-solving, while documenting the whole process in their art journals. Meanwhile, tasks like role-play stimulated discussions and presentations which in turn led to peer- constructive criticism and encouraged the practice of collaborative skills.

The coded final interviews (Appendix 3.2) indicate that, throughout the project, the participants made indirect reference to their practice of transferable skills. They referred to thinking skills by bringing up the process of reflecting on art and their life's choices, to the clarification of thoughts and to the connections they made between their theme and art. There is also a reference to social skills as they pointed out practices of discussion, teamwork, feedback, feeling appreciated by others, collaborating on, and communicating, ideas. Due to the frequent reference to such skills, one of the six main categories extracted from the participants' interviews that shape up the coding of my field-notes, was that of 'Transferable skills for Life'.

My field notes recorded several observations of the participants recognising their acquisition of practicing transferable skills required in life. These were extracted in particular from their discussions and self-evaluations. The museum collection (images and actual), the generic themes, mind-mapping, art-journaling, discussions and self-evaluation were all mentioned as contributors to the practice of transferable skills for life. Most participants mentioned that they found the mind-map tool very helpful to direct their thinking and suggested ways of how such a tool can become handy during any life situation that needs problem-solving. In the final interviews, P8 said that "the mind-map helped him a lot to clarify thinking confusion" and insisted "I will keep carrying on using the mind-map throughout all my life".



Fig.4.2 A Session with the MUŻA Senior Curator

The meeting with the senior curator (Fig.4.2) who offered a short presentation about MUŻA's new museum philosophy, continued to stimulate their questions in response to their appreciation of the projected images of the collection. The participants also raised challenging questions, such as whether MUŻA will be focusing more on tourism than the locals. Moreover, they ended up engaged in intriguing debates with the curator about the cost of museum artworks. For this community of young adults, critical thinking was highly stimulated by their intrinsic interest in the financial aspect of the art museum collection. This interest often raised discussions concerning whether the value of art lies in its financial aspect, technical skill or concept.

The task of playing the role of the museum guide (Fig.4.3.1- Fig.4.3.3) during the museum visit encouraged the participants' decision-making and critical thinking in choosing artworks. Evidence of such higher order thinking skills was further confirmed while they explained in detail the ways in which the chosen artworks related to their chosen theme and also their life. They recognised that they could make meaning of the art they observed, connected with and communicated about. It was interesting to listen to the participants' realisation that while some of them chose the same artworks, they nevertheless expressed different interpretations vis-à-vis the significance of their chosen theme. The reference of the participants to meaning-making through multiple interpretations aligns with William Isaacs' concept of powerful collective-thinking by referring to the value of

‘dialogue’. Isaacs recalls its two Greek roots, *dia* and *logos*, suggesting “meaning flowing through... collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties that structure everyday experience” (Isaacs, 2019:online)



Fig.4.3.1 A participant during the role-play activity at the NMFA



Fig.4.3.2 A participant explaining during a role-play activity at the NMFA



Fig.4.3.3 A participant explaining during the role-play activity at the NMFA

The practice of thinking skills was further confirmed when most participants mentioned their recognition of the changes they made to their original plans as their work developed. Some of them also referred to their awareness of their transformed ways of looking at things. They noticed this especially when they started choosing alternative images of the collection based on new directions their work was taking. In the final interviews, the participants expressed their appreciation of the project's objectives in encouraging their thinking skills for their own life. For instance, P6 admitted he "learned how to think through the project ... what could be used here could also be used in life". He said at first he "wondered what they would be gaining from discussing social themes, but later I realised how important it is to reflect... in life". Likewise, P9 admitted he "recognised the benefit of the constant questions which engaged me into thinking, rather than my usual habit of rushing to create something in a short time"

The questions I used were open-ended and certainly not to lead participants to voice interpretations of the collections I had in mind. Through questioning I aimed to scaffold their practice of talking

about art by directing their attention toward their chosen theme and life rather than the art content. Open-ended questions like: “what more can you say about your choices of artworks?” and “how would alternative artworks also relate to your theme?” served to spark dialogues and stimulate questioning. Hence, the questions which sparked an exchange of knowledge and experiences were not always led by me. In fact, the participants continually generated and regenerated dialogues driven by questions they asked each other while looking at the museum collection and also while offering feedback to each other as they presented their work in progress. These dialogic practices throughout the process of developing their chosen theme vis-a-vis art interpretation fostered “a community of enquiry, in which discussion and debate were integral” (Charman and Ross, 2004:7)



Fig.4.4 The participants consulting with each other

My field notes include several observations mentioned by the participants of their practice of collaborative skills throughout the project. For instance, during the museum visit, even though none of the participants chose to work in pairs or groups for the role play activity of museum guide, I could still notice them cooperating with one another (Fig.4.4). In fact, the role-play activity was effective in promoting collaboration among the participants as it stimulated the urge to validate observations and ideas before presenting them to the whole group. Such activity also made them

realise they had a meaningful reason to work together. They noticed they had to problem-solve a task which is common to all (playing the role of a museum guide) and that eventually by sharing ideas they could learn from each other and gain confidence in presenting their art interpretations to the rest. Indeed, art interpretation “takes into account a range of perspectives for thinking about the work beyond the personal” (Charman and Ross, 2004:7).

While going around the museum, the participants collaborated by sharing their perceptions about the displayed artworks. This was the case especially for the works which recalled their communal thoughts of the local seascapes and landscapes from the past as portrayed in the artworks. When they observed Giorgio Pullicino’s ‘View of Manoel Island’ (Fig.4.5), they shared their common disappointment at the current local environment while they discussed their shocking observations about the present-day town of Gżira which is chock-full of buildings.



Fig.4.5 The participants sharing thoughts while observing the NMFA collection

It was evident that the artworks which promoted most collaborative interpretations among the participants was the contemporary collection of photography. This collection at the time was part of ‘reserved collection’. Prior to the start of the project, after liaising with the NMFA curators, they displayed it purposely in the museum’s courtyard for the project’s visit. This collection evoked

discussions concerning the participants' opinions and experiences due to the contents of the photos showing real life situations of 'refugees' (Fig.4.6) and 'a grandma holding the cat' (Fig.4.7). The participants identified with these contemporary artworks and connected with each other through related opinions concerning current issues of refugees and personal narratives about their grandmothers who also owned cats. Thus, the contemporary collection stimulated the participants' practice of sharing curiosity emerging from a communal context. Moreover, it immediately evoked their own narratives leading them to empathise and offer different perspectives which served as preparation for the performance of their role-play. This collective learning depended on the participants' dialogues among themselves as a community of enquiry, and neither with me nor with museum experts. This recalls Melinda Mayer stating that "meaningful learning occurs when visitors' interpretations build on the comments and conversations of a social group" (Mayer, 2005: 16). In addition, their individual patterns of knowing were constructed through negotiation with their communities of interpretation (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006).



Fig.4.6 Sharing opinions about the contemporary issue of refugees



Fig.4.7 Participants sharing personal narratives about their grandmothers, most of whom were cat owners

During the creative process while developing their chosen theme, although the participants did not choose to cooperate on one artwork together, they still collaborated. For instance, they asked each other for advice on art techniques, such as colour-blending and perspective drawing. They also asked for each other's opinion while deciding and developing further ideas, whenever they felt stuck and to select images relevant to their theme. During the final workshop, while they presented their development of work, some participants admitted that what they thought was impossible to create, could be easily constructed with each other's help. It was evident that their need for collaboration continued to strengthen the relationship of trust among themselves, thus reducing their perception of me being the only 'expert' in the room.

4.1.7 Relevance of the NMFA

When asked about the NMFA throughout the initial interviews, most participants replied that they were not aware of any art museum in Malta. For instance, P1 wondered "a museum... it must be famous, right" while P5 admitted "honestly, it means nothing". Other participants expressed their curiosity whether the NMFA could be "a place with art for the public to attend and see" (P8) or

“could be an auction” (P7) or “the art museum is a treasure, right?” (P10). A participant recalled that during his school days: “if there was a school visit to the museum, I refused to go to school visits” but then insisted “I would like to visit the museum now... if I have the opportunity to” (P1). Similarly, P9 showed his awareness that interest in learning can potentially be re-kindled later in life by replying “I have never been to an art museum... I had a completely different life”. These replies made me wonder: was the local schooling system responsible for the opinion which considered the NMFA as irrelevant?; was it due to their upbringing within families that did not value museums?

Sociological research on contemporary visitor studies such as those by Hooper-Greenhill (2000) and Bennett (1999) found that museum-access-barriers are closely related to one’s social aspects such as economic, cultural and educational status, because “to go to the museum you must have the opportunity to "see" ” (Bourdieu, 1972:online). Sociology professor Bella Dicks, argues that museums are irrelevant for those “whose life-experiences have denied them access to the cultural ciphers that unlock the meaning of artefacts” (Dicks, 2016:52). Then again this research refers to the value of art museums for one’s knowledge of art not for one’s holistic lifelong learning as personal fulfilment and well-being.

Since during the time of Project 1, the NMFA was still open for the public, this project included a visit to the museum. Before starting the analysis of the data collection, I expected that the relevance of the NMFA could be checked by comparing the response given at the initial interviews with the comments on relevance, based on experience, as mentioned during the final interviews. The initial interviews revealed that the majority of the participants were hardly aware of the NMFA. This affected the validity of the data collected about their perceptions of the museum’s relevance prior to the NMFA visit experience. Aware of the participants’ state, being under the effect of medication, I could not insist for further elaboration in their interview replies. Meanwhile, their replies before the start of the project gave the impression that the participants had an intrinsic need to learn now that they grew up and are craving for learning beyond schooling. This was not only confirmed by their replies in the final interviews but also through my field notes while observing their keen interest as they wandered around the collection during the NMFA visit. Their continuous

questions during the 3rd workshop involving an interactive session with the NMFA/MUŻA senior curator, also confirmed their craving for learning in a non-formal setting.

The coded final interviews show that all participants found the museum visit relevant, whether for the emotions transmitted through its collection, or for its financial aspect or for its national heritage value. P2 said “the museum visit served me very much”, while P5 said “it served me a lot” and P6 added “I realised that before visiting the museum, I could not imagine that in Malta we have artworks of such high value”. P9 explained that “the art museum visit helped me to develop ideas”. One of the participants mentioned that the museum visit served as a link to the choice of his theme, because “as soon as my eyes went on the painting of the ‘iceberg’, it remained very clear in my mind” (P7).



Fig.4.8 Photo by Darrin Zammit Lupi

As mentioned earlier, throughout the museum visit the contemporary collection displayed purposely for the project was more relevant to the participants than the permanently displayed one. However, even while observing digitally projected images of the contemporary collection the participants raised more questions and discussions. During a workshop, a participant (P10) started opening up about how the artwork of Darrin Zammit Lupi (Fig.4.8), showing refugees on a boat resonated a lot with him. It immediately recalled his painful memories concerning what he himself had been through. By sharing his experience of suffering, he said he felt more connected to the

rest of the participants as they showed interest by asking him questions and sharing their empathy on the issue of refugees. Such a personal response to art stemming from the participants' own ways of engaging with the collection and creating meaning through cultural-identity contradict Bourdieu's theory (1972) regarding the cultural capital which is required for a museum-visitor relationship. Although they lacked cultural capital, they could still 'see' art through their self- and their cultural-identity. The personal ways through which these participants engaged with the NMFA collection while developing their themes are discussed and documented by images later on in this chapter.

Further observed exchanges of the participants' personal responses to the collection of contemporary digital images led to deeper interpretations through debates concerning their decoding of communal symbols. The artworks which sparked most discussions were 'Guerriero' (Fig. 4.9) and the 'PN, MLP' (Fig. 4.10) sculptures (Appendix 3.4). The discussions revealed that for most participants, the sculpture 'Guerriero' (Fig. 4.9) signified suffering due to the red colour representing blood. Most participants concluded by interpreting the whole work as portraying dying birds and thus the suffering caused by bird hunting. Meanwhile, for the Maltese participants, the image of 'the Goddess of Fertility' sculpture with 'PN, MLP' carvings (Fig.4.10) recalled contextual symbols of the two dominating political parties in Malta. This provoked a discussion which led to an interpretation of the contrast between the deity of the past, represented in the artwork, and the current deification of politicians in today's local context.

By debating strongly-held convictions regarding artworks' meanings, and mostly in a socio-political context, the collection enabled the participants to transform personal responses into interpretations based on "analysis from different points of view" (Burnham and Kai-Kee, 2011:83). The participants showed more confidence in questioning and debating the contemporary collection rather than the permanently displayed one. This makes one wonder whether the limited relevance of the NMFA to various public audiences might be due to its displayed collection. Up to the time of writing, these two artworks were still not displayed at MUŻA. Were they considered controversial? Is it not MUŻA's new community-based target to encourage new narratives from public dialogues and debates, so that visitors may exchange different cultural experiences? Is

MUŻA still transmitting a dominant culture through the selected narratives, especially through its four stories concerning the Mediterranean, Europe and Empire, the Artist (MUŻA, 2018)?



Fig.4.9 Raymond Pitre's 'Guerriero'



Fig.4.10 Norbert Attard's 'The Goddess of Fertility'

The participants expressed their gratitude for being provided with an opportunity to visit the art museum as it facilitated their learning to look at and talk about artworks. A participant admitted that “had I not participated in this project, I would have never realised I could learn to appreciate art” (P2). Throughout the NMFA visit and role-play activity, as each participant felt that his interpretations of the collection had been welcomed and tolerated by the rest, they realised they did not have to be art historians or experts to appreciate art and visit museums. During the evaluation of the NMFA visit, participants agreed that the task of interpreting images of the collection also served to boost their confidence in appreciating art and sharing it. This was felt especially for the activity of imagining themselves in the role of a museum guide. Some said such meaningful learning experience encouraged them to visit other art museums and feel confident to talk about artworks. The project’s findings show that it provided them with a sense of confidence in discovering for themselves how to navigate art museum appreciation, which eventually inspired ideas for developing their chosen theme and for creating their own artwork. Due to the “intimate relationship between interpreting art and making art” (Charman and Ross, 2004:2), this theme-

based project grounded in a holistic approach facilitated the participants' own constructions of art interpretation and art making skills.

During the final interviews and presentations of works, the participants mentioned the ways in which the NMFA collection was relevant for their theme development. P3 said the museum visit helped him a lot as “it was of interest and inspiration for my chosen theme of ‘the family’ as I could link them to my work development.” (Fig. 4.13). For P6, Antonio Sciortino’s work ‘Rythmii Vitae’ served as an inspiration. He interpreted it as “the sculpture showing a woman and a man behind each other, showing that the man has to provide a support for the woman” (Fig. 4.14). During the presentation of his work, this participant explained such interpretation due to his own beliefs and approval of the traditional gender roles. Later on, he admitted his failure in not being supportive to his girlfriend and maintained that once he is out of the drug rehab, he will do his best to be a source of support to his girlfriend.

While pointing at the image of Albert Bierstadt’s ‘Floating Iceberg and a small boat’, P9 explained that the image of “the ‘iceberg’ remained impressed in my mind.” He continued to explain how it linked to his chosen theme of the environment, stating that “for me it means peace... it is what I have been searching for a long time and I cannot say that I found it, but nearly. That is why it impressed me so much... an iceberg on its own... in calm waters.” (Fig. 4.21). Thus, for P6 and P9, their interpretations of the museum collection, apart from serving for their theme development, also led them into “learning to live one’s life in a better way” (Biesta, 2006:173) which recalls the second dimension of lifelong learning “for personal development and fulfilment” (Aspin and Chapman, 2001: 39).

During the final presentation, all participants explained their learning process and connections between their chosen theme and their chosen NMFA artworks. They indicated their interpretation and reinterpretation of particular artworks through their theme development as analysed in the section below. The term ‘reinterpretation’ in this study refers to the changes and adaptations of earlier interpretations (Kaufman, 2019) constructed by the participants. Through peer-criticism, discussions and reflections, the interpretations of the participants, which had previously been based only on their personal responses, gradually transformed. Since video cameras were not allowed, I

jotted down the participants' descriptions immediately in my notes and took photos, covering their identity, while they each presented their work to the rest of us. Appendix 3.4 (Project 1) shows the participants' selection of those artworks from the collection which they found relevant for their theme development.

4.1.8 The Participants' Reinterpretation of the NMFA Collection

While presenting his work (Fig.4.11), P1 mentioned the transition he made from focusing on one theme and then on another. He also planned to work through collaboration with another participant, but due to unforeseen circumstances changed to individual work. Furthermore, he mentioned how the museum visit inspired his work development. He explained how Antonio Sciortino's 'Rythmii Vitae' and Patrick Fenech's 'Caged Spaces Series' (Appendix 3.4) led him to choose another theme to develop on his own, from sketches to mixed-media collage. He presented his theme development as follows:

“Together with my friend, at first I chose to develop the theme of ‘Addiction’ and we decided to work together as we thought we would find it useful for our life. Then my friend got suspended. After visiting the museum and seeing works like the ‘Caged Spaces Series’...the freedom expressed by people in a village feast and the sculpture of ‘Rythmii Vitae’, I realised that ‘Freedom’ from addiction would be a more suitable theme. The painting of the Iceberg also gave me a sense of freedom, away from every one...choosing solitude not loneliness. So I created this collage and at times photomontage of pictures together with pictures of the artworks I chose from the NMFA to express ‘Freedom’. I also used blue and white strokes of paint to continue with the sea that represents freedom away from other people and city life.”



Fig. 4.11 P1's Theme Development

Inspired by a combination of Antonio Favray's 'Grandmaster Pinto' and Emvin Cremona's 'Abstract' (Appendix 3.4), P2 insisted from the start that, due to his feeling of internal confusion, he is better off working individually and chose the theme of 'the Self' (Fig.4.12). His description of his creative process reflects the combination of the symbolic and abstract aspects in his two chosen artworks. He explained his theme development as follows:

"The chosen theme is of 'the Self' as my work represents myself. I have a lot of confusion and chaos in my head... this is why I show it in black and white, because I am never all black or all white in what I do and think. These symbols are very important for me... the symbol of religion, the symbol of peace, the symbol of the sea and the symbol of question mark... all symbols surrounding the symbol of yin-yang... which shows that in the good there is some bad and in the bad there is some good. All this is then dominated by the symbol of the eight pointed cross, which shows the fact that I am Maltese. This eight-pointed cross was shown on the painting of the Grandmaster Pinto who carries it with pride. Another painting which encouraged me to create this work was the abstract painting as I have never used paints before and this gave me the courage to feel free in using paints the way I wanted to."



Fig.4.12 P2's Theme Development

The contemporary photograph ‘Companions’ by Joseph Smith (Appendix 3.4), which also attracted the participants’ collective interpretation during the NMFA visit, continued to inspire P3 in his theme development (Fig.4.13) which he described as follows:

“For me the ‘Family’ is the most important value in life...that is why I chose it as a theme. As the text on my work shows...through the family relationship, I can find love, respect, loyalty, honesty and reach future goals. I love photography but I don’t have my camera here, so from the NMFA, I was mostly inspired by the photograph showing a family consisting of an old lady and the cat. The wedding photo included in this photograph reminds me of a similar photo that my grandma has. To create this work, I chose good pictures of photography that I found from magazines and added some colour using paints and markers”.

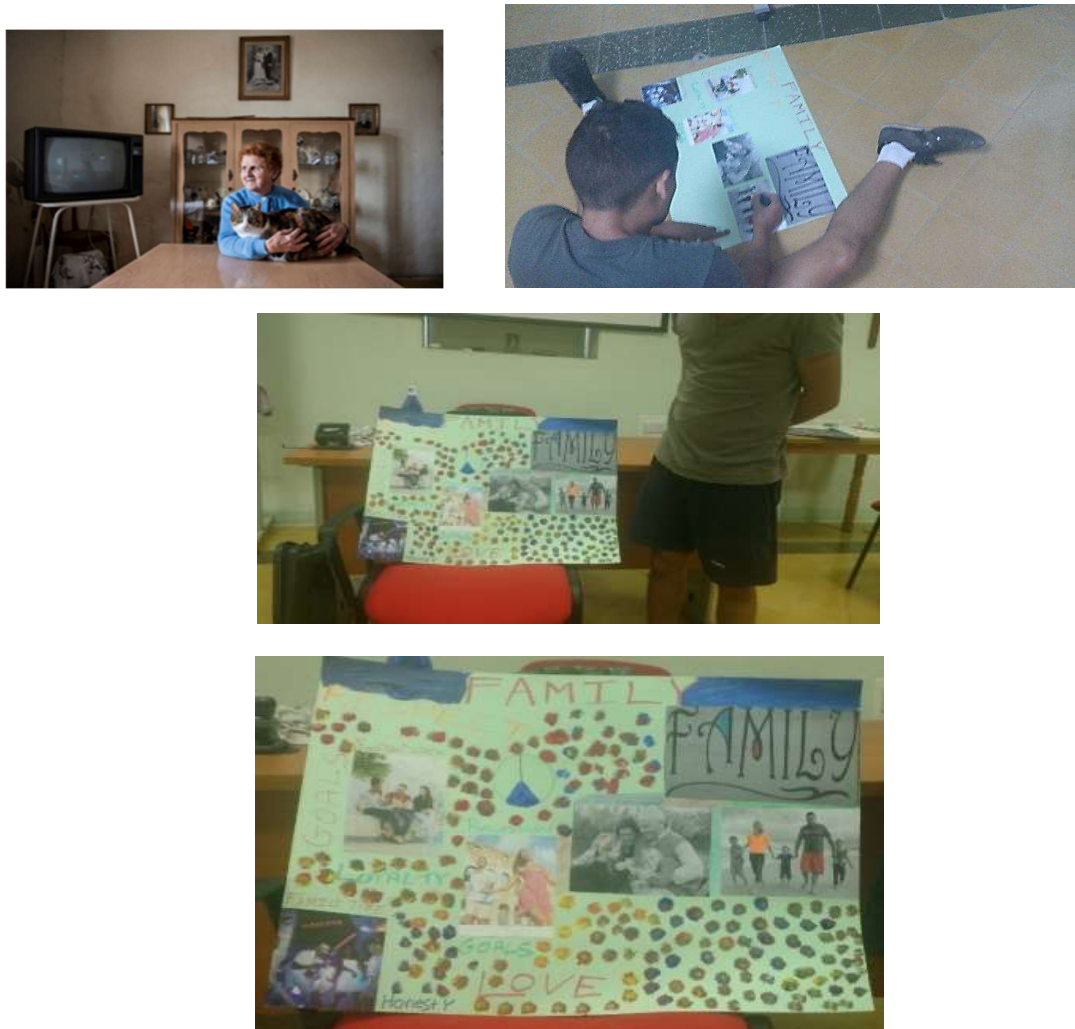


Fig.4.13 P3’s Theme Development

P4 also interpreted the ‘Family’ theme but through the reinterpretation of other chosen artworks (Fig.4.14), namely Antonio Sciortino’s ‘Rythmii Vitae’ and Samuel Bugeja’s ‘Mother and child’ from the NMFA (Appendix 3.4). During his presentation, he explained:

“I have chosen to work on the theme of the ‘family’ and developed this work with pictures and cut-outs of rectangles of bright colours which for me mean a happy life with my future family... with my partner and the child we will be having when I am out of here. The two sculptures of ‘Rythmii Vitae’ and ‘Mother and child’ were of a good inspiration as one shows a strong couple together and the other shows the love between a mother and her child. So these sculptures are a reflection of the future of my family and the rectangles of bright colours represent the bright future of my family”.



Fig.4.14 P4’s Theme Development

P5 reinterpreted three artworks chosen from the NMFA collection, consisting of Antonio Favray's 'Grandmaster Pinto', Lazzaro Pisani's 'The death of Abel and Cain' and Antonio Barrera's 'Il Grano d'Oltremare' (Appendix 3.4, Project 1), to develop his chosen theme of 'War'. He explained that his combination of these three artworks served to inspire his theme development (Fig.4.15) as follows:

“The painting of the Grandmaster Pinto represents the arrogance of rich people in power; the painting of Abel's death represents jealousy and evil. The painting of the fisherman at the port represents us common people...the working class. So in my work I included pictures of the rich and powerful, some of them control the oil industry... in contrast to the working class and people who suffer the wars and injustices because of those in power”.



Fig.4.15 P5's Theme Development

Another participant, P6 also chose the theme of 'Family' and, like P4, was also inspired by Antonio Sciortino's 'Rythmii Vitae'(Appendix 3.4), displayed at the NMFA, but he reinterpreted it in combination with Mattia Preti's 'Christ on the Cross' (Fig.4.16) and presented his theme development as follows:

"My family is my life... and I know I ruined it. My family suffers because of me. I chose to work on the theme of 'Suffering and love of my family'. The painting 'Christ on the Cross' and the sculpture of 'Rythmii Vitae' inspired my work, because in the first I see the pain I put my family through... they suffer the cross because of me... and in the second, I see the strength of love between a man and a woman, no matter what happens... the strength with which they hold each other as one strong piece. Then I developed it as a drawing using the symbol of peace... the peace when a family provides love... this is what I want to find when I am out of here... I will not ruin my family this time".



Fig.4.16 P6's Theme Development

Similar to P3, the artwork of John Smith's 'Companions' (Appendix 3.4) inspired P7 to develop his theme of 'Love', which he mostly felt for animals and thus combined it with another artwork showing animals - that of Antonio Sciortino's 'Arab Horses' (Fig.4.17). Due to an arm injury, P7 could not go further than his journal with his theme development. Thus during the final workshop, he only showed his creative process through his art journal. This raised a discussion about the value of slowing down, where all participants agreed that throughout the project they understood the importance of learning to appreciate the process rather than rushing to finish off an art product. P7 presented the learning process of his theme development as follows:

“The sculpture ‘Arab Horses’ and the photograph of the old woman with a cat inspired me as both contained animals and my theme is ‘love’ especially for animals as they give unconditional love. I continued to work on my art journal so far, using pictures of dogs and parrots, which are my favourite animals.”



Fig.4.17 P7's Theme Development

Throughout the final presentations, I was quite surprised and intrigued by the ways in which the participants reinterpreted the NMFA artworks vis-à-vis links to their themes and personal life. A case in point was when P8 reinterpreted Adriano Cecioni's 'Interior with Women' as 'peaceful' (Fig.4.18) and explained that...

“The painting showing a room with women knitting brings peace to mind and reminds me of the peace I find when I go near the church. That is the drawing I made... showing the church and the theme of 'Peace'... I remember when I was a child, my mother used to take me to church... peaceful.”



Fig.4.18 P8's Theme Development

On the same lines as P8, P9 also dealt with the theme of ‘peace’, equating it with ‘freedom’, explaining a similar notion given by P1 whereby freedom is found in solitude (Fig.4.19). Like P1, he was also inspired by the artwork of Albert Bierstadt’s ‘Floating Iceberg and a Small Boat’ (Appendix 3.4). P9 admitted he was immediately captured by the serenity transmitted through this artwork during the museum visit. Furthermore, he reinterpreted the artwork as follows:

“Although there were other seascape paintings that captured me at the museum, the ‘Iceberg’ painting was the one that kept sort of haunting me. As soon as I saw this painting, it gave me a sense of freedom and serenity, which nowadays is all I look for. I had tears streaming down my face, it was a sort of relief when I stood in front of this painting. That is the reason for choosing to develop the theme ‘Freedom’. I created this work, inspired by the ‘Iceberg’ painting, using corrugated cardboard, burnt polystyrene and paint. I wanted to show the sunset with paint but did not manage to finish... so this work is unfinished and for the first time I do not feel anxious about the fact that it is not yet finished as I appreciate the process I have been through... reflecting while working and not simply rushing to finish off work.”



Fig.4.19 P9's Theme Development

Due to the fact that P10 dropped out of Caritas Rehab, this participant was not present during the last workshop in which the final presentations concerning their theme development were delivered. Fig.4.20 shows P10's development of work explained through his last self-evaluation. In my field-notes, I wrote his explanation as follows:

“I cannot write so I chose pictures from newspapers and magazines that have to do with the theme of ‘Me and Others’ showing me as a refugee who came on a boat. The picture printed from the image of the NMFA photo by Darrin Zammit Lupi reminds me what I have been through. The pictures showing different kinds of boats...and then people smiling, all wishing for the same ‘happy’ boat trip and ‘happy’ life. The yin-yang symbol represents the good and bad that we find in people wherever we are.”



Fig.4.20 P10's Theme Development

4.1.9 Challenges

Although the project did not have a fixed time-table, it required time management due to the fact that it was limited to only eight sessions of two hours each within a drug-rehab context. In addition, some structure was also required to encourage participants to reflect on their own constructed interpretations of art and theme-development.

In the final interviews, when asked about suggestions for improvements to the project workshops, all participants insisted on the need for more time, either to have more discussions, or more practice, or for the workshops' duration or for the duration of the whole project. For instance, P1 complained that "there were moments where we did not have enough time to continue discussing". Similarly, P8 suggested "I wish there was more time allocated for discussions." Contrastingly, P6 said he wished there was "more time to draw... more time for practice" while P2 said "in just two hours we achieved a lot, let alone what we could have achieved in three or more hours." On the other hand, P9 complained about something totally different - the lack of materials, arguing that "I have everything at home...to make sculpture with woodwork, metal or organic... here I did not have all the material necessary to develop my work." This participant was very creative and it was challenging for him to create work with basic materials. Later, he admitted he understood that the project's aims included much more than the development of the artistic technical aspect.

During the final workshop's evaluation session, the participants agreed that since the project promoted holistic learning and skills for life not just for an exam or for a job, it should be provided all year round and each session lasting two or three hours. Their suggestion made me wonder whether three hours would have solved the time-management issue with this community of participants, considering that they craved the opportunity for discussions. For those participants who required more time for understanding, time would still have been an issue. Another concern is whether additional time and sessions would have led to exhaustion for this community of participants, who were going through drug withdrawal symptoms. When I asked the directors, they explained that the Caritas Rehab programme had a tight schedule. They reminded me that my workshop's two hour sessions were replacing the two hour spiritual session, which was to resume right after the end of my project.

Another challenge was the learning environment. The room originally allocated for the project's workshops presented a challenging environment due to its narrow dimensions, and having only two small tables, no whiteboard and no projection facilities. It was also too warm. It was an effective strategy to check out materials and room allocation two weeks before the workshops started. This gave me enough time to buy the necessary materials and to change the original room allocation. Once I refused the narrow room, and was offered the media room instead which, while equipped with projectors, air-conditioning and comfortable chairs, lacked tables for the practical activities. In a way, the challenging environment also gave the participants the possibility to practice creative thinking and collaborative skills. Some participants chose to work on a bench outside the media-room, others enjoyed lying on the floor to work, while others joined chairs to create a working surface (Fig.4.21).

The participants often insisted that individual work was important because once they get out of the Caritas Rehab programme, they could take away the artwork together with the art journal, as 'souvenirs' to remind them of their learning experience. This made me wonder whether their attitude towards producing collaborative artworks would have changed, had the Caritas environment provided a gallery/ showcase for the permanent display of collaborative works created during their stay. Once the project was over, I suggested this to the directors who agreed it would be a good idea for the future. For some time afterwards, the artworks together with the creative process developed throughout the project, were still being displayed at an exhibition within the Caritas premises, accessible to visitors and other residents.



Fig.4.21 Participants' creative process on their own created working-surfaces

4.1.10 Effective Educational Strategies

The coded final interviews reveal that all participants mentioned ways in which the project provided them with meaningful learning experiences. A few quotes extracted from the final interviews indicate the participants' awareness of effective educational strategies, such as “you have allowed us the freedom to create... you never imposed on us, because we are the type of people who when told what to do, we immediately reject it... but you have been giving us a direction and then we were free to continue the way we wanted to.” (P4). Another participant mentioned his awareness of the benefits of educational strategies like “to start a creative process...

the questions that guided me to reflect where I stopped last time and to clarify how I would be proceeding next... this creative process was something I used to find difficult so the project helped me to learn that by reflecting on my ideas, I could clarify my thoughts to continue creating the work.” (P7). These two quotes confirm the project’s effective educational strategies through a constructivist approach where the educator “intervenes only as required to guide the students in the appropriate direction” (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142).

Both the emergent codes of the final interviews and the coded field notes (Appendix 3.2) show that while expressing their appreciation of the project’s learning benefits, the participants expressed awareness of the skills practiced and the strategies which they considered effective. Table 4.1 shows the most frequently mentioned learning benefits associated with the educational strategies applied during the workshops. Further on, each educational strategy is discussed in detail.

Participants’ mentioned learning benefits	Effective Educational Strategies
Reflecting on and evaluating our choices in life Self-discovery Creative and critical thinking skills Communication skills Social skills Discovering new abilities Life-long learning	<p>Self-evaluation: both expressed orally and written in the art journals.</p> <p>Discussions, while observing the museum collection and of topics that arose during the workshops.</p> <p>Presentations of work-in-progress and Peer-evaluation that generated constructive criticism for further development of work.</p>
Learning to look at and talk about art through the art museum The museum visit as a meaningful new experience to interact with others to explore art and life	<p>The role-play activity of the ‘Museum Tour Guide’ that automatically engaged the participants with the collection and each other.</p> <p>The museum visit that provided alternative ways of seeing and links to their theme development.</p>
Mind-map concept Clarification of thoughts Making connections Trying, continuing and not giving up	<p>Mind-maps, constructed collectively on the white-board and individually in the art journal.</p>

Art as a learning process to develop ideas Linking art appreciation and art making	The art journal as a space to reflect, develop and present ideas.
NMFA artworks related to the themes Most commonly relevant theme: 'Family'	The general social themes , offered as examples of themes, leading to the development of a theme which resonated mostly with their own narratives.

Table 4.1 Learning Benefits associated with Effective Educational Strategies

4.1.11 Self-Evaluation

Research on the effects of self-evaluation found that it promotes lifelong learning skills as learners become aware of their responsibility to monitor their own learning, improve where necessary and think about the way forward (Kurnaza and Çimer, 2010). For this reason, I encouraged this strategy throughout the project. Its practice needed to be introduced for these participants and sustained through reminders and my own example by keeping field notes to learn together with them. Reminders consisted of guiding questions such as: *'What else did you discover today about your chosen theme? Did you find other connections between the museum collection and your theme? Did you collaborate with others today?'*

The participants mentioned that documenting their self-evaluations in their art journals (Fig.4.22) provided a few minutes of silence for deeper reflection. It also provided them with more confidence to present their work-in-progress to the rest of the group. Discussing their learning discoveries while flipping through their art journals, they kept reminding each other of further learning that occurred. The participants mentioned the ways in which self-evaluations encouraged them to generate ideas and find more connections between the collection and their themes.

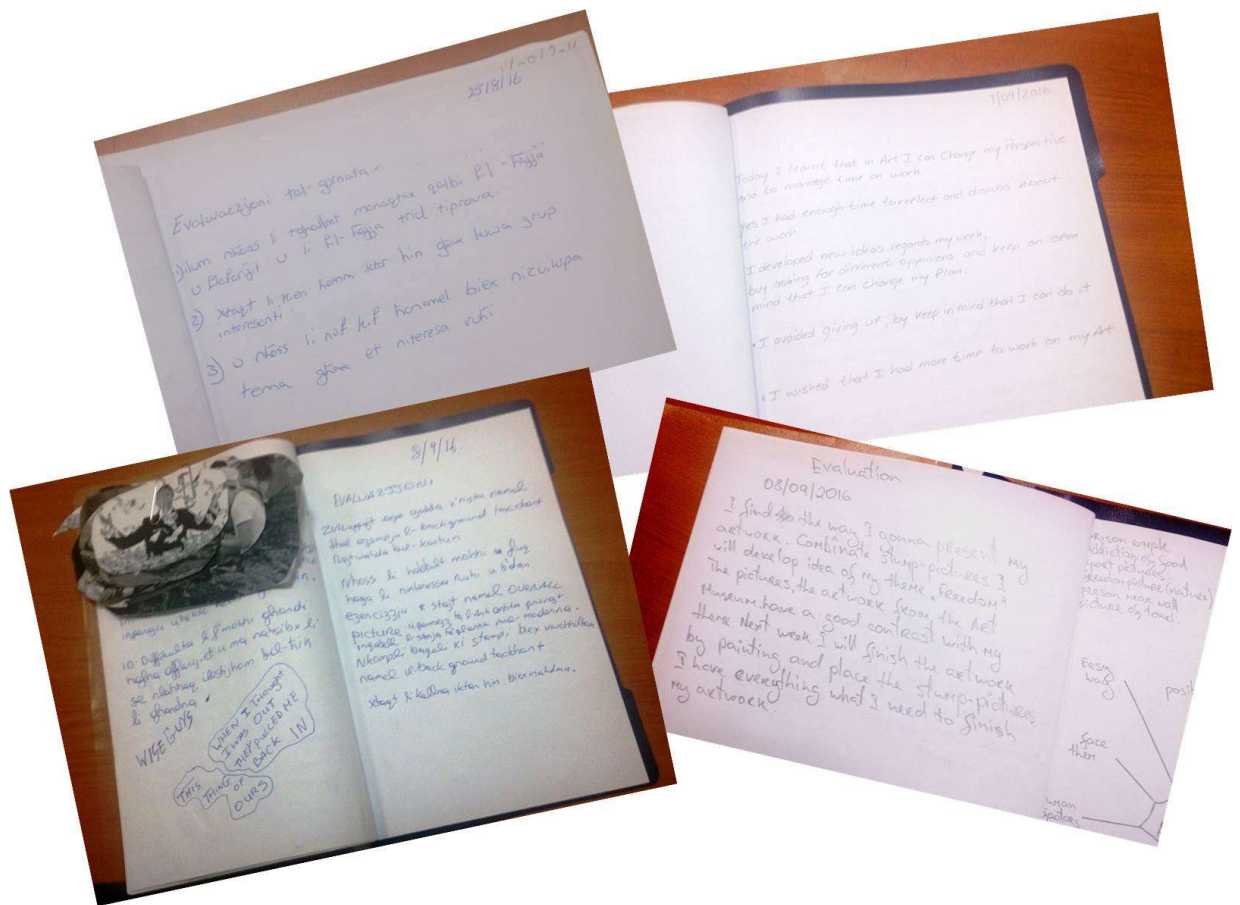


Fig.4.22 Some participants’ self-evaluations on art journals

4.1.12 Discussions

The strategy for raising discussions was not only based on my teaching experience but also on research showing that, through discussion, learners practise “how to analyse a situation or an object from different points of views” (Burnham and Kai-Kee, 2011:83). Even if I did not plan to raise discussions, they would arise naturally due to the project’s participatory approach. In fact, some interesting discussions were unplanned and concerned topics about life. During the evaluation sessions, the participants remarked that, through the workshops, they realised their need to discuss topics relevant for life, something which their rehab programme hardly provided time for. While monitoring them as they developed their work in practice, I often found myself discussing deep topics like ‘life and death’, ‘one’s life path/destiny/ purpose in life’ and ‘religious/spiritual

choices'. It was quite challenging to keep a neutral position at times but reminding myself to promote further thinking through an inquiry-based approach helped me avoid influencing them with my opinions. The questions I posed, in turn, stimulated the participants to question and challenge each other's opinions. This guided the construction of their own meanings on art, life and the themes they were developing. For instance, during the 7th workshop, the participants discussed how they saw the process of reflecting on the development of themes as intrinsically similar to the reflection process required for their life situations. This generated further discussions and questions about the meaning of life and the meaning behind creating art.

4.1.13 Presentations and Peer Evaluation

Since the participants were not used to the strategy of presenting their work development, at first this was quite challenging for most. Initially, some of them perceived presentations as a means of bluffing. When asked to give feedback on each other's work, they found it difficult to do so as they did not want to offend each other. Through acting out fictitious presentations of my work-in-progress and by encouraging them to provide me with constructive criticism, gradually they got used to it and by the end of the workshops, their final presentations and peer evaluations became quite fluent.

The presentations were often carried out at the start of the workshops. Most participants managed to explain the creative process of their work development by referring to their art journals. They talked about the techniques and materials used, the way their work linked to their chosen theme, the chosen NMFA artwork and also to their life. After each presentation, some participants asked questions and offered suggestions to each other which served for further constructive ideas. The participants mentioned that the presentations helped them recognise the value of the creative process. They explained that previously, their concept of art was more about the product and they expected to know step by step what needs to be done to finish it off quickly. As they watched each other's presentations, they realised that art allows one the freedom to make mistakes while experiencing an unknown journey.

As seen from the final interviews, the participants realised that listening to the feedback of others about their work was not as offensive as they thought it might be at first. On the other hand, it was helpful in validating interpretations and in providing alternatives for further connections with the collection. This recalls constructivist principles where the active meaning-making of learners and their interpretations (Sienkiewicz, 2015) result in different constructed meanings of the collection (Mayer, 2005) and are considered valid even if they do not correspond with curatorial narratives and meanings (Hein, 2005).

4.1.14 The Concepts of Mind-mapping and the Art Journal

Educational research shows that when used through a constructivist learning approach, since learning occurs through a process of linking up information, “mind-maps have an important place as a lifelong learning tool” (Erdem, 2017:1). Considering that this project could serve for lifelong learning through connections between art and life, mind-maps were seen as a suitable strategy. During several evaluation sessions, the participants mentioned how the ‘mind-map’ construction was very helpful firstly as the project led them to make meaning out of their self-identity (Fig.4.23), their needs (Fig.4.24) and their chosen theme (Fig.4.25). Secondly, they found mind-maps useful to clarify their thoughts on their personal life situations at that time. The participants admitted that the process of constructing mind-maps encouraged them to visualise their thoughts.

Clear evidence of the impact of the mind-map on the participants, was available when three new participants joined the project. I observed the original participants showing their mind-maps to the new ones while mentioning ways of how mind-mapping has been serving them throughout their daily life, especially whenever they feel confused and need to clarify their mind or generate ideas.

provided by the participants' frequent comments on how they felt that they owned their learning thanks to the documentation of their observations, ideas and self-evaluations in the art journal. In addition, they often insisted they will continue the habit of art journaling after the project is over as it helps them visualise, express and understand what is often trapped inside. Exploring materials through the use of the art journal, while creating their art, led them to collaborate and exchange artistic techniques. As a result of the open-ended experiences of the art journal, further "open-ended and dialogue-based" (Sienkiewicz, 2015:237) interactions were promoted.



Fig.4.26 Participants' Art Journals

At a later workshop, most participants indicated their belief that the art journal had a stronger learning value than the artworks which they were trying to finish. This indicated their awareness of the value of a learning process.

4.1.15 Theme Development:

Based on a constructivist conceptual framework of learning, the project set the participants on a problem-solving journey — to develop a theme with reference to the national art museum collection. Their learning depended on their selected theme as it drove their creative process. They constructed their own meanings “to discover and create knowledge to fit their belief system” (Cooperstein and Wiedinger, 2004:142) while building on previous knowledge which they had negotiated through social interaction and practising life-long skills.

Participants were reminded that the general social themes (Table 4.2) presented during the first workshop serve as a starting point for their own theme development. Thus they felt free to discuss and explore the themes at a deeper level to come up with their own themes. By exploring their interests and needs before choosing the theme they wished to develop, they were able to identify a theme which is relevant to them.

THE GENERAL SOCIAL THEMES
Representation of the self (self-identity portrait... body image and beauty standards emotions and moods...personal narratives...how much do we identify with our physical appearance and with the various roles we play in society?)
Human relationships (friendships, family, citizenship, cultural identity, solitude, gender issues... in what ways do human beings relate to each other?... Why do we need to relate?)
War and Violence (freedom, social justice, fear of diversity, racial discrimination, poverty, suffering, pride, power struggle...What has been going on and is still going on for greed, power, pride?)
Religion and Spirituality (Village feasts? Churches? Society’s dominant beliefs? Spiritual beliefs? Do we often judge people’s behaviour on religious or non-religious beliefs? Do we practise tolerance for different beliefs or non-beliefs?)
Environmental issues (natural surroundings and built surroundings, recycling and reusing, animal welfare...How is our surrounding affecting us? What are we doing to protect the environment/ animals?)

Table 4.2 General social themes

Presenting the generic list of social themes led the participants to think about experiences and how these can generate further ideas. Consequently this raised interesting debates and further questions. It was interesting to note that such debates led the participants to share ideas regarding how they envisioned the development of particular themes. They believed that in return, their theme development would serve them to deal better with their real-life challenges. In the final interviews, one of the participants noticed that “in a way all themes were relevant” (P7). During the NMFA visit, P9 recognised that “a lot of works from the NMFA collection were relevant to the themes” presented during the project. Meanwhile when the participants discussed the general social theme of ‘human relationships’, it was clear that most of them found it relevant as they started sharing personal experiences, some of which included guilt feelings. This led to the ‘family’ theme being the most common.

The final interviews further confirmed the popularity of the choice of the ‘family’ theme as three participants used the same wording. Of course, all three participants gave a different meaning. For instance, P3 confessed that it reminded him of “my girlfriend and my daughter... very relevant theme, as I never appreciated them unfortunately due to my drug addiction”. On the other hand, P4

said that “right now my girlfriend is pregnant, so this theme is very relevant for me.” Meanwhile, P7 argued that “although I did not choose the family theme, I still learned from listening to the views of others on the subject.” Similarly, P6 stated that “the themes we discussed were all important, as we could use them for life.” Contrastingly, during the interview P7 generalised the choice of theme for all as he replied that “the self-awareness theme... I consider this theme as the most relevant for us here at the Drug Rehab.”

Although the project was not aimed to be a form of art therapy, it seemed to provide some indirect form of healing to this community of young adults. This is especially due to their own choices of themes, which encouraged their meaning-making of either their confused thoughts, their guilt feelings or the need for tranquillity. For instance, both P5 and P8 chose the theme of ‘War’, but for P8 the interpretation was very personal, as he said “I consider war has always been going on within myself for a long time and only now am I finding some peace.”

4.1.16 The Role-Play Task

Since the NMFA was still open at the time of Project 1, a museum visit was included. The participants said they found the museum visit very meaningful as they could experience the authentic museum collection and engage directly with the artworks to prepare for their role as a museum guide as required by the role-play task. For the role-play, they needed to imagine they were the new museum guide and explain reasons for choosing three artworks they found most relevant for the development of their chosen theme. Thus, indirectly, the role-play activity provided the participants with an active opportunity to get familiar with the museum and its collection. As they wandered from one artwork to the next, they engaged in observations, reflections, discussions, interpretations and meaning-making. They documented this learning process in their art journals, which eased the presentation of their explanations to the rest of the group.

Unlike the learner and activity centred role-play task, the participants said they felt uncomfortable during the introductory guided tour provided by the museum staff. The museum narratives were presented as “non-negotiable... built around a high level of knowledge of scholarly disciplines” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006:242) and did not engage the participants. I could also observe the

participants' lack of attention span and bored facial expressions, which had to be blurred in the photos to respect the ethical rules. Perhaps this was not only due to their lack of art history background but also because they felt the knowledge power-relation gap between themselves and the museum guide. This confirms that while such ready-made museum tours work for an audience interested in art history which expects the museum expert to deliver knowledge, in the case of this project's participants, it disengaged them. Arrangements for this project's museum visit were made a month before the visiting-date, including information being given on the role-play task and on the background of the participants' identity. Nevertheless, it seemed that prior to the visit the museum guide had not been informed.

After having politely suggested to the museum guide to conclude the tour as our visit was limited to two hours, I observed that the participants started walking around the museum with more confidence as they felt more at ease. They roamed around with a purpose in mind - *the role-play task*, but this time they were the ones who decided how to work towards that purpose, which is to problem-solve and take decisions, while also keeping their own time-management. This experiential learning approach enabled participants to manage their own learning agenda and stimulated their discoveries of ways of interpreting the museum collection vis-a-vis their chosen theme. Their learning agenda did not include artists' biographies or historical information as assumed by the museum staff. Just like the mind-map tool, the generic themes and the art-journal, the role-play task provided a flexible structure which guided their learning discoveries but did not impose the learning contents.

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005:71) argue that "deep knowledge of artworks is a part of good gallery teaching" and Barrett (2000:11) points out that interpretation "runs the risk of being overly idiosyncratic or too personal". However, my project did not aim at art teaching in the art museum. It aimed to explore the participants' own ways of learning, using the art museum for holistic lifelong learning. In conclusion, the observation of the experience of the participants in a museum visit revealed the importance of getting to know the audience beforehand, thus facilitating the ability to make learning connections between their interests and the museum collection. The findings of Project 1 show that, a ready-made museum tour is irrelevant for reaching out to a community of young adults who have a strong need to feel in control, who are going through drug

withdrawal symptoms and have a short attention span. Regardless of how well organised it is and how qualified a museum guide may be in art history and in the museum collection, a museum tour should not be imposed as a learning agenda for all.

Reflecting on the experience of the project itself and the analysis of data collected for Project 1, I reflected on whether an effective museum education outreach necessitates the visit to the museum premises. The participants still engaged with the collection by observing its projected images. Would the collection's projection of images or the virtual exhibition of the collection be sufficient to give more time for observations and deep engagement with the chosen artworks? This question links to the discussion of findings of Project 2. In this project the participants had the task of constructing virtual exhibitions, as well as choosing the theme they would develop with reference to digital images of the NMFA collection.

4.2 Project 2

4.2.1 The Purpose of Project 2

The purpose of Research Project 2 was to investigate museum educational strategies which can reach out to a community of seven young adults, having an undergraduate academic level of education, as the chosen participants of this project. The museum education strategies investigated through the project differed from strategies used by an art lecturer because the investigation shifted to the participants' own educational strategies constructed while they engaged with the museum collection. Unlike university lectures, throughout the project the participants were not learning under examination pressure but were involved in holistic lifelong learning. Project 2 set the participants on a task involving the creation of a Virtual Exhibition (VE) with reference to the national art museum collection. This task would be carried out in parallel with another research process which would create an exhibition making reference to their NMFA visit (a month before the museum closure), as part of their Bachelor in Education Degree (B.Ed.) final course year at the University of Malta.

4.2.2 The Participants' Identity

Bearing in mind that the participants of Project 2 were full-time University students who have been trained in art education, I was aware that they already had a good background of art knowledge and art education. By drawing on their own experience, both as young creative practitioners and as trained educators, I felt confident that these participants could come up with strategies which can instigate a learning process out of their own art practice. These participants were trained in contemporary art education, and with the approach whereby knowledge is constructed through active learning. This was in line with the general pedagogical and theoretical framework of my research study based on constructivist learning theories.

In addition, the participants were trained to fulfil their educator's role by encouraging self-discovery knowledge through experiential learning. Hence, the findings of Project 2 stemmed from the concerns, debates and suggestions of a group of young adults with a background in academic art and art pedagogy, aiming to contribute to MUŽA's provision of educational outreach for other young adults. Appendix 3.1 (Project 2) gives further details about the participants' identity and context.

4.2.3 Discussion of Findings

As indicated in the detailed projects' contexts in Appendix 3.1, similar to Project 1, Project 2 also engaged its participants through a learning process while dealing with the development of their own chosen theme with reference to the NMFA collection. In contrast to the analysis for Project 1, bearing in mind that the participants of Project 2 were trained as artists and art educators, the project's impact could not be analysed through direct results gained from what the participants consider to be the benefits of the project. Instead, the discussion of findings for Project 2 was analysed indirectly, through the educational strategies constructed by the participants, based on developing the thematic Virtual Exhibitions (VE), which aim at reaching out to other young adults. As shown in Figure 4.29 and as listed below, six main categories of findings have emerged from the combined coded data of Project 2 (presented in Appendix 3.2 and 3.3):

- The relevance of the NMFA for young adults
- Suggestions for MUŽA's outreach strategies for young adults

- Practising transferable skills (cognitive and social)
- The virtual exhibition as a means of museum educational outreach
- Effective educational strategies as a result of the project
- Challenges of the project

Each of the above six categories is discussed in further detail later. Despite the different findings, four of these categories happened to be the same as those mentioned earlier in the discussion of findings for Project 1. Eventually, this may lead to a ‘common’ set of recommendations for museum educational outreach strategies including anticipated challenges to be adapted according to particular young adult community’s needs.

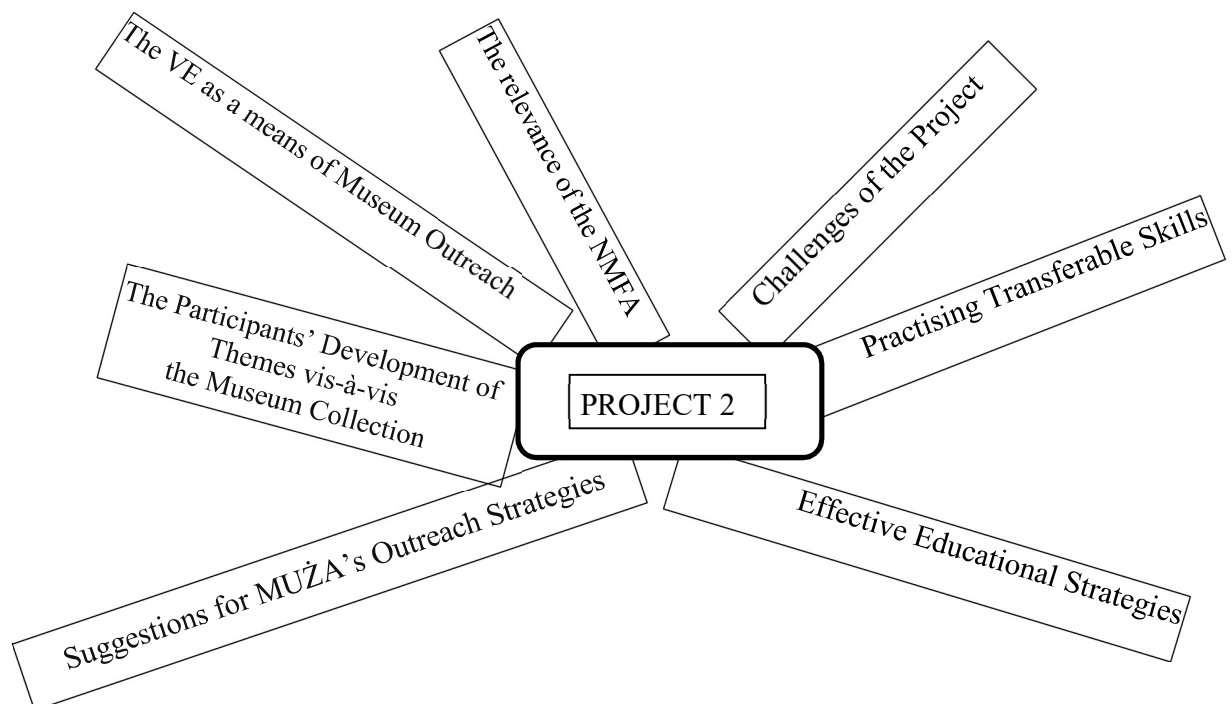


Figure 4.29 Project 2’s Six Main Categories of Findings

4.2.4 The Relevance of the NMFA for Young Adults

(P – Participant)

While research shows that museums are struggling to maintain relevance (Anderson, 2012; Kletchka, 2018), throughout Project 2 (see the Project context in Appendix 3.1), the participants struggled to give relevance to the national art museum. ‘Relevance’ here refers to how valuable the participants considered the museum according to their own culture and their interests in life. The participants commented on the relevance of the museum, or rather its irrelevance for them and other young adults, during the initial interviews and the initial phase of the project. The coded initial interviews (Appendix 3.2) show that all the participants at the time (2016-2017) considered the NMFA to be neither inspiring for them nor serving as a public educational resource. Five participants indicated that they considered the NMFA to be irrelevant due to its “boring atmosphere”. P2, P5 and P7 recounted their personal experiences as young adults who “used to leave with a sad mood every time I visited the museum” (P2) and perceived the museum as “a cold environment” (P5) where “everything is stiff, no experts going around to help you, little information...I cannot expect to be educated through a boring setting” (P7).

The participants’ expressions considering the NMFA as irrelevant might have stemmed from what Doering and Pekarik (1996) refer to as the visitors’ entry narrative to a museum, which often directs perceptions of satisfaction. Further on, the project task called for another aspect of ‘relevance’—the relation the participants perceived between the choice of artworks from the collection vis-à-vis the theme they chose to deal with. As noted in the field notes, while presenting their work in progress and their methods of linking their theme development to the museum collection, the participants confessed that the collection had little appeal.

Bearing in mind that effective learning is enhanced when learners feel a connection with what they are learning (Ball and Lai, 2006), I explored ways of fostering the museum’s relevance. One way was by setting tasks which elicit personal connections, such as the ‘self-identity’ mind-map. Delving through their multiple identities “situated in the realities of the physical and sociocultural world” (Falk, 2006b:113) served to guide their selection of a theme that is meaningful at a personal

level. Keeping their meaningful theme in mind, they started looking at the museum collection through personal narratives. Since “objects in a museum can breathe life as they become incorporated into visitors’ personal narratives” (Smedley, 2015:198), gradually a shift occurred in the participants’ previous judgement considering the NMFA as irrelevant. For instance, a participant said “I started noticing relevance of the collection only after going through detailed observations of artworks and personal reflections...not during the museum visit” (P5). Another participant revealed that “later on I noticed that the artworks helped me to get in touch with my inner child” (P7).

Research shows that young adults are attracted by contemporary museum collections, which are closer to the ‘now’ and the future (Bartlett et al., 2002). Similarly, this project’s participants blamed the NMFA’s irrelevance “as the majority of works in the NMFA collection are classic” (P3). Some participants mentioned that although they considered the NMFA collection to be limited, the modern and contemporary art section, (which they could only observe as digital images) was relevant to the themes they were developing. Nevertheless, unlike the participants of the other two projects, they still did not choose to refer to the NMFA contemporary collection in their VE thematic development. This made me wonder: why did the participants having a background in art and art education choose to connect their contemporary thematic VEs to the classic collection which they deemed to be a factor contributing to the NMFA’s irrelevance for young adults?

The coded final interviews revealed that only one participant (P1) found the visit to the NMFA to have helped with his theme development immediately. P1 explained that prior to the museum visit he still did not have a specific theme in mind, but after observing “plenty of artworks that referred to ‘death’, they immediately inspired me to choose the subject of death”, which eventually led to his decision to portray death through war. Paradoxically, for another participant it was of the NMFA’s “boring atmosphere” (P7) that led her to choose a cheerful theme concerning childhood. Her personal need to cheer up after the NMFA visit inspired her to transform the boredom into a positive VE experience for young adult visitors. These two participants’ replies show that their visit at the NMFA prior to the start of the project workshops to work on the theme development did indeed provide them with a thematic choice. Yet, their learning experience through using the museum collection still required facilitation.

During an evaluation session, the participants acknowledged that the further they dealt with the process of their VE theme development, the more links they could find with the collection. Up to the project's middle phase, their meaning-making and their links with the collection hardly derived from their own initiative. Often I had to guide them with open-ended questions about their themes while projecting digital images of the collection. Even though they had a background in art and art education, just like the participants of the two other projects, Project 2's participants admitted they would not have visited the NMFA out of their own initiative. It was the project's theme development task that motivated their NMFA visit. Then again, they were "active in the process of making sense of experience" and my educator's role was "to provide stimulating environments for learning" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000:24) adapting to their existing knowledge and encouraging different learning styles.

While showing their work-in-progress, the ones who demonstrated their discoveries of constructing virtual exhibitions through digital software became the experts. Moreover, through demonstrating research of their particular theme and experiments with unusual material (eg. wax and borax), all participants became experts in their field. Through such an exchange of knowledge, the educator is perceived as a learner (Sotto, 2007), constructing learning of the participants' discoveries, ways of connecting to the museum collection and learning styles. The participants' interpretations of the collection vis-à-vis their theme development, brought up several new outlooks and generated questions, which I had not previously considered.

Both the final interviews and their documented self-evaluations indicate that as the project progressed, the participants felt they could connect more to the NMFA collection, especially through viewing and reviewing digital images of the collection and zooming into them to observe details. P5 mentioned that the NMFA visit was irrelevant as it did not inspire her work. However, throughout the project, she realised that "when we viewed digital images of the collection in detail... I started noticing artworks that were related to my theme — the ones displaying everyday scenes". This revealed that by facilitating the participants' alternative ways of looking at the collection through projecting and zooming into digital images of it, their experience of the museum collection became more relevant than their previous museum visit. The participants explained that the digital images allowed them time to focus on details, review and zoom into them at their own

pace. Besides my observations and the final interviews, the visual documentation of two Participants' Art Journals (PAJ) continued to confirm this through their observations too, when stating:

“Zooming into the images of the NMFA artworks helped us to see the hidden details and meanings”. (PAJ 24.02.2017)

“Seeing the images of the NMFA artworks zoomed on screen helped us more in connecting them with our own work”. (PAJ 24.02.2017)

Such results indicate that some museum audiences may require lengthy exposure to the collection in order to find relevance and connect artworks to their own interests. Providing the audience with guidance to zoom and manipulate digital images of the collection on digital devices is one way of facilitating relevance through a lengthy exposure. Just like “objects do not speak for themselves” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006:236), digital devices on their own do not guarantee interaction of all public audiences with a museum collection. Being “digital natives”, the participants of Project 2 had more digital expertise than me — “a digital immigrant” (Prensky 2001). However, although most educators have learned to use digital devices later in life, they have more life experience to facilitate young adults' understanding of the context of the technology they use (Han et al., 2001). Unexpectedly, the participants of Project 2 still needed guidance to recognise that by zooming and rotating images, the collection could be observed in more detail and more time could be allocated for reflection and meaning-making. Meanwhile in the digital era, educators are no longer the only sources of knowledge. Thus, “being willing to learn from and with our students is important” (Han et al., 2001:83).

4.2.5 Reaching out to Young Adults

The coded field-notes and initial interviews, including comments gathered through the participants' focus group concerning feedback from their interview replies, reveal ideas for several potential strategies which MUŽA could use to engage a young adult audience. Below is a list of the resulting suggestions for MUŽA's outreach strategies targeting young adults within its premises. Later on another list presents suggestions for MUŽA's outreach programmes. Each suggestion is further

discussed and supported by the participants' own words, including the points listed below:

- Technological devices to facilitate interaction with the collection;
- Apps with the QR code for accessible information through a mobile device;
- Competitions such as the uploading of Facebook selfies next to artworks from the collection;
- Activities involving drama, re-enactment, creative story-writing, with reference to the collection;
- The presence of museum staff to address various audiences' learning needs;
- A varied collection including installations that could appeal to a wide spectrum of audiences;
- A colourful and vibrant environment;
- Treasure-hunts that encourage engagement with the collection and further research about it;
- Activities that encourage connection with the collection through the basic human senses.

The participants recommended that technological devices are used by MUZA, referring to the use of today's social media and apps to reach a diversity of young adults. One of them mentioned how he was inspired by the access to technological devices provided in museums abroad. He recalled that, "when entering the house of Gaudi in Barcelona, visitors are provided with a tablet which puts them in front of the fireplace and then replaces it with another image". He insisted that "the art collection needs to come to life because otherwise young people would not be interested" (P2). Meanwhile, P6 argued that "because today, young adults are immersed in social media, laptops, mobiles etc... they would consider the museum as a waste of time". She insisted that "it is a must that the museum provides technological devices". In a reply to another interview question, the same participant recommended that:

"the museum should organise Facebook selfie-competitions next to artworks from the collection...treasure hunts involving the use of an App with a QR code... if there is no painting title, the visitors could check it with a mobile phone immediately and they experience such discovery" (P6).

In a way, the participants' recommendations reflect the constant need of today's young adults for instant gratification, probably generated by technological devices and social media as they explore

the unknown to achieve satisfaction through their own discoveries. It makes me wonder: would the technological devices provided at a museum become just another resource, like those young adults already continuously consume? Given the insatiable crave for instant gratification, would a museum that offers an experience through technological devices end up as just another source of encouragement to seek the approval of others? Research shows that in an era where software updates and changes are frequent, a project-based task, providing a relevant goal, may work better for the digital natives (Gude, 2013). Han et al. (2017) argue that learners can easily access facts and techniques online, but when educators co-explore with them questions of “why?” and “so what?” they facilitate meaningful understandings of concepts related to art and life. This again points to the opportunity for MUŽA to reach out to young adults through educational programmes encouraging social interaction.

Although throughout my projects, I focused on educational programmes as strategies for MUŽA to reach out to young adults, the digital realm could also provide the basis for an outreach strategy. When it comes to the digital realm of museums, the participants’ suggestions are hardly representative of what is already available in museums worldwide. The Think Paper (Resources.riches-project.eu., 2019) highlights that digital museum games offer engaging exchanges, while “dialogic” apps on smartphones enable visitors to chat with museum educators who adapt learning to visitors’ learning preferences. This paper also indicates that eye-tracking devices, touch and gesture interfaces can stimulate multi-sensory perceptions through active participatory scenarios inspired by museums’ themes and collection. On the other hand, Nina Simon (2010) affirms that some visitors would never take initiative to engage with a museum interactive display. As indicated by the participants in this project, although there is a direct correlation between the young adults and the use of digital technologies, the participatory aspect for some museum visitors lies in their personal ‘silent’ engagement with art. On the other hand, a culture track survey (Halperin, 2017) indicates that museums have to become spaces for socialising rather than places for silent observation.

P2 and P6 also recommended social interactive approaches for MUŽA to engage young adults inside its premises by organising activities such as drama and re-enactment with reference to the

collection. As an example, P2 suggested young adults could “choose a painting and do a silent mime inspired by it”. Another suggestion he made was “to re-enact one of the displayed battle scenes... so they can start to create stories” He insisted that young adults need to find the museum experience “meaningful” and recommended the need for human connection at the museum, as young adults alone are not likely to make frequent visits to the museum voluntarily. In a way, his latter suggestion could imply that no matter how many technological devices a museum provides, young adults, especially those with no art background, would be more attracted to a museum that organises a structured activity or programme that facilitates social interaction. Four other participants later insisted on “the presence of museum staff” to guide the young adults around and carry out activities in an engaging manner.

Research shows that despite an increase in attention to the visitors’ needs (Anderson, 2004; De Backer et al., 2013), museums still focus on visitors with an art background rather than those unfamiliar with art and museums (Screven, 2004). Even though she had an art background, a participant still suggested that museum staff need to be present and ready to help out. She argued that:

“I am a young adult who loves art, but then there are young adults who find art irrelevant. So, what I would like to see in a museum... maybe more interaction... more experts around the museum who can talk with you. For me that I’m studying art... if I go to a museum and there is no one, I’m just looking and only maybe read the labels, but that’s it”. (P7)

Similarly, P3 said “not everyone has aesthetic knowledge... there should be a museum guide who explains according to what a young adult audience comes up with through their questions or suggestions”. Also, P4 brought up the need for “museum personnel to help out in guiding anyone’s museum experience”. Since in Malta, the role of museum educator is non-existent, when referring to the presence of museum personnel, the participants could not mention such a role. To provide meaningful museum experiences, without identifying the role of museum educator, Simon (2010) suggests that museum staff need to understand visitors’ needs by greeting them and prompting their responses to exhibitions.

On the other hand, P5 did not recommend having museum personnel to guide or facilitate young adults’ appreciation of the collection. Instead, she believed that the national art museum requires

better curatorship in selecting the museum's displayed objects so that they can appeal to a variety of audiences. She explained that:

“the museum collection should include different forms of art rather than simply paintings and sculptures. For example, installations that focus on engineering so that the museum can attract young adults who are into other aspects of life, not only those who are into art”.

Three participants suggested that MUŻA should aim to provide links to the collection, stimulating the basic human senses, such as applying devices for sound-effects next to particular artworks. As a way of connecting through the sense of seeing, P1 suggested “activities that engage the visitors to observe the collection, for example by finding ten different designs in the paintings”. Another example for an activity was provided by P3 who suggested “to find a list of objects within the paintings at the museum... then to figure out what to do with them”. Meanwhile, P6 recommended a way to connect to the sense of hearing at the museum, stating that the museum has to introduce sound-effects “for example, when seeing a painting showing 'the storm', one could wear headphones and listen to the sound of rain”.

The participants' suggestions for MUŻA to create connections with the senses could be provided through projects involving contemporary installations by artists or art students. Grounded in the philosophy that all knowledge, perceptions and emotions are based on the information people receive via their senses, museums such as Tate in London and Museum M in Leuven provided multisensory art experiences through a hybrid of permanent and contemporary exhibitions. In 2015, the Tate Sensorium, a multi-dimensional art display allowed visitors to experience artworks through sound, smells, tastes and more specifically touch, using innovative technology which creates three dimensional sensations that can be felt but not seen. This sensory approach to experiencing art helped visitors to connect with artworks stimulated by senses that trigger memory and imagination (Magagula, 2019). In 2018, a multi-sensory installation –‘Symphony at the Museum’- designed by three Master degree students, inspired by the works of Museum M enriched the visitors' experience as different senses were addressed. These in turn gave rise to emotions and connotations. For instance, an installation by Judit Szalipszki stimulating the senses of smell and hearing, provided the opportunity for visitors to engage with a 17th century still-life painting - Maerten Boelema de Stomme' s *Still life with ham and lemon* (Symphony at the Museum, 2019).

The coded initial interviews revealed that the participants contributed examples of ways through which MUŻA could promote its events and attract young adults, as listed below:

- Installing exhibitions showing some works in the collection, at various local councils;
- Projecting the modern and contemporary collection on local cities' bastion walls;
- Installing outdoor exhibitions of the collection in public spaces according to the environment the artworks portray, e.g. landscapes in nature and religious ones in churches;
- Organising outdoor exhibitions of the collection during local public events;
- Promoting MUŻA through University student organisations;
- Marketing MUŻA and its collection through public transport interior/exterior;
- Organising competitions requiring an awareness of the collection through museum visits;
- A television-series (drama) including features from the collection;
- Advertising the museum experience and events through the University's Facebook page;
- Information programmes on television about visiting museums or showing re-enactments of particular artworks through the participation of young adults dressed up in related outfits.

Despite the participants' training in art education, it is remarkable that none of them suggested museum outreach examples through schooling contexts. On the other hand, a few participants of Project 1 suggested that holistic activities like those they experienced through the project should be offered at schools.

4.2.6 Examples of Museum Outreach Activities and Programmes

Most of the participants' suggestions were based on visitors who had enough time to engage with individual artworks in a museum. Inspired by the participants' suggestions, literary sources (Jagodzińska, 2017; Symphony at the Museum, 2018; Magagula, 2019) and my internship experience in Leuven (Retina Project, 2018), the following recommendations are categorised

according to the engagement time required to involve young adults in museum educational activities:

A one-time visit activity (duration of 1 or 2 hours):

- Quizzes and treasure-hunts, e.g.: facilitating interaction with the collection and further research on the artworks' details through the use of technological devices such as smart phones;
- Competitions, e.g.: the uploading of selfies on MUŽA's website imitating facial expressions or poses next to portraits and figure sculptures. whereby the ones which get most votes would have their photo printed and displayed at the museum entrance for a month;
- Museum forums, e.g.: inviting participants to discuss social and environmental issues by selecting relevant works from the collection;
- *For young adult artists/art students:* Sketching sessions of MUŽA collection to develop a theme they would be working on.

A short-term programme (for example an intensive weekend) featuring:

- A creative process, e.g.: inviting participants to select works from the collection and bring related objects from home. This initiates their learning process of creating, exhibiting and interpreting their own artworks inspired by the collection and objects brought from home.
- Freedom in the museum gallery, e.g.: offering materials like paints, crayons, brushes and paint-rollers and asking participants to collaboratively create art on a wall space at the museum, following an instruction to improve, remove, transform and replace. This would then serve to inspire reactions from other participants or public visitors (Jagodzińska, 2017). At MUŽA, this could be carried out on the walls of the upper rooms intended for seminars and those of the workshop rooms at the ground floor.

- *For young adult artists/art students:* Inviting participants for painting sessions inspired by old masters. The creative process and final artworks of the students could then be exhibited temporarily at the MUŽA ground floor corridors and via the museum's website and social media. Billboards in prominent roads could display images of the old masters' and the students' creations next to each other. This can encourage public feedback on contemporary interpretations of old artworks at MUŽA.

A long-term programme (e.g.: activities on weekly basis for four months or more)

- Re-enacting art through creative story-writing, e.g.: inviting participants to collaboratively imagine and write stories and conversations regarding selected artworks of MUŽA collection. Once the stories are created, they are to convert them into scripts which re-enact their interpretations of the artworks. This programme could develop into a project involving young adult actors and performing arts students. Their performance could be held at the MUŽA yard, surrounded by a display of the participants' selected works of art. Eventually this could also involve young adult photographers/ videographers/ digital art students to shoot/ film the re-enactments.
- Curating an exhibition, e.g.: inviting participants to become familiar with various aspects of museum works by visiting the stored collection to select artworks, meeting various employees (curators, conservators, graphic designers) and creating the concept of a temporary exhibition (Retina Project, 2018; Jagodzińska, 2017). At MUŽA, the corridors are wide enough for the public display of temporary exhibitions created and co-curated with the participants during museum educational programmes.
- *For young adult artists/ art students:* Creating multi-sensory art experiences, e.g.: inviting participants to design multi-sensory installations (Symphony at the Museum, 2018), inspired by works from the MUŽA collection. An evaluation of their installations could be gained through observing/ surveying the responses of public visitors who look at the artworks and engage with the installations, thus experiencing art through the senses.

This section shows that at the time, with reference to the NMFA, the participants imagined several ways of how a national art museum could become relevant, serving as an encounter for young adults. Yet, now that MUŻA has been open to the public for a year, the museum staff has still not taken initiatives which could make collections relevant for young adults. Neither community outreach programmes nor any activities mentioned in this section are being held to encourage young adults to visit the premises or engage with the museum collection.

4.2.7 Transferable skills

In their chapter regarding the constructivist learning approach, Cooperstein and Kocevar-Wiedinger state that when planning, “all sessions, whether designed for a specific class or not, should include transferable skills” (2004:143). As noted in the field notes and recorded through visual documentation, while exploring ways to construct their VE, the participants became aware of their practice of transferable skills, mostly their cognitive and social abilities. In her self-evaluation, one participant noted that the project provided her the opportunity to think deeply about her final coursework project. She found that the VE task was “fundamental at the end of the B.Ed. course to clarify further my development of work for the final project” (PAJ 3.02.2017). Two participants mentioned the benefit of the project in terms of the opportunity to value their constructive criticism on their initial interviews replies. One noted that, “reviewing our interviews’ replies served to encourage constructive criticism” (PAJ 3.02.2017). Another wrote that “the fact that we were given the opportunity to think about our own replies promoted understanding” (PAJ 3.02.2017).

The participants referred to the sharing of their opinions concerning young adults’ trends with reference to those mentioned by the CEO of Agenzija Żgħażaġh, which in turn evoked ideas about ways through which their VE could be meaningful for other young adults. As the project evolved within a social setting, it provided the participants with an “opportunity to compare and share their ideas with others... to vocalise their knowledge” (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004: 142). Thus, they no longer needed to check their learning with me. In other words they no longer considered me as the only expert. They could confidently collaborate with each other to find solutions for each social theme and provide alternative ideas. Another instance where their collaborative approach led to construction of knowledge and reduced my intervention, was while

sharing their discoveries, after having explored digital software and unusual materials to develop their VE creation. Apart from the previously mentioned thinking and collaborative skills, the participants' abilities in constructing through their own knowledge, also demonstrated their practice of other transferable skills such as problem-solving and innovation.

During a discussion, the participants pointed out the similarity between the learning experience they obtained through applying thinking and social skills and that which their VE viewers can also experience. The practice of transferable skills through a virtual exhibition was also indicated by Samis (2007) when maintaining that digital media engages interpretation and consequently arousing interest and curiosity for learning. Some participants argued that since their VEs concern controversial issues, this in itself would stimulate other viewers, particularly considering the practice of thinking by young adults and their social skills. The participants estimated that their VE, while serving as a teaser to their physical exhibition, would also stimulate the curiosity of other young adults and encourage them to think 'outside the box' on the chosen controversial issue or other issues that would come to their mind. This showed that the intention of their VE had undergone a gradual shift.

The participants' initial intention behind exhibiting their work was based on personal pride in having developed their theme with reference to the museum collection, similar to that of the participants of Project 1 and 3. Later on, the aim became to stimulate thinking and feelings by raising public awareness about social and environmental issues. All participants agreed that their intention behind the VE was not to impose their message on other young adults. Instead, they said that they would "welcome misinterpretations" or "different themes to emerge" that would eventually "encourage the visitors to carry out further research". Hence, their VE's intentions also aimed at promoting the practice of transferrable skills, especially thinking, social and life-long learning.

Three participants explained that, having provided the audience with access to the creative process of their VE in an inquiry-based approach, the VE would be an educational experience in itself as it promotes critical thinking and further research. P3 insisted that "the display of my own creative process through questions and sketches, indicating the creative process for my meaning-making of

the theme, could likewise guide the audience to go through a learning process”. Similarly, P7 explained that her VE “encourages the audience to think in alternative ways and practice critical and creative thinking” while P5 talked about how her VE creation exposed a creative process “serving for the audience’s development of ideas and inspirations which can keep evolving”. Correspondingly, two participants mentioned the value of the VE experience as a starting point and added that “while reflecting about issues that they strongly feel about... it could also serve as an eye-opener for further research resulting in deeper learning”(P4). Likewise, P6 argued that “the VE may provide a point of departure to ask questions within oneself and to others... to trigger questions, participation, action, which is the learning experience of my VE”. Similarly, studies show that virtual museums support an active experiential learning approach. This encourages the learners’ self-discovery as they access the information they choose, reach their own conclusions and construct their own knowledge (Ott and Pozzi, 2011; Ismaeel and Al-Abdullatif, 2016).

4.2.8 The Virtual Exhibition

As to their parallel work on the VE as well as the exhibition (part of their final coursework assignment), one of the intriguing debates the participants used to have concerned the benefits and limitations of a VE. Some participants expressed the view that the ‘virtual’ exhibition has more advantages than the ‘physical’, as digital facilities such as zooming and rotating images could lead to better appreciation of artworks’ details. This aligns with the virtual accessibility offered by over a thousand world-famous museums through the Google Art project. The gigapixel resolution of most images allows online visitors to zoom on brushstrokes and details that are difficult to observe in a busy museum with regular lighting (Google Arts and Culture, 2019). This poses the question: if currently people can access museums’ high-definition reproductions of artworks, why would they still visit art museums?

While debating, the participants referred to their own museum experiences. They compared their physical visit of the collection at the NMFA, darting from one artwork to the next, with their reviewing parts of the collection virtually. They admitted that their virtual experience of the collection provided them with the opportunity to pause between one artwork to another and to zoom into artwork details they had previously ignored. In fact, a participant wrote that “zooming

into the images of the NMFA artworks helped us to see the hidden meanings” (PAJ 24.02.2017). During a workshop, the participants discussed the difficulty of dedicating one’s full attention to each work whenever visiting an art museum. Moreover, they admitted that having more time to observe an artwork virtually was more effective, as appreciating its details led one to discover further the relevance of the collection to their theme development. On the other hand, research shows that many museums are now offering slow-art-tours specifically for visitors to slow down and take their time to observe and connect with the displayed art (Rosenbloom, 2014).

Overall, most participants said that a physical exhibition’s authenticity can be experienced directly as the textures, brushstrokes, dimensions and aura of the artworks can be sensed. Tom Jacobs (2017), a culture journalist, maintains that facing an original artwork in person is an irreplaceable experience because the aura that original works hold, cannot be reproduced. So, I think that once again it all depends on the visitors’ preferences and intentions when visiting an art museum physically or accessing it virtually. But what about those who are unaware of the physical and the virtual accessibility to the knowledge provided by art museums? Museum educational outreach is required in both formats to reach out to audiences’ different learning styles.

The coded final interviews revealed that the participants’ main educational ambitions through their VEs were to raise public awareness of social issues and to encourage thinking and discussions. Correspondingly, research shows that virtual exhibitions engage interpretation, increase motivation and awaken interest and curiosity for learning (Samis, 2007). Another suggestion that participants came up with concerned the much-needed MUŽA collection online to improve public accessibility. However, according to Cairns (2013), making museum collections available online does not guarantee public accessibility and engagement.

Eventually, the participants’ aspiration of having their VE installed at MUŽA evolved during the project. They realised that their VE could also be made available online, beyond MUŽA premises, and thus their VE could be accessible to all, generating several interpretations and feedback. This recalls critic Lawrence Alloway’s democracy of popular culture “ready to be consumed and understood by all, in their own terms” (in Myers, 2011:11).

4.2.9 Effective Educational Strategies

As a result of Project 2, comments by the participants confirm the effectiveness of the planned and emergent educational strategies. This is evident from their art journals and also through my field notes of observations of their actions during workshops. These were categorised in three of the emerging coded field notes (Appendix 3.2). Re-watching the video documentation of the workshops also helped with the analysis of effective educational strategies, in the following ways:

- Providing digital images of the museum collection (for zooming into details);
- Encouraging mind-mapping;
- Allowing time for reflection and evaluation through art journaling and collaboration;
- Addressing the participants' learning needs through discussing emergent themes;
- Presenting generic themes to facilitate the participants' choice of their own themes.

In my initial scheme of work for the workshops of Project 2, I assumed that the participants, being University students, would already have knowledge and experience of the mind-mapping technique. Thus, my first workshop's plan was to elicit and link the participants' own ways of constructing tangible mind-mapping before exploring digital mind-mapping. However, just like the participants of the other projects, the concept of mind-mapping required an introduction also in this case. As expected in an action research approach, I constantly needed to adapt plans to fit the participants' learning needs. The visual documentation, contained in the participants' journals, reveals how they engaged with the concept of mind-mapping (Fig.4.30).

Evidence of how the participants constructed their own knowledge can be found in the concluding arguments which refer to the use of brainstorming prior to mind-mapping to list ideas about any topic and to construct a mind-map to expand their thoughts on the chosen theme. The introduction of the mind-map concerned general themes which they felt familiar with, e.g. self-identity (Fig.4.31a) and universal needs (Fig.4.31b). For the latter mind-map, the participants first brainstormed the 'universal young adult needs' using the whiteboard (Fig.4.32). This enabled them to check the list of needs which they consider that young adults have in common.

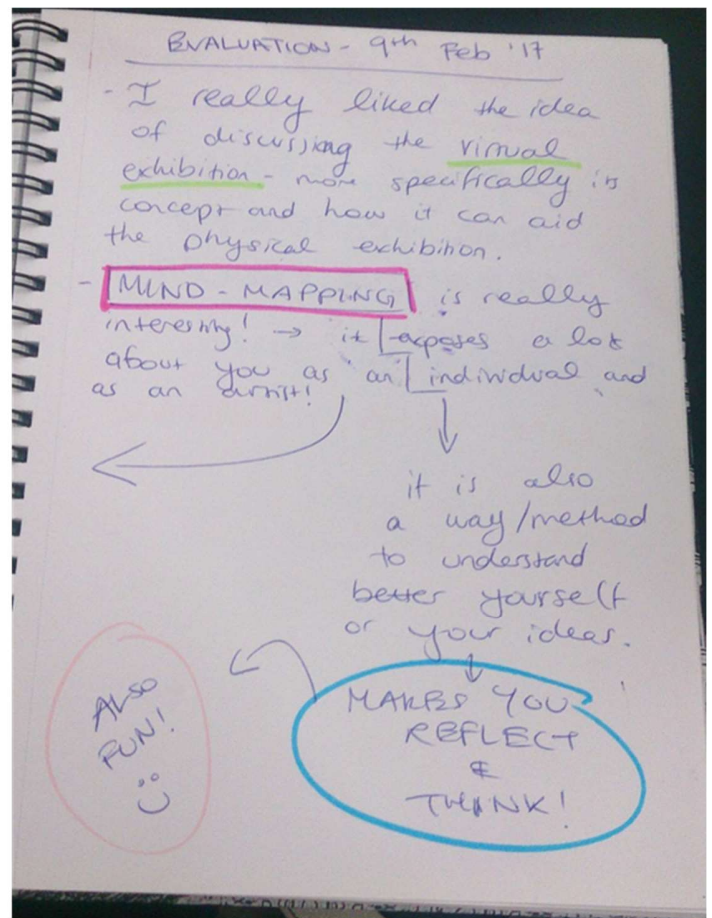
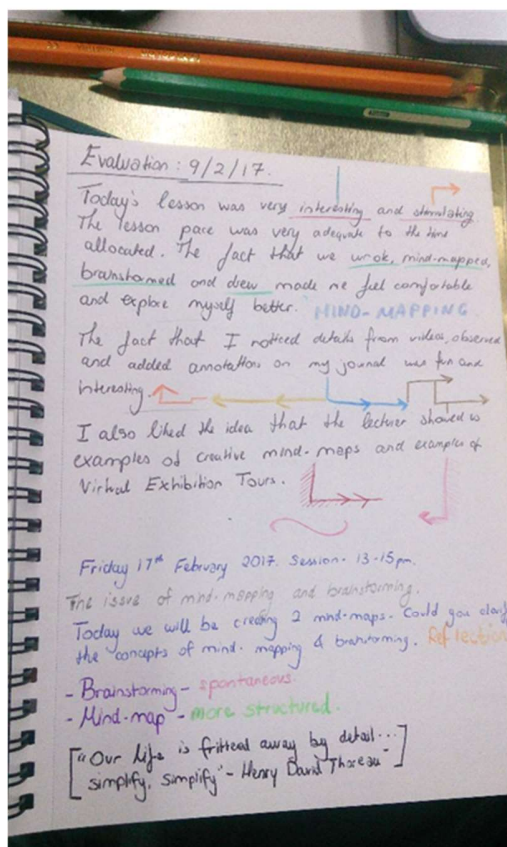


Fig.4.30 Participants' journals showing evaluations re session on mind-mapping



Fig.4.31a Mind-maps of self-identity on art journals

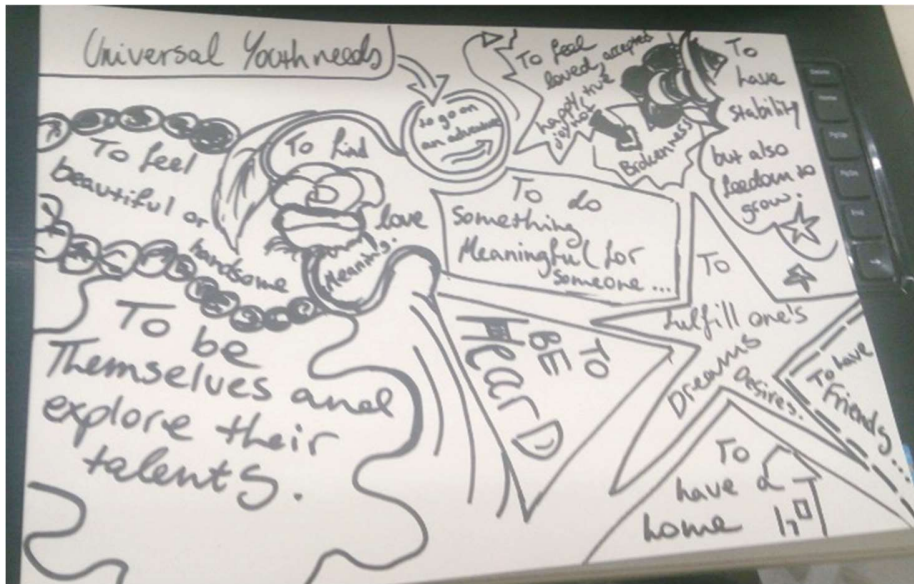


Fig.4.31b Mind-maps of individual perceptions of universal needs on art journals

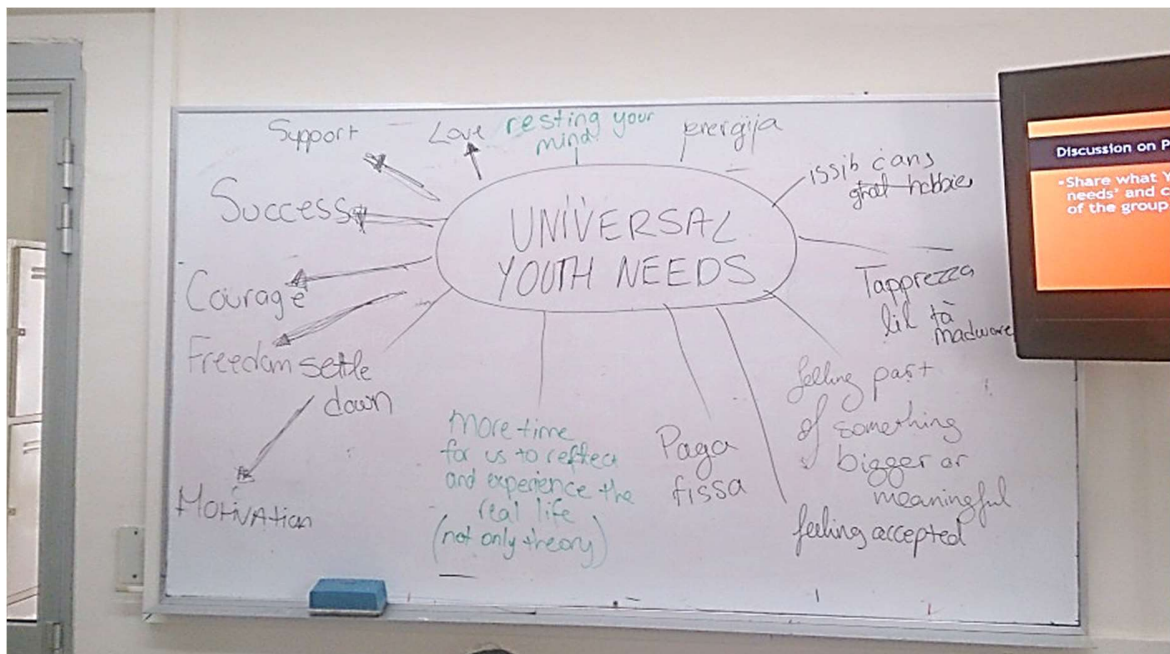


Fig.4.32 Brainstorming universal needs collaboratively on a white-board

Research shows that even in the case of constructivist approaches, museum educators “still are, in their own way, creators of context” (Hubard, 2014: 14). In this project, creating the context involved facilitating meaningful ways of engaging with the collection through tools like mind-mapping, art journaling, digital manipulation of the collection’s images and generic themes. Showing concrete examples of these tools motivated the participants to explore them further. For instance, after showing a few samples of digital mind-maps, the participants explored digital apps to create mind-maps in the digital format (Fig.4.33). Some participants said that digital mind-maps are easier to manipulate, allowing more connections and expansion of ideas due to options like ‘copy/paste’ of images (Fig.4.34). Figures. 4.35a and 4.35b reveal how a participant included several more connections by recreating his tangible mind-map digitally. Other participants said they preferred the ‘old-school’ sensation of elaborating a tangible mind-map on their art journal through the sensory handling of fancy pens, highlighters and collaging techniques (Fig. 4.36a).



Fig. 4.33 The participants, with both laptops and art journals in front of them to explore approaches of tangible and digital mind-mapping.

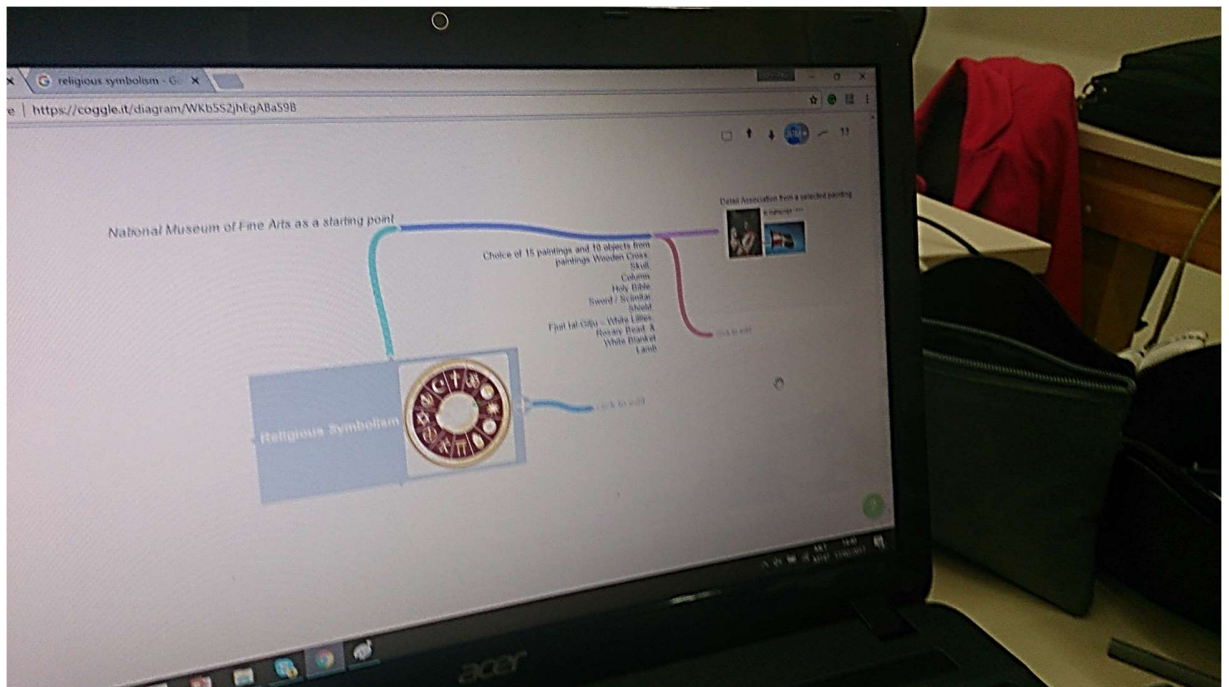


Fig. 4.34 A participant's creative process of digital mind-mapping.



Fig.4.35a A tangible mind-map of the VE, showing hints of artworks from the local art museum and international artworks that inspired the participant's VE theme development.

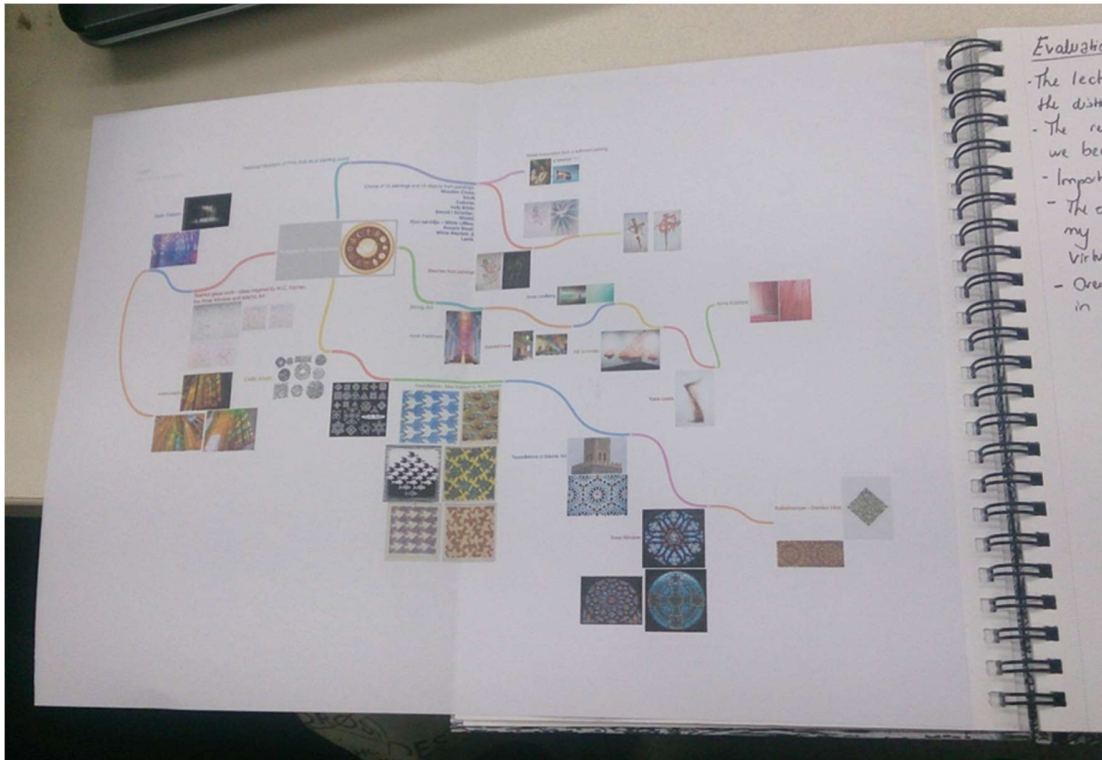


Fig. 4.35b A printed digital mind-map of the same participant's VE included in his art journal.



Fig. 4.36 The participants' creative process of tangible mind-mapping.

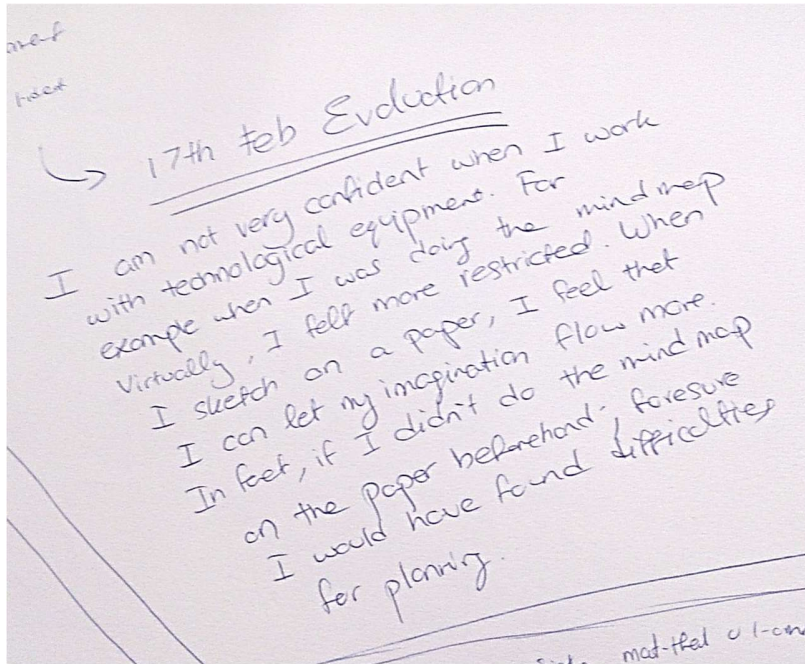


Fig. 4.37a Preference of the tangible creation.

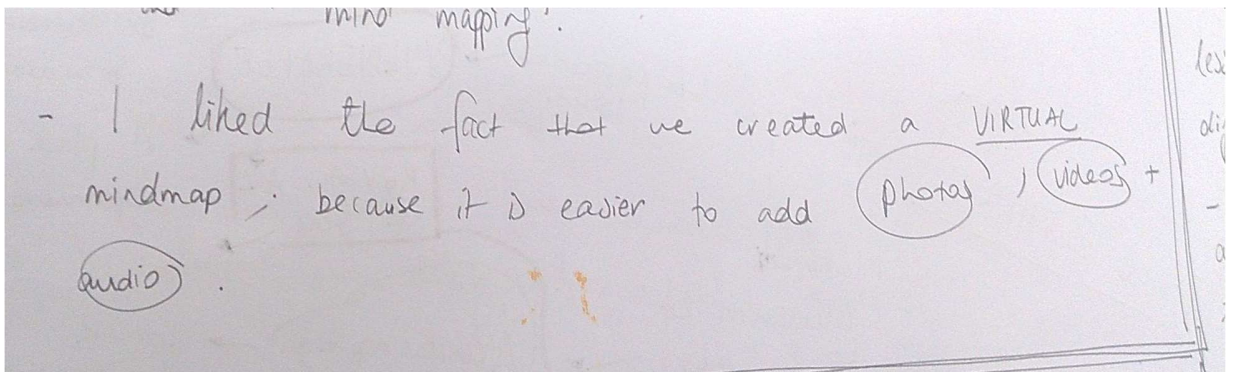


Fig. 4.37b Preference of the virtual creation.

Going through the evaluations contained in art journals revealed that most participants preferred using the tangible (Fig.4.37a) rather than the digital (Fig.4.37b) approach to construct a mind-map. Once again this indicated my prejudices, as prior to the project I expected that, due to their young age, participants would be more inclined to use digital techniques. For this reason, “museum staff have to go beyond imagining what they think the visitors want. They have to question visitors directly” (Kotler and Kotler, 2000:276). My projects’ findings show that action research carried

out together with the participants shapes the museum learning experience such that it fits their interests and needs.

The participants' mind-maps enabled me to follow and understand the creative process of the participants as they developed their chosen themes while discovering connections to the museum collection. Eventually, the mind-maps helped me to guide the participants where necessary and helped them to present their work-in-progress and offer peer-constructive criticism to each other. The art journals served as a good indication of the participants' evaluation of mind-mapping (Fig.4.38a; b). These included the participants' comments coded in Appendix 3.2 (Project 2), "the mind-map was truly helpful as I am clarifying process and ideas" (PAJ 17.02.2017) and "mind-mapping makes you reflect a lot...a relief from routine!" (PAJ 17.02.2017).

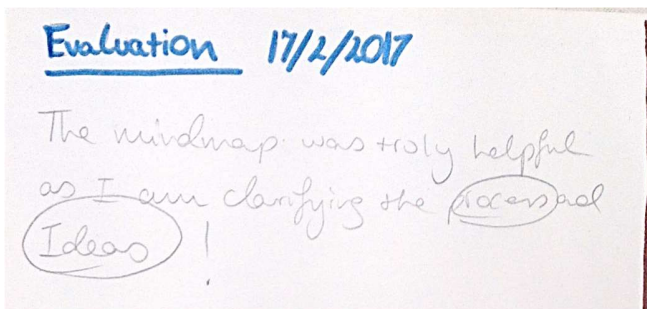


Fig.4.38a A participant's evaluation showing the benefits mind-mapping.

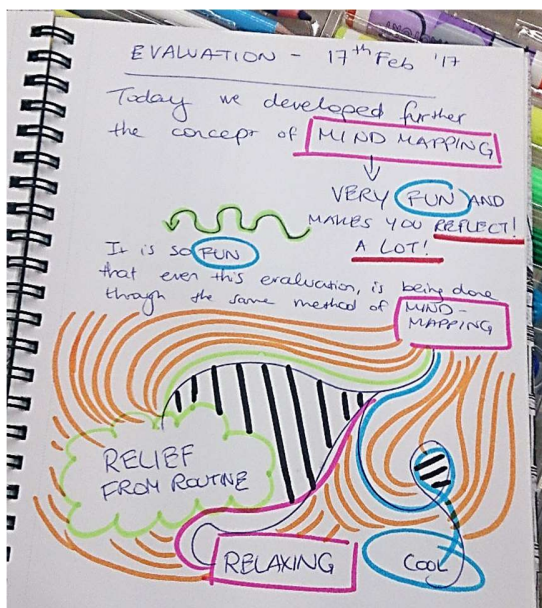


Fig.4.38b A participant's evaluation of the fun aspect of mind-mapping.

During the self-evaluation session, while discussing the benefits of mind-mapping, a few participants brought up the issue concerning the lack of time available to pause and think during their school days and also at university. They agreed that with all the lectures, projects and assignment deadlines, they were not being allowed quality time to pause for reflection and appreciate their learning process. They added that they initially expected their participation in my project to increase their workload during their final year of University. But right after the first workshop, they realised that the project addressed their need to pause, think, discuss, and collaborate with others to develop ideas and clarify their minds. They mentioned how being allowed enough time to reflect through mind-mapping; evaluate their creative process; looking at artworks' projected images and the opportunity to receive constructive criticism from others, enabled them to visualise new ideas and come up with solutions. The visual documentation also shows that such practices engaged the participants throughout the project (Fig.4.39a;b).

Moreover, the participants said that being allowed enough time to look at the projected images of the artworks helped them slow down and thus to make better connections than they did during the visit at the NMFA, which involved rushing from one work to the next. Smith and Smith (2001) explain that the typical museum visitor wants to see it all and there is nothing wrong with this as long as one enjoys the museum visit. However, many times the participants of Project 2 stated that they became bored and sad while visiting the NMFA. On the other hand, they appreciated and enjoyed how the project gave them the opportunity to slow down to look at the collection's images, reflect and discuss them in the context of life and social themes. In their study, Smith and Smith (2001) found that a benefit of taking time to appreciate a museum's art collection is that, by relating art to one's life, it nurtures reflection and contemplation.

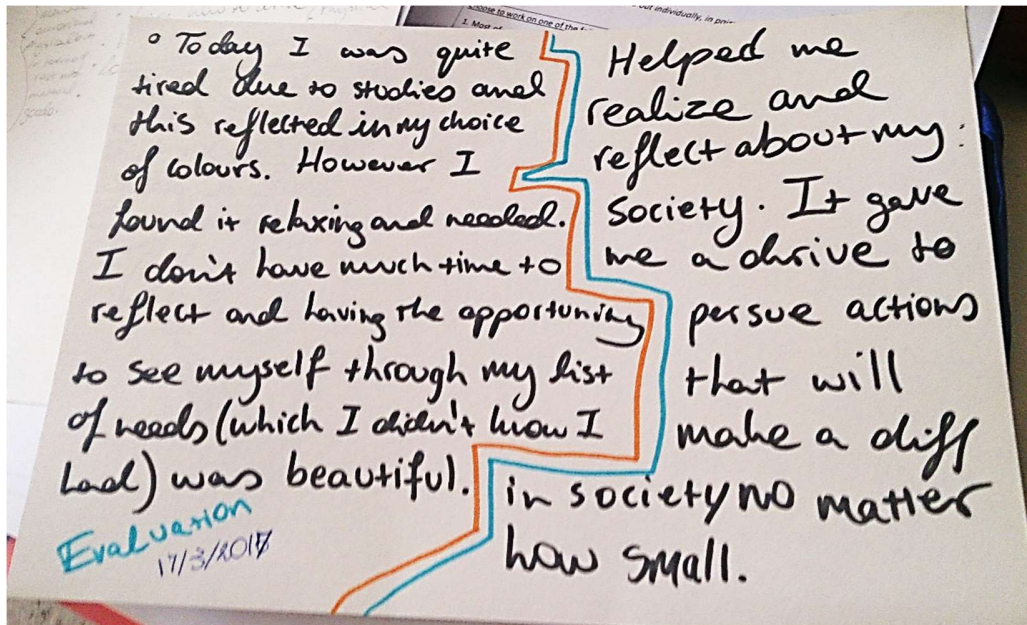


Fig.4.39a Documenting in art journals generates constant reflection on the creative process.

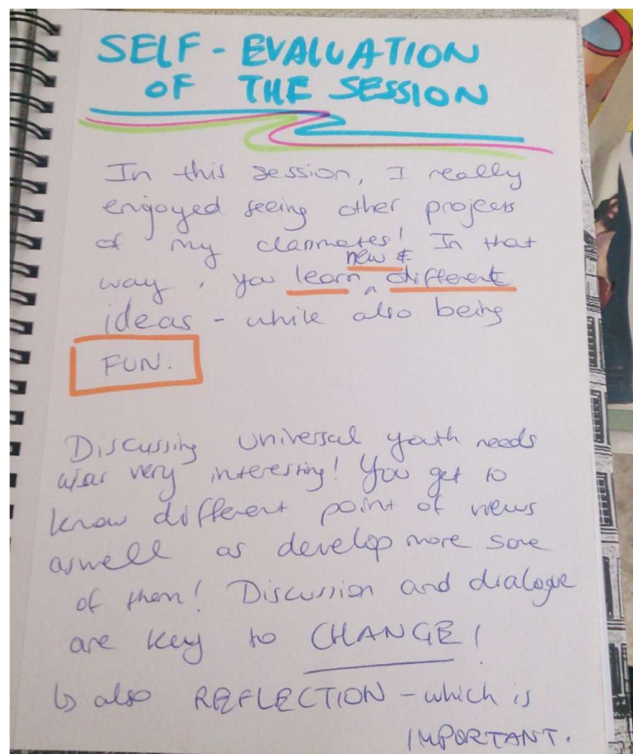


Fig.4.39b Documenting in art journals generates constant reflection on the creative process.

Unlike the other projects, the participants of Project 2 had the opportunity to continue developing their theme beyond the workshops. Yet, unlike the participants in the other projects, these young adults were constantly under heavy time-pressure from the demands of final exams and assignment deadlines. In fact, according to the participants, “the project came at the right time” to ease the stress of their studies.

During evaluation sessions and interviews, the participants pointed out the benefit of learning through collaboration during workshops. The task engaged them in collaboration with each other to expand their ideas while constructing mind-maps, to explore unfamiliar software and to serve as critical peers for the development of their chosen themes (Fig.4.40). As documented in my field-notes, the participants searched for videos of VE construction and for suitable software, and later shared their discoveries with the rest of the group (Fig.4.41).

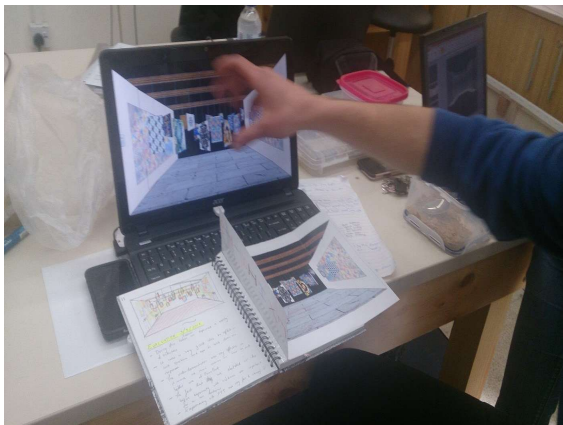


Fig.4.40 Exploring themes through presentations, discussions and peer criticism.

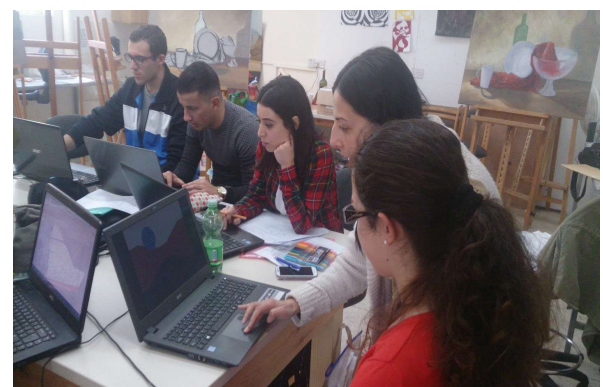
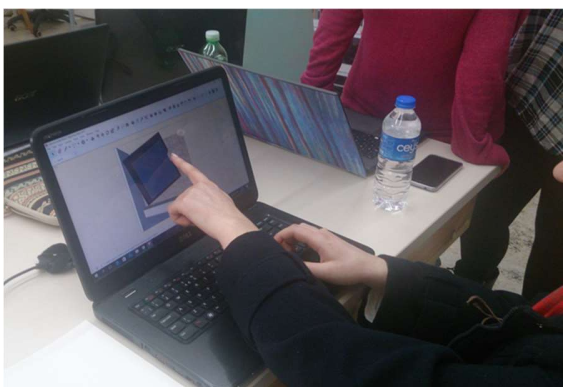


Fig.4.41 Exploring digital software for VE creation through collaboration.

Throughout the project, discussions among the participants, even if time-consuming, helped them to remain enthusiastic about the research and to continue sharing their understandings. As Biesta (2006) remarks, the motivation related to the personal dimension of lifelong learning is more intrinsic. Meanwhile, the strategy of discussions was time-consuming and due to the two-hour time-limit of each workshop, at times I had to interrupt their passionate arguments. The participants often complained that a two-hour workshop was not enough for such a project. They felt that the project provided them with a learning experience of which they have been deprived during their academic studies — a collaborative learning opportunity through the sharing of life experiences. Similarly, the findings of a museum audience research (Kotler and Kotler, 2000) indicate that for the majority of visitors, social experiences are at least as significant, if not more so, than the educational ones.

One of the discussion topics that emerged often during the workshops concerned the issue of the virtual and the physical realms. They argued about “today’s virtual world inhibiting real life communication” and mentioned their own experiences of how the virtual world constantly distorts their emotions and communication. Moreover, all participants agreed on their need to be listened to and to feel understood by others through human interaction. Correspondingly, in 2015, the New Tate Modern’s building aimed at creating spaces where visitors could mingle after 47% of those surveyed declared they would like the gallery to include “space for encounters” (Furness, 2019). This set me thinking about the potential of MUŽA’s education outreach programmes to address young adults’ needs for human connection beyond the virtual world. Then again, my planned task in Project 2 ignored these needs and involved the participants in the virtual realm by constructing a VE. This was based on my assumption that today’s young adults are immediately attracted to the virtual. Their role as educators/ curators of their VE led them to discuss another emergent issue, concerning ‘the curatorial role’. The participants were encouraged to reflect on the curatorial role through a question-task that required them to think about the intentions of their own VE, and the related design set-up and evaluation plans to provide viewers with a learning experience. Figure 4.43 shows the task of curatorial planning on the art journal of one participant. This shows the importance given to resources and to the environment to create an effective experience. Likewise, a study by Zhang et al. (2018) showed that museum visitors derive their sense of satisfaction according to how the museum environment contributes to their learning and leisure experience.

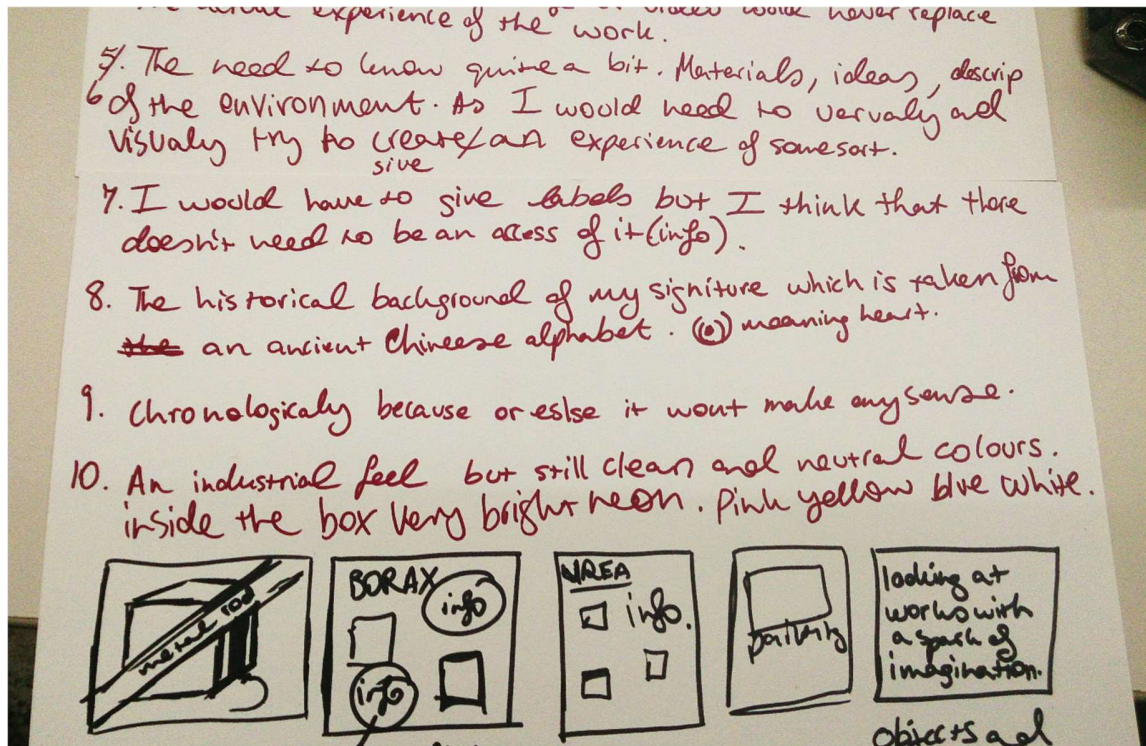


Fig.4.43 A participant's curatorial meaning-making.

Apart from emergent issues, the participants chose themes related to a social issue which they felt strongly about and developed it while constructing both a tangible and a virtual exhibition. Their chosen themes were as follows:

- Childhood nostalgia;
- Gender stereotypes;
- War vs time;
- Unity in religious beliefs;

- Consumerism vis-à-vis animal awareness;
- Exploring the truth.

They explored their chosen themes through debates which led them to refine the social issue about which they wished to raise public awareness. Throughout the workshops, each participant presented the work-in-progress of their chosen theme, while the rest offered feedback and constructive criticism. This process helped the participants with their decision-making and charting the way forward. Since meaning is actively created through multi-faceted relations in the communication practice (Lukianova and Fell, 2015) the participants' interaction helped them to develop and transform their chosen themes.

4.2.10 Developing the Chosen Themes with Reference to the Museum Collection

Appendix 3.4 (Project 2) includes images of the participants' choices of artworks from the museum collection. Although the participants chose the artworks mentioned in Appendix 3.4, they did not always include them in their VE but were nevertheless part of their creative process. This led to a gradual transformation of the original intentions of their VE. Throughout the workshops, such transformation could be witnessed both through observations which are noted in my field notes and the notes which participants documented in their art journals. This collected data could then be compared with that gathered through the coded replies of the participants. These were the replies to the first three questions in the final interviews (Appendix 3.2) and which consisted of their initial intention, the thematic choice and its link to the museum collection.

After discussing the generic themes at the beginning of the project, the participants were assigned the task of visiting the art museum as often as they needed and come up with a theme of their own choice. Unexpectedly, the coded final interviews reveal that only two participants declared their choice of theme as having emerged from the museum visit. P1 described his chosen theme in relation to the subjects portrayed in the NMFA collection as follows:

“I chose the theme of ‘war’ right after visiting the NMFA where I observed a lot of death... a lot of paintings concern murders so I thought “this museum shows a lot of death”. (P1)

Meanwhile, P7 focused on the emotional states generated in her by the atmosphere of the NMFA premises, explaining that:

“I wanted to achieve something positive rather than negative. The NMFA has dramatic themes, so I wanted to go against that negativity”. (P7)

The next section is a discussion of findings that emerged mostly from the coded visual-documentation (Appendix 3.3, Project 2). This documentation concerns the ways in which the participants developed their chosen themes. The participants’ chosen ways of dealing with their themes are revealed in transcriptions of their own words. Furthermore, the discussion of findings also considers the participants’ reflections in linking their work to their eventual choices of artworks from the collection. This is the basis of their creative process. Since during the time of the workshops, the art museum closed down and did not provide online access to its collection, I provided the participants with digital images of their requested choices (Appendix 3.4, Project 2).

Starting from Participant 1, whose chosen theme was ‘War vs Time’, he interpreted what he felt was the reality of wars, namely the futility of the soldiers’ life in the context of the passage of time. Fig. 4.44a shows an image of his exhibition, consisting of wax soldiers symbolising the lives of the soldiers ‘melting away’ and a wax skull to reference death. Fig. 4.44b, c, d illustrate the creative process of his theme development. Fig. 4.44e shows two images from his VE, where he managed to fit images of artworks chosen from the museum collection on images of local streets, in a sort of camouflage effect on the walls and on the pavement. These two images also include images of the wax soldiers which he used for his exhibition. He expressed as follows the meaning-making developed throughout his learning experience while dealing with this chosen theme:

“War does not bring anything other than suffering, pain and death. It is a game used by governments to win or to gain power. Men are used as a means to get what they want. Unfortunately, many soldiers have lost their lives in recent wars. However, those who survived physically still had to cope with severe mental consequences”. (P1)

P1 explained that the images he chose from the museum collection (Appendix 3.4, Project 2) for his VE could serve the audience to “start making connections... to visit the real collection at the museum and they start appreciating the collection too.”



Fig.4.44a Participant 1's exhibition

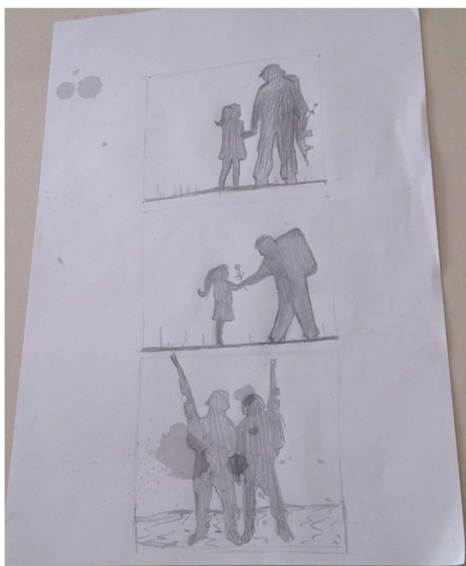


Fig.4.44b Participant 1's sketch.



Fig. 4.44c Participant 1's experiments with moulds for the wax soldiers.



Fig.4.44d Participant 1's construction of the VE.



Fig.4.44e Images from Participant 1's VE which merge images of his three chosen artworks from the collection in the background, images of his construction of wax soldiers and images of local roads, aimed to engage the viewer's reflection.

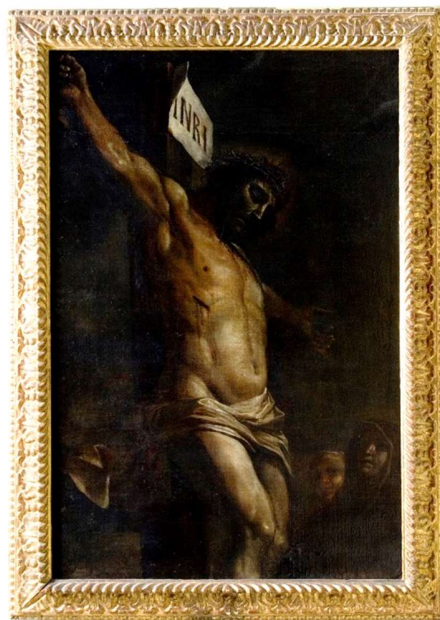


Fig.4.44f P1's chosen artworks from the museum collection.

Impressed by the several images of 'death' portrayed at the NMFA, P1's link to the museum collection was in reinterpreting the artworks depicting massacres, like Valentin de Boulogne's 'Judith and Holofernes', Mattia Preti's 'Christ on the Cross' and Matthias Stom's 'Death of Cato' (Fig. 4.44f ; Appendix 3.4, Project 2). He compared these works with the useless deaths caused by today's wars. At the start of the project, I expected he would link his theme with artworks showing battle scenes, which were quite numerous at the NMFA. His unexpected way of making links with the collection and those of the rest of the participants reflect my constructivist approach in allowing the rise of "multiple narratives that viewers create when looking at artworks" (Mayer, 2005:16). During one of the presentations of his work-in-progress, he said that due to constant bombardment of images showing terrorism which, at the time of the project, appeared regularly on social media, he felt that the artworks depicting tortured bodies provided a better connection to his theme. When asked about the way he would evaluate the success of his VE, P1 said that "the best way would be

by feedback gained from the viewers... for instance someone leaving a message that my VE made him aware of soldiers' suffering.”

Similarly, Participant 2 said that an appropriate way to check his VE's success would be from “the reaction of the public viewers... the comments of the viewers”. The theme of ‘Unity in Religious Beliefs’ which P2 chose to develop concerned the unity of what he considered to be the two dominant religions: Catholicism and Islam. Fig. 4.45a shows an image of his exhibition consisting of an installation of stained glass effects with symbolic designs representing both religions, especially the geometric patterns and the cross. In fact, P2's argument when interpreting this theme was that:

“Throughout history, Christian Churches and Mosques evolved aesthetically to embrace new followers. In Europe, during the Gothic and the Renaissance periods, stained glass inspired the faithful through religious narratives in churches and monasteries. Islamic artists applied key elements from the classical tradition of elaborating them to initiate a style of unity and order. The clarity of the rectangular coloured glass reflects the translucent coloured light on both sides slightly above eye level. The intention was to create a serene cohesion between these two major and conflicting religions. The chosen designs feature an arrangement of repetitive abstract patterns, shapes and symbols”.

His creative process in developing his concern for the unity of religious beliefs for both the physical and virtual exhibitions can be seen in Fig.4.45b; c; d. Meanwhile Fig. 4.45e shows an image from his VE.

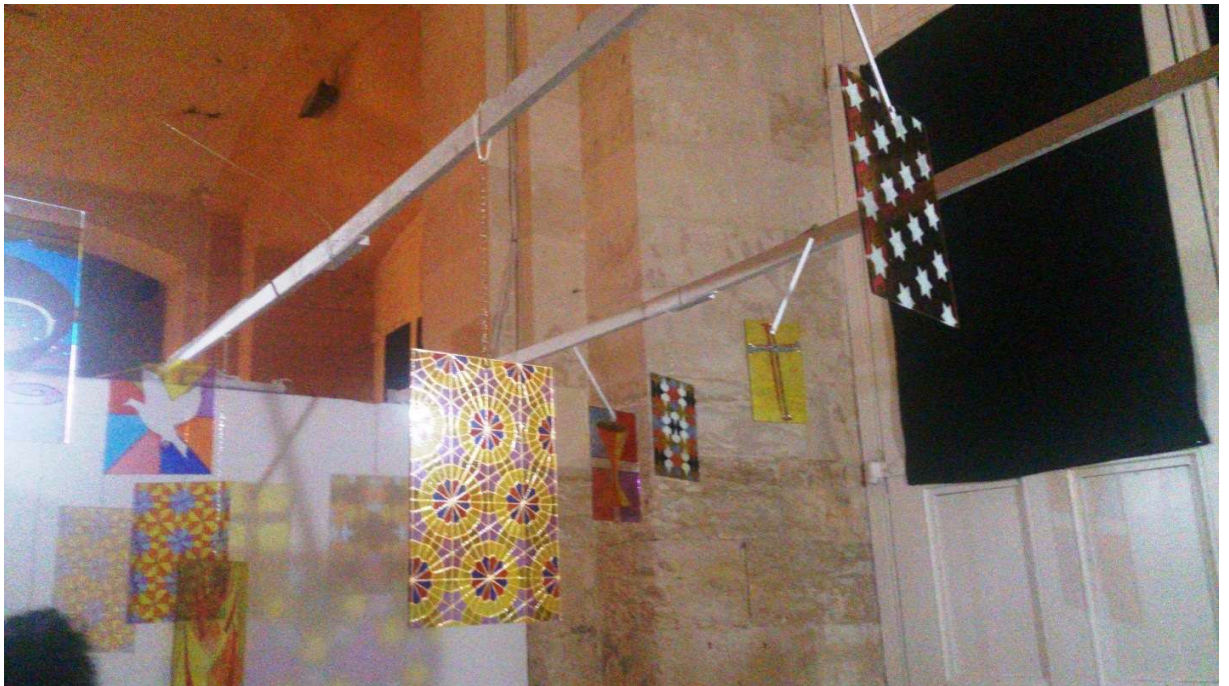


Fig.4.45a Participant 2's exhibition.

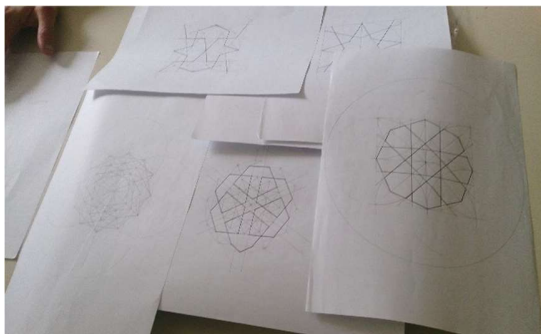


Fig.4.45b Participant 2's sketches.



Fig.4.45c Participant 2's mind-map

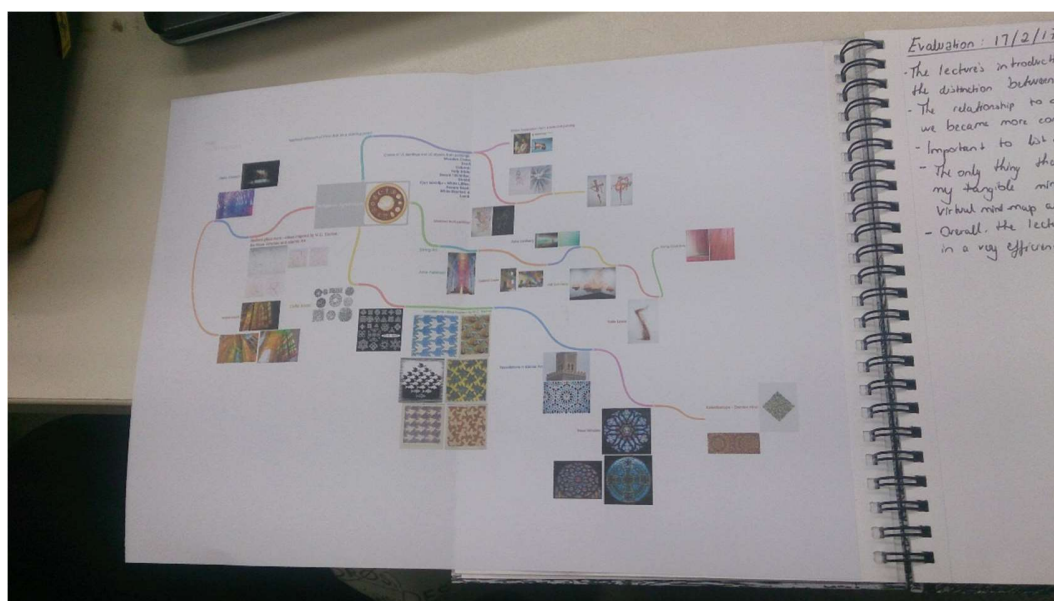


Fig.4.45d Participant 2's printed digital mind-map.

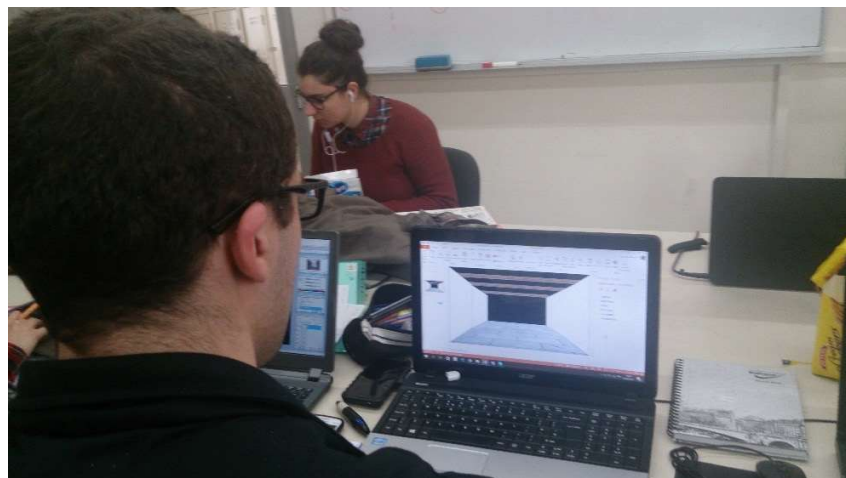


Fig.4.45e Participant 2's construction of the VE.

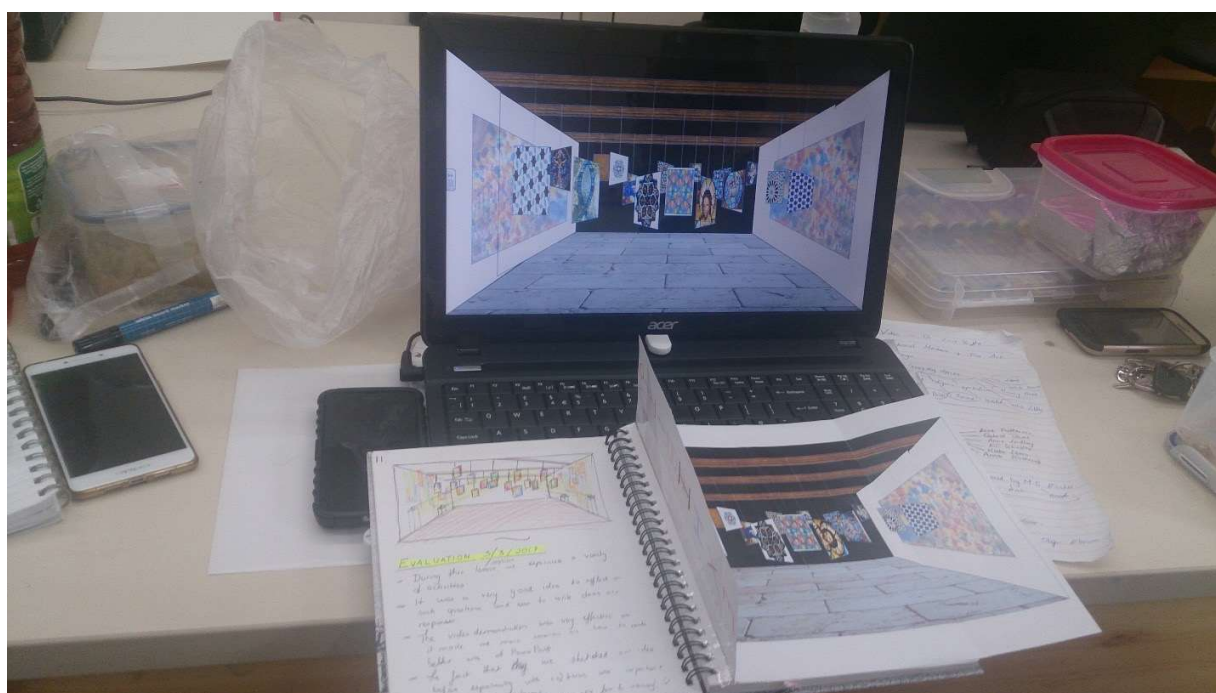


Fig.4.45f An image from Participant 2's VE and his documentation on the art journal.



Fig.4.45e P2's chosen artworks from the museum collection.

Although P2 did not choose to insert images of his chosen artworks from the collection, he was still inspired by four artworks (Fig. 4.45e; Appendix 3.4, Project 2). As mentioned earlier he was one of the two participants who complained that the museum collection was not relevant for

contemporary issues. He argued that the NMFA only displays works representing one of the dominant religious narratives. So he doubted that the public would connect his VE to the museum collection. On the other hand, while he presented his VE, the rest of the participants suggested that including open-ended questions in his VE could encourage the public to reflect and question the reasons for the museum's choice of selected works.

During the final interviews, when asked for his views on the possibility that his work would be misinterpreted, P2 admitted "I would actually feel good when my work is misunderstood because that shows that my work is not that direct but includes more than meets the eye." This confirms that P2's intention was to encourage the viewers to think, regardless of what might come to their mind while browsing through his VE. Yet, some viewers are not used to think critically and would still require human guidance. In fact, museums are exploring programmes that allow visitors "to come together in a museum space, along with staff, to reflect together" (Kotler and Kotler, 2000: 278).

P3's chosen theme concerned 'Gender Stereotypes', which she interpreted as follows:

"Society imposes expectations on the individual based on the person's sex. Unfortunately, going against the stereotypical boundaries tends to lead to misjudgements and social exclusion. From the day of birth, one is faced with assigned predictions and expectations according to one's sex. This project deals with the issue of gender inequality and questions the role of females in society."

Her exhibition consisted of a photography installation indicating her meaning-making of the theme (Fig. 4.46a). The creative process is displayed in images from Fig. 4.46b till Fig.4.46f. Most of her creative process was then featured in her VE (Fig. 4.46g).

Charmaine Zammit
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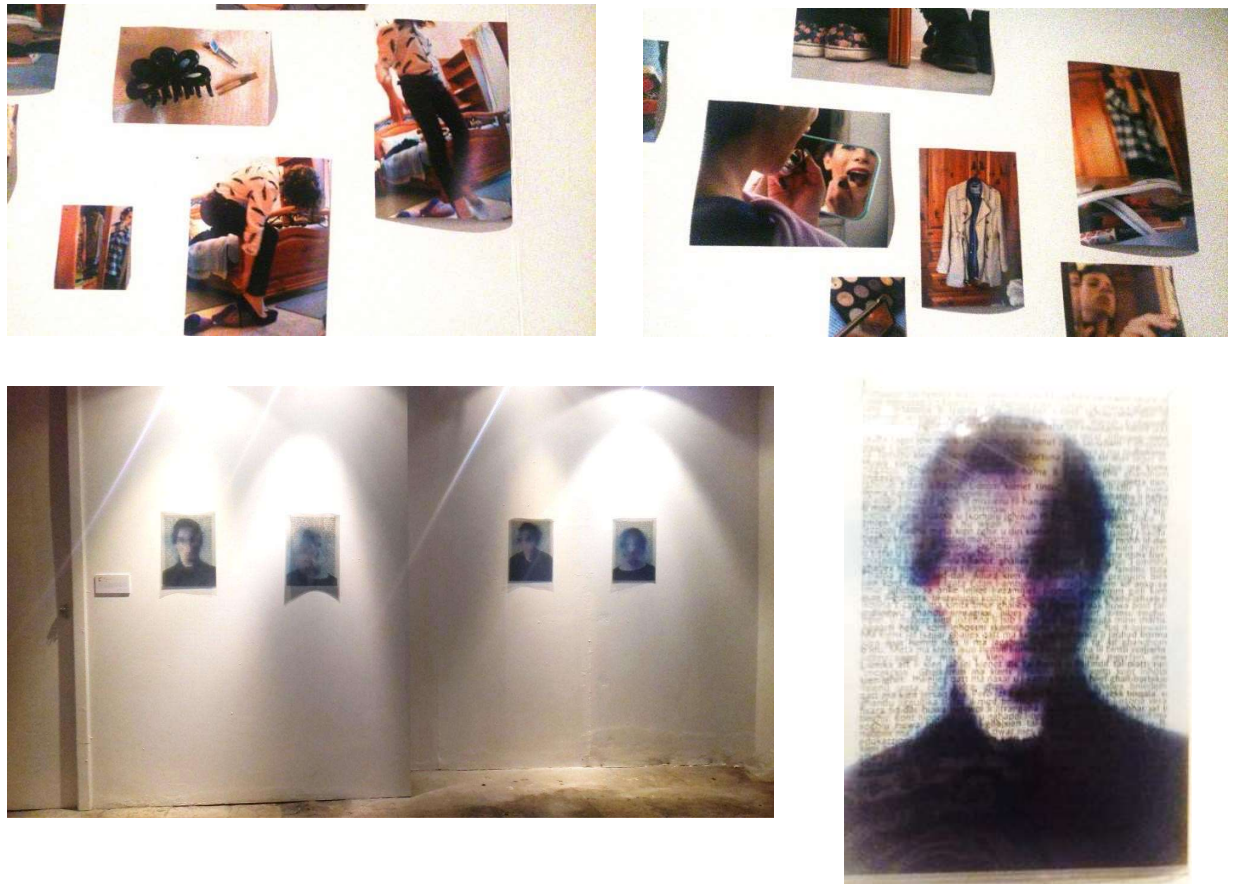


Fig.4.46a Participant 3's exhibition.

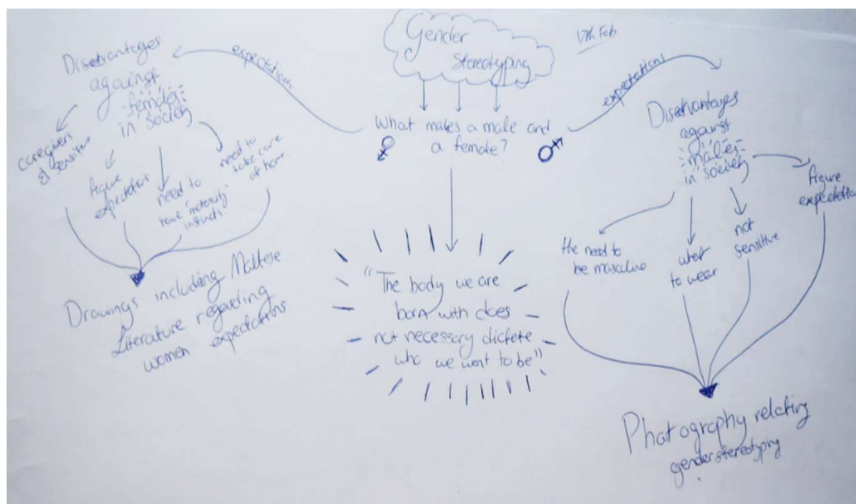


Fig.4.46c Participant 3's mind-map.

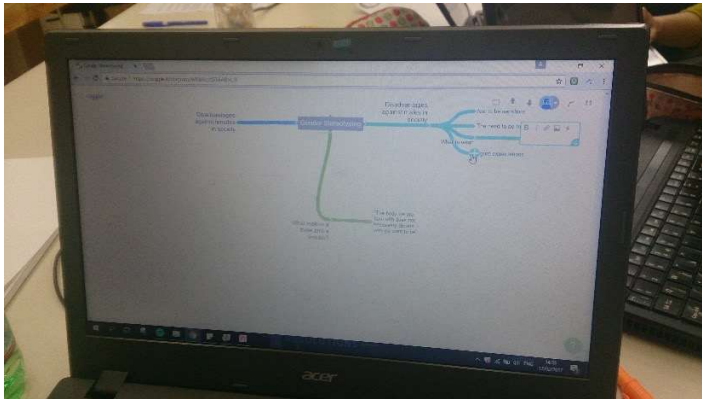


Fig.4.46d Participant 3's digital mind-map.



Fig.4.46e Participant 3's sketches.

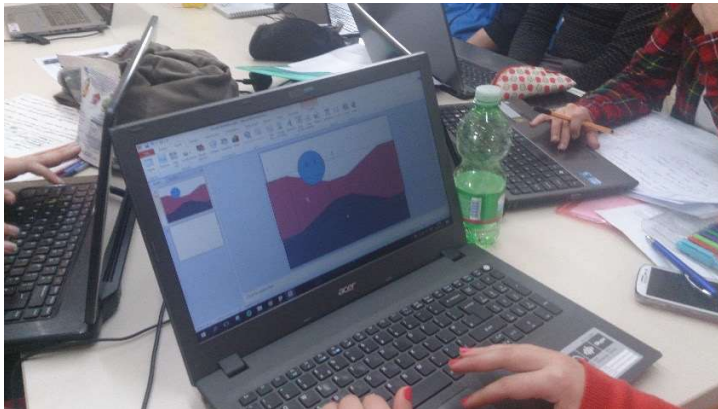


Fig.4.46f Participant 3's construction of the VE.

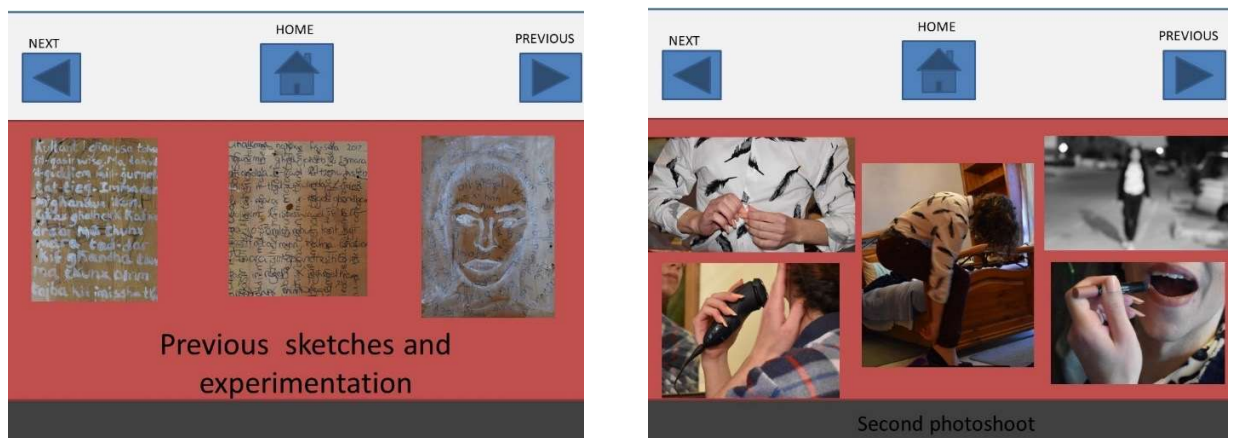


Fig.4.46g Images from Participant 3's VE, recalling her creative process of theme development and images from her exhibition.

Throughout her VE presentations, P3 explained how the development of her chosen theme - 'Gender Stereotypes' stemmed from her wish to instil awareness of gender inequality based on her own experience as a woman in Malta. During the final interviews, she mentioned that the collection was limited to providing viewers with possible links to her VE since "at the time the artworks were created, the artists did not even think of gender stereotypes" (P3). Her remark showed her strong intention to transmit her personal message rather than being open for the viewer's interpretation of her VE. This recalls the limited perspective of those museum visitors who, in a similar way to the beliefs of the participants of Project 1 and Project 3 prior to the workshops, think that a museum

collection is to be interpreted according to an artist's intentions or experts' narratives. Such views are also aligned with Bourdieu's (1974) theory of cultural reproduction.

Similar to P2, P3 was also concerned that her theme could not easily be linked to the museum collection as most artworks depict classic rather than contemporary themes. Once again, several debates were raised by the rest of the participants, who suggested ways to refer to artworks which do not directly represent the chosen theme so that the audience is stimulated to think and question. For instance, one of the artworks which could have been suitable for P3's theme and provoked questions is Adriano Cecioni's 'Interior with women knitting' (Appendix 3.4, Project 1). However, I avoided the imposition of my own links to their themes and collection, as the target was to explore the participants' own ways of using the collection. Besides, meaningful learning happens when allowing the construction of interpretations through "conversation among visitors in museums" (Mayer, 2005: 16). P3's chosen artworks from the museum collection were the following: Norbert Attard's 'Hermaphrodites', Esprit Barthet's 'Mari tal-Bajd' and Antonio Sciortino's 'Rythmii Vitae' (Fig. 4.46h; Appendix 3.4, Project 2). Although P3 requested the images of these works and referred to them as her links during the presentation, she did not include them in her VE



Fig.4.46h P3's chosen artworks from the museum collection.

A VE which included several references to the collection was the one constructed jointly by two participants. For the exhibition, P4 and P5 worked separately on two different installations, each

dealing with their chosen themes of ‘Social justice’ and ‘Existence’ (Fig.4.47a). Meanwhile, for the VE they were the only participants who chose to collaborate by merging their themes into one concerning ‘Exploring the Truth’. Their theme focused on how education leads one to explore multiple truths and was described as follows:

“Education is very important, actually it is the key to everything: the key in being knowledgeable, into getting out of poverty and most important, it helps you understand the truth without letting others’ opinions affect your own. This exhibition's aim is to help the individuals reflect on their own lives and see what they can do to improve their lives or the lives of others.”



Fig.4.47a Participants 4 and 5’s separate exhibitions.

Fig.4.47b, and Fig. 4.47c show the creative process of P4 and P5 while constructing the meaning of their combined themes from which they developed their new theme concerning truth emerging through education. This recalls Plato’s philosophical narrative of the Cave. As shown through snapshots of their VE, from Fig. 4.47d to Fig. 4.47f, these participants included images from both of their exhibitions and text, mostly in the form of questions with which to engage the viewers. Their collaboration to develop the theme together eventually led them to make their VE accessible online as from 2017, through the following link:

<http://abigailgabriella.artsteps.com/pages/pviewexhibition.aspx?ID=34626>

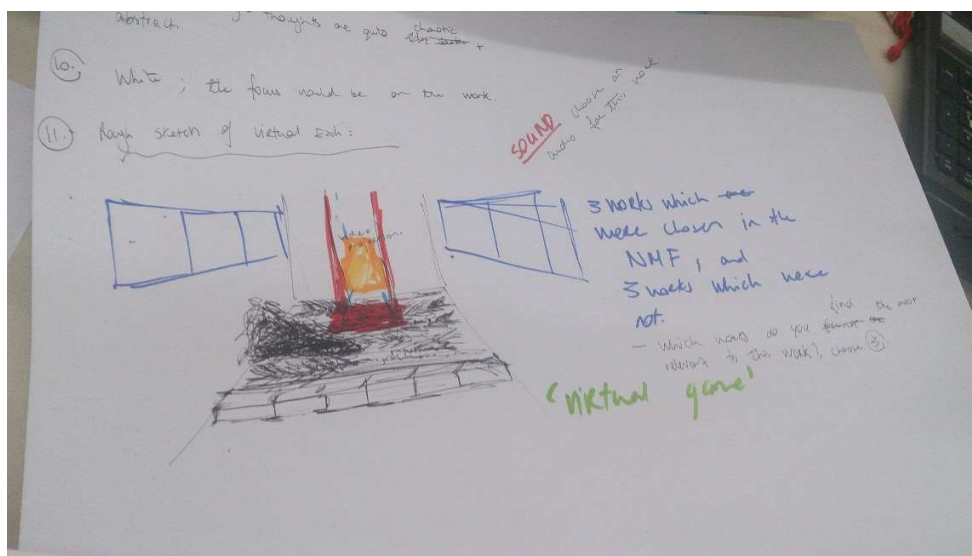


Fig.4.47b Participants 4 & 5's creative process tangibly on art journal.

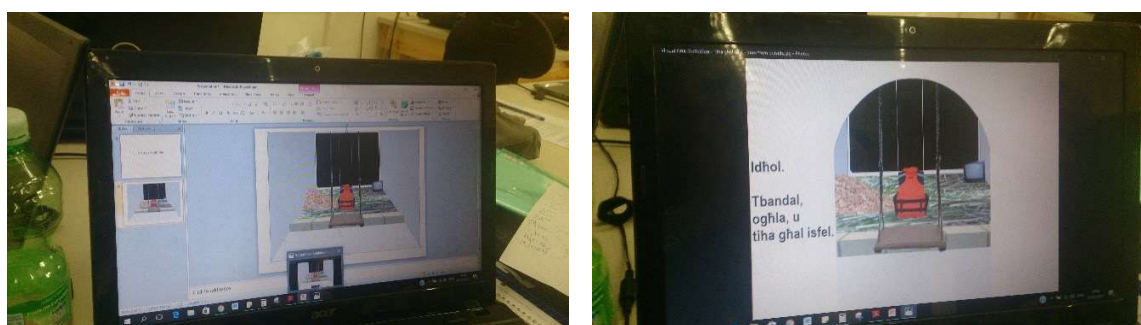


Fig.4.47c Participants 4 & 5's creative process digitally.



Fig.4.47d Snapshots from Participants 4 & 5's VE.



Fig.4.47e Snapshot from Participants 4 & 5's VE showing the embedding of their choices from the museum collection (Appendix 3.4, Project 2).

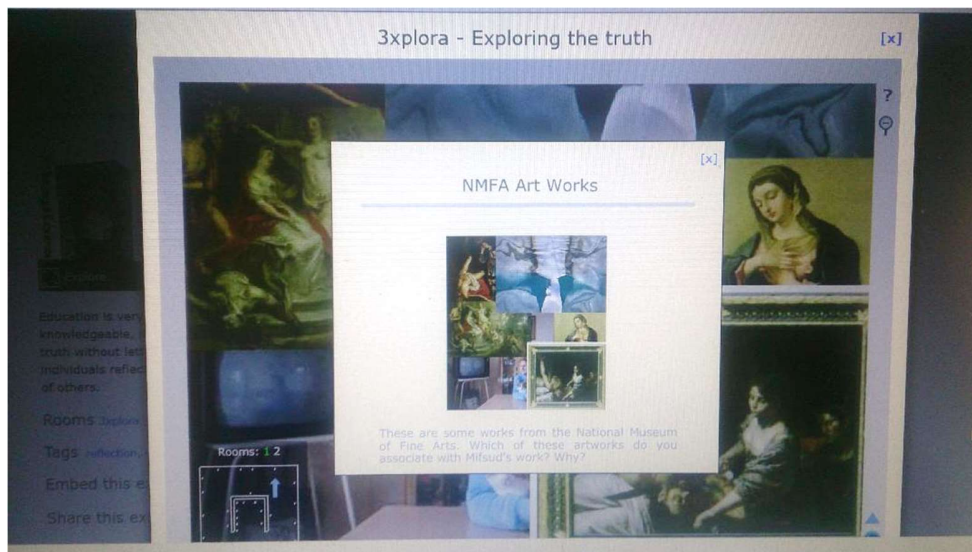


Fig.4.47f Snapshot from Participants 4 & 5's VE showing their attempt to engage the viewers to interact with artworks from the museum collection.

Unlike P2 and P3, during the final interviews, P4 and P5 admitted that they would rather welcome alternative interpretations of their VE's theme, as "art is open to interpretation" (P4) and the VE is to stimulate the viewers "to relate to their personal experiences which are more relevant to them"

(P5). When asked about how they would evaluate their VE's success, both P4 and P5, like the rest of the participants, mentioned that feedback from the viewers would provide the best indication. However, P4 elaborated by asking about the possibility of "leading a sort of focus group involving those viewers who leave a comment on the VE". Although interviewed separately, P5 also explained that "the VE would include 'chats' and 'blogs' which could serve as a virtual forum and if discussions arise from it, that would show that the VE was successful". In fact, Fig. 4.47g shows the homepage of their VE. At the bottom, it includes tabs inviting viewers to login/ register and leave their comments. This shows their attempt to put into practice the method for evaluating their VE which they themselves suggested in their interview replies.

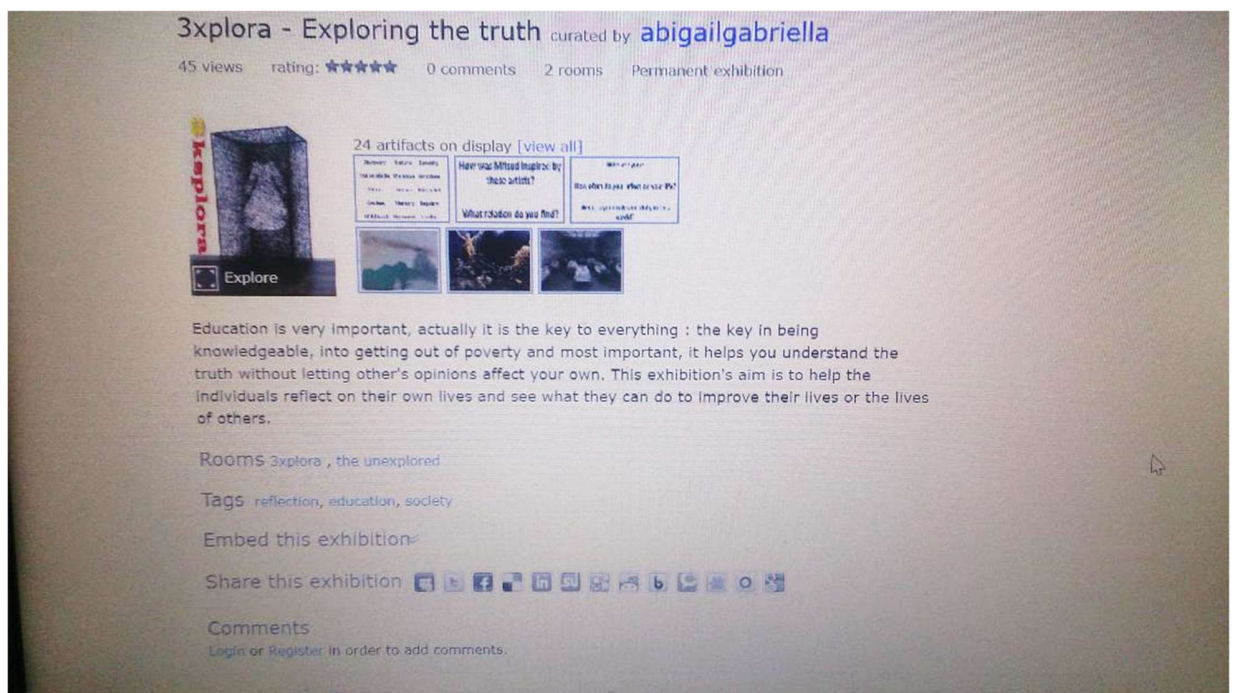


Fig. 4.47g Screenshot of the homepage of P4 and P5's online VE with options to add comments.

The artworks which the two participants selected from the collection and which provided the basis for the theme of their individual exhibitions, were later considered together for the construction of their VE theme (Fig. 4.47h; Appendix 3.4, Project 2). Furthermore, their online VE includes artworks from the collection which invite interactivity by posing open-ended questions (Fig.4.47f).

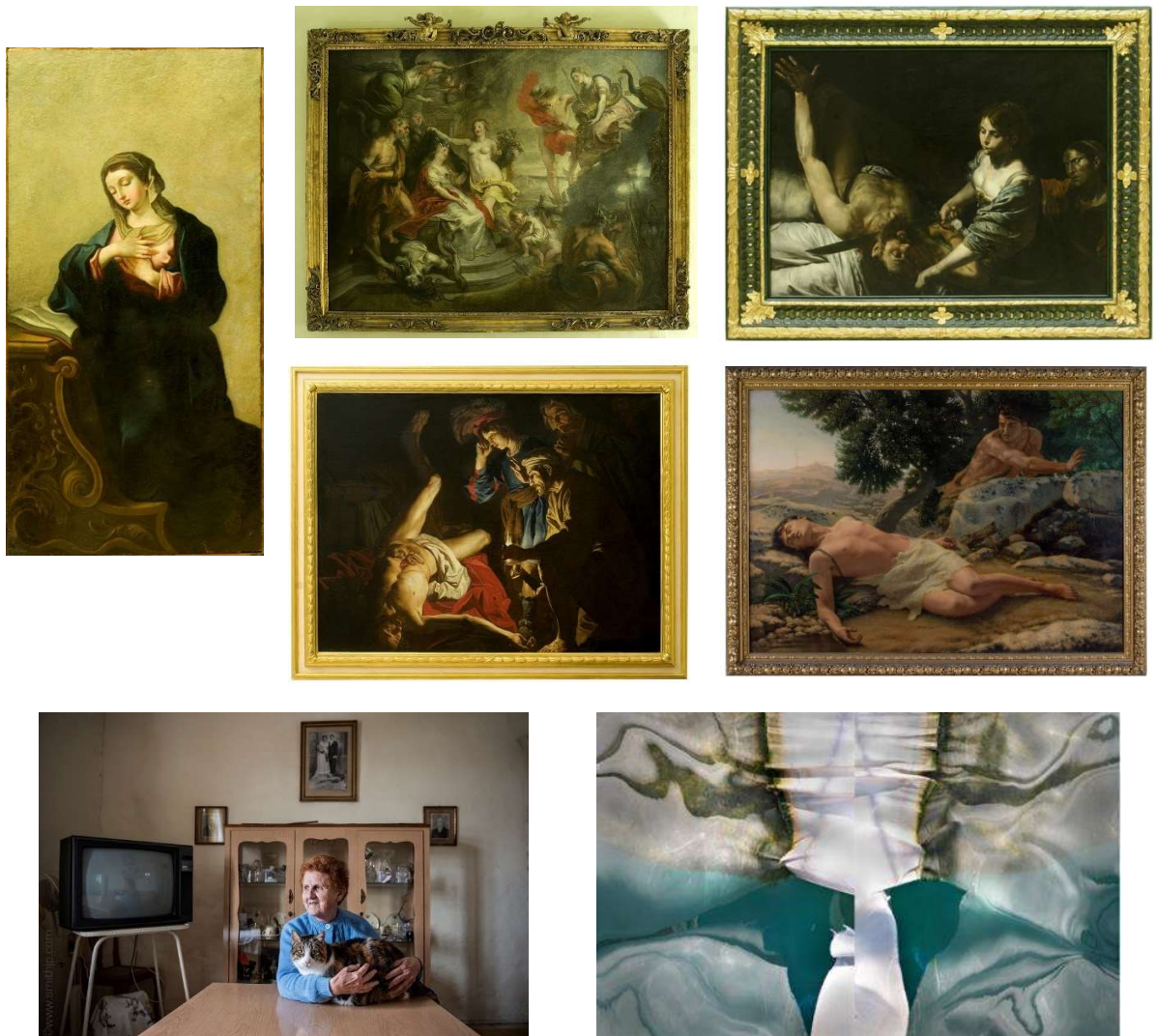


Fig.4.47h P4 and P5's chosen artworks from the museum collection.

In contrast to the VE of P4 and P5, the VE of P6 makes no reference to the museum collection, even though in her work-in-progress presentation she explained how a few works from the collection (Fig.4.48f) had inspired her work. P6 chose to deal with the theme of consumerism, in response to how people use animals for their own excessive consumption such as the production and consumption of beauty products. Her exhibition (Fig. 4.48a) consisted of an installation with mirrors aimed to stimulate the viewers' reflection on her chosen theme, which she interpreted as follows:

“Consumerism is one of the strongest forces affecting our lives in the modern world. The rise of many powerful beauty industries make consumers challenge their appearance by influencing them to consume beauty products so as to alter their image to fit in with society. Questioning the ethical production of such products, the theme explores the inhuman cruelty of animal testing, often ignored or not even considered in today’s fast-paced world. The images parallel to each other serve to expose the paradox between the reality presented to us by the media and the actual reality behind it, whereas the repetition of mirrors serves to create an awkward sensation emphasising not only the viewers’ outer appearance, but to also make the viewers look at themselves and reflect upon their responsibility as human beings.”

P6 dealt with her creative process through sketching (Fig.4.48b) and experimenting with software to construct her VE (Fig.4.48c). Snapshot images of her VE (Fig. 4.48d; Fig. 4.47e) show the combination of images from her physical exhibition with the text which aims to encourage viewers to think. During the final interview, P6 argued that “I want the audience to really understand the message I am trying to transmit, however any work of art is free to be interpreted as one wishes”. Thus in a way, although she indicated a strong intention to transmit her message aiming to raise awareness about human responsibility towards animals, P6 still accepted that her VE could raise alternative issues depending on the viewers’ interests. This aligns with Falk and Dierking’s (2000) concept of visitors’ engagement in free-choice learning in the museum through their own personal context of experience.

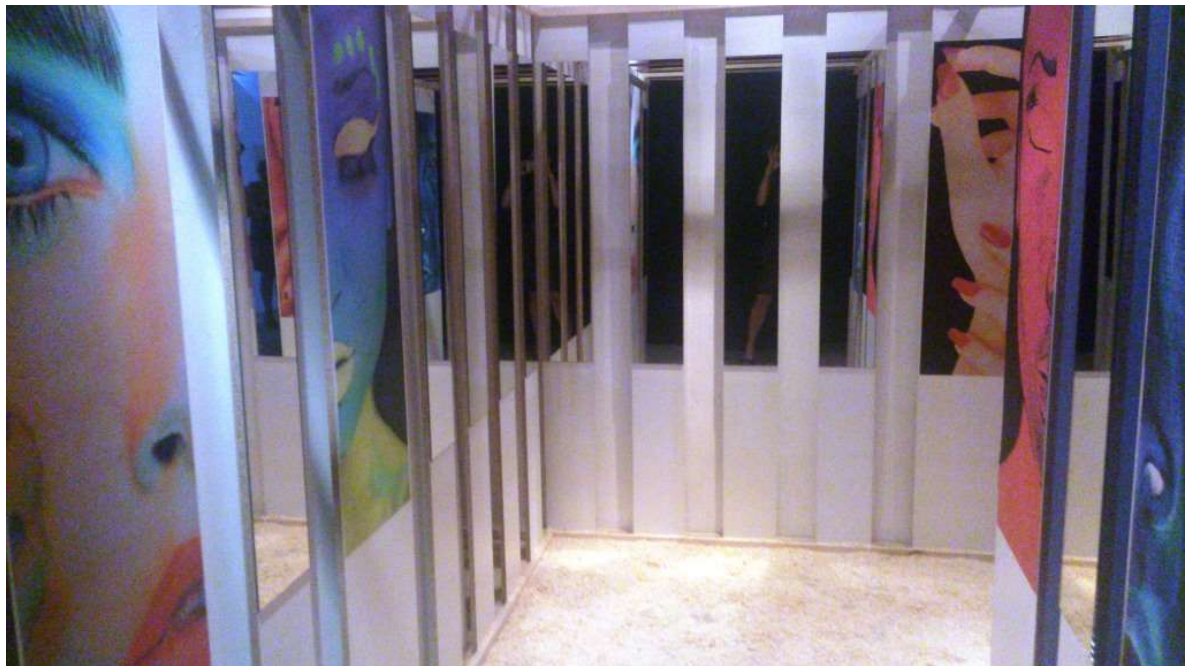


Fig.4.48a Participant 6’s exhibition.

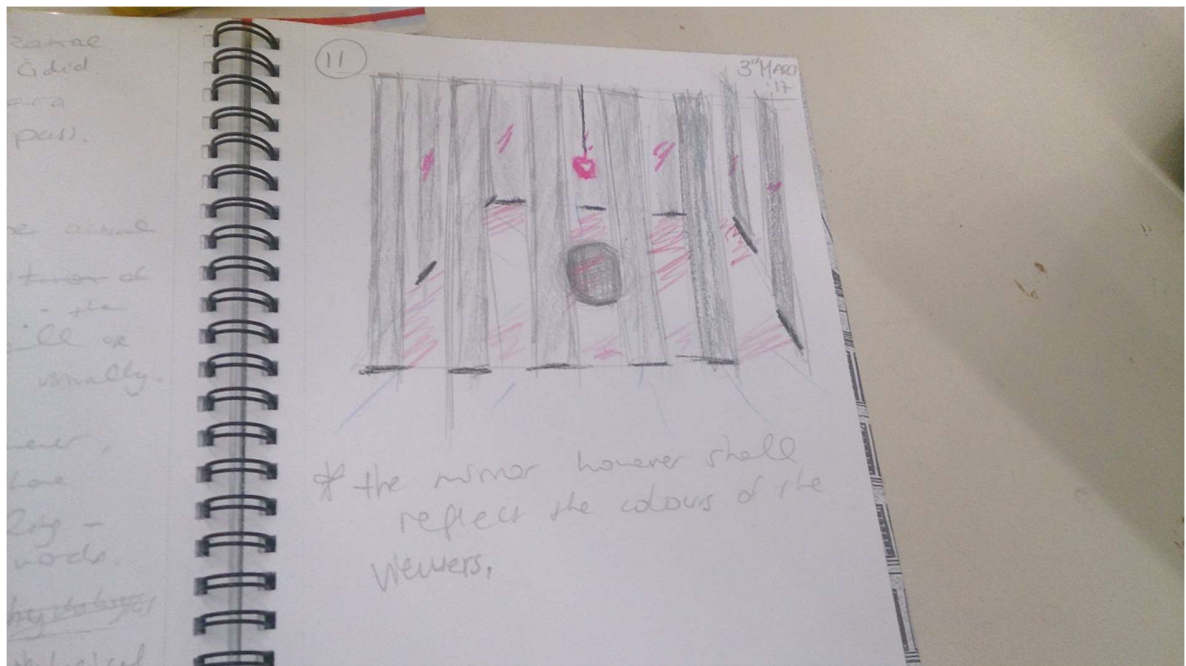


Fig.4.48b Participant 6's sketch.

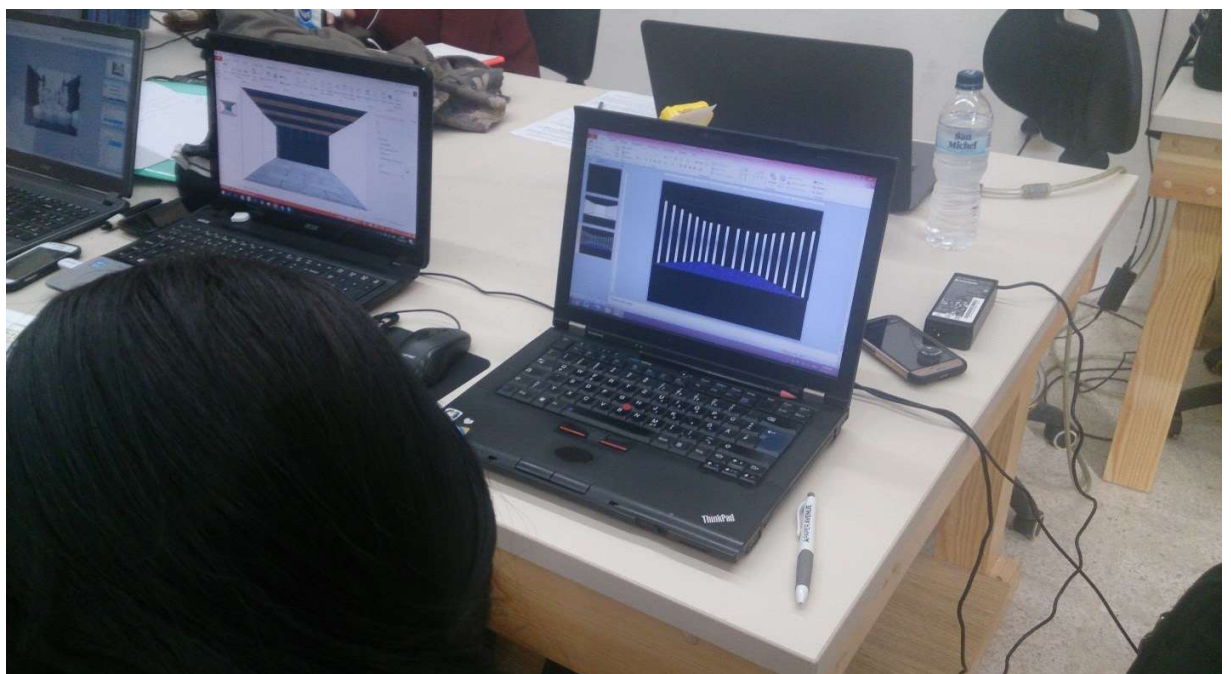


Fig.4.48c Participant 6's construction of the VE.



Fig.4.48d An image from Participant 6's VE including her exhibition in digital format.

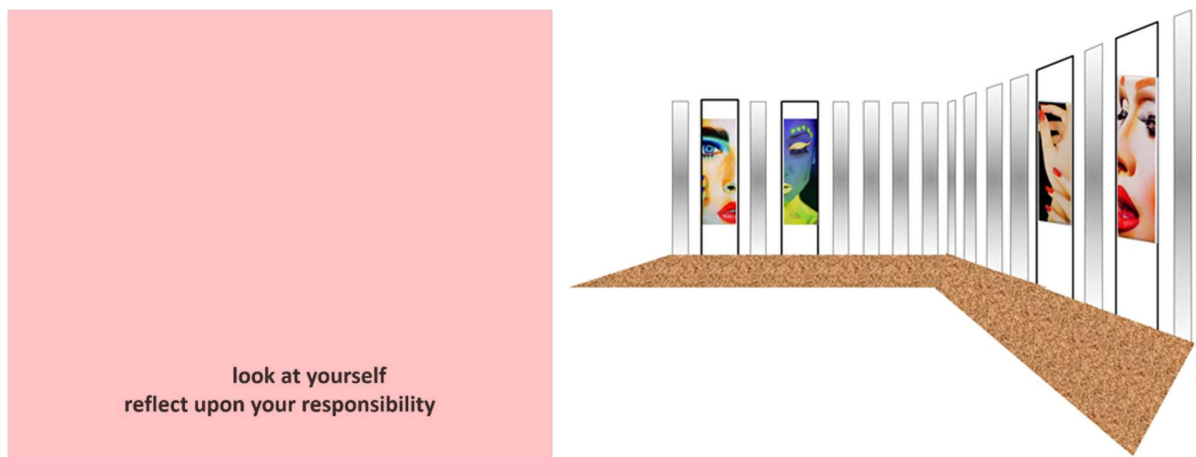


Fig.4.48e An image from Participant 6's VE.

Although there was no direct reference to the collection within the VE, P6 still chose works that somehow inspired her during her creative process (Fig.4.48f; Appendix 3.4, Project 2) namely works linked with concepts of 'beauty' and 'consumerism'. She identified 'beauty' in the artworks

of Antonio Sciortino's 'Speed', Bernardo Strozzi's 'Portrait of a lady' and Sebastiano Conca's 'Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist'. P6 selected two works which she perceived as containing an element of 'consumerism', namely Edward Caruana Dingli's 'Boschetto Fair' and Giuseppe Cali's 'Distributing Alms to the Poor'. While the notion of consumerism is clear in the former painting, the latter refers to the emergence of charity as a result of consumerism that widens the gap between the rich and the poor.

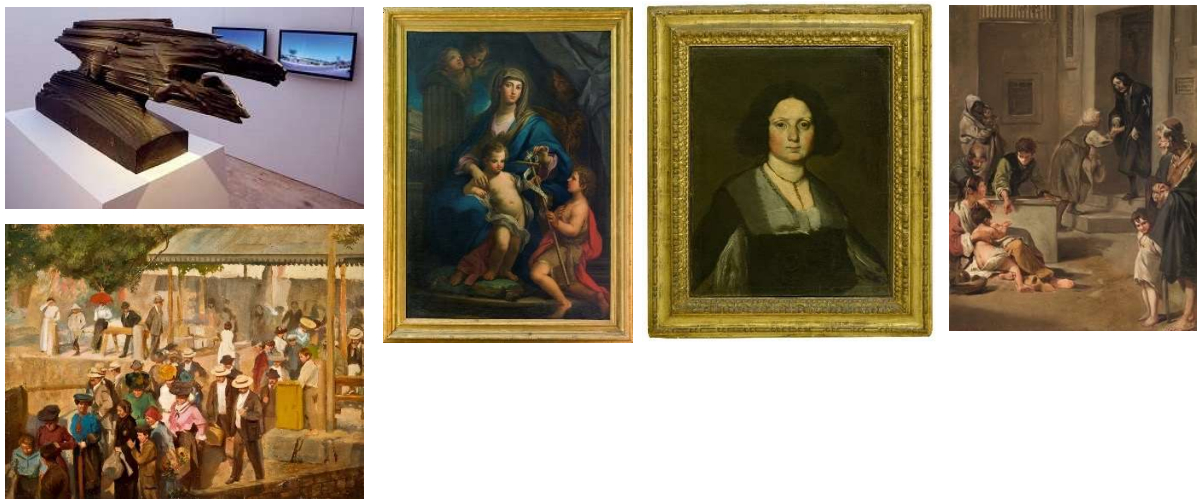


Fig.4.48f P6's chosen artworks from the museum collection.

Kotler and Kotler (2000:278) claim that "museums contain a great deal of sensory stimuli" which visitors may find overwhelming. Unlike the rest of the participants, the atmosphere at the NMFA premises is what inspired P7's chosen theme. Throughout the workshops and interviews she explained how her reaction to what she considered as a "dull and sad" atmosphere at the museum motivated her to choose the pleasant theme of 'childhood nostalgia'. Her intention was that both her exhibition and VE would eventually transmit a joyful experience to compensate for the dull atmosphere of the NMFA. She verbalised her meaning-making of the theme as follows:

"One of my fondest memories of being a child is going on adventures to faraway places in just a blink of an eye. Travelling through the portal of a big cardboard box, you could become a pirate and then transform into an explorer just by closing your eyes and imagining the scene. My artwork aims at recapturing the childlike spirit and rekindling the art of box

transformation. Drawing upon my childhood bed-time stories, I created an imaginative space full of enchantment and mystery using different media and a little touch of glow magic to light up the space. The work morphs depending on the light or lack of light in the room. Remember that sometimes the world can be more than it seems and there is always more than you can see.”

At a later stage of her theme development, she chose one artwork from the collection (Fig. 4.49h) which she felt resonated with her theme, which was Robert Caruana Dingli’s 'Alpine Landscape' (Fig. 4.49h; Appendix 3.4, Project 2), and which she described as “showing a particular tree of a willow, it served to inspire my work to include a flow of branches pouring out”. This was very clear in her exhibition which consisted of an installation of mixed-media, texts and drawings (Fig.4.49a), and which derived from a physical amplification of her investigations (Fig.4.49g). Her creative process consisted of very intensely executed tasks through sketches, research and experiments with different materials (Fig. 4.49b to Fig. 4.49e). Fig. 4.49i (on the right) shows a snapshot of her VE, which reveals that P7 has only taken a detail from the ‘Alpine Landscape’ and as she indicated, this particular detail served to inspire her tree construction. Her VE involves a sequential narrative, including cheerful music and several texts made up of questions which encourage viewers to think and interact with her work (Fig. 4.49f).

Her text in one of the snapshots (Fig. 4.49i, on the left) indicates that she was inspired by the painting when she visited the NMFA. However, it was the digital format of this artwork at a later stage that inspired her work. This made me wonder whether P7 wrote this since deep down she still considered the actual artwork displayed in the physical museum to be more worthy of observation and interpretation than its digital copy. Did she believe that her VE would be less valuable if it showed her inspiration to be derived from a digital image of an artwork instead of the actual artwork observed during a museum visit? Was she not comfortable with the VE exposing the fact that the digital image allowed her more time to observe and connect with it at the comfort of her home?



Fig.4.49a Participant 7's exhibition.

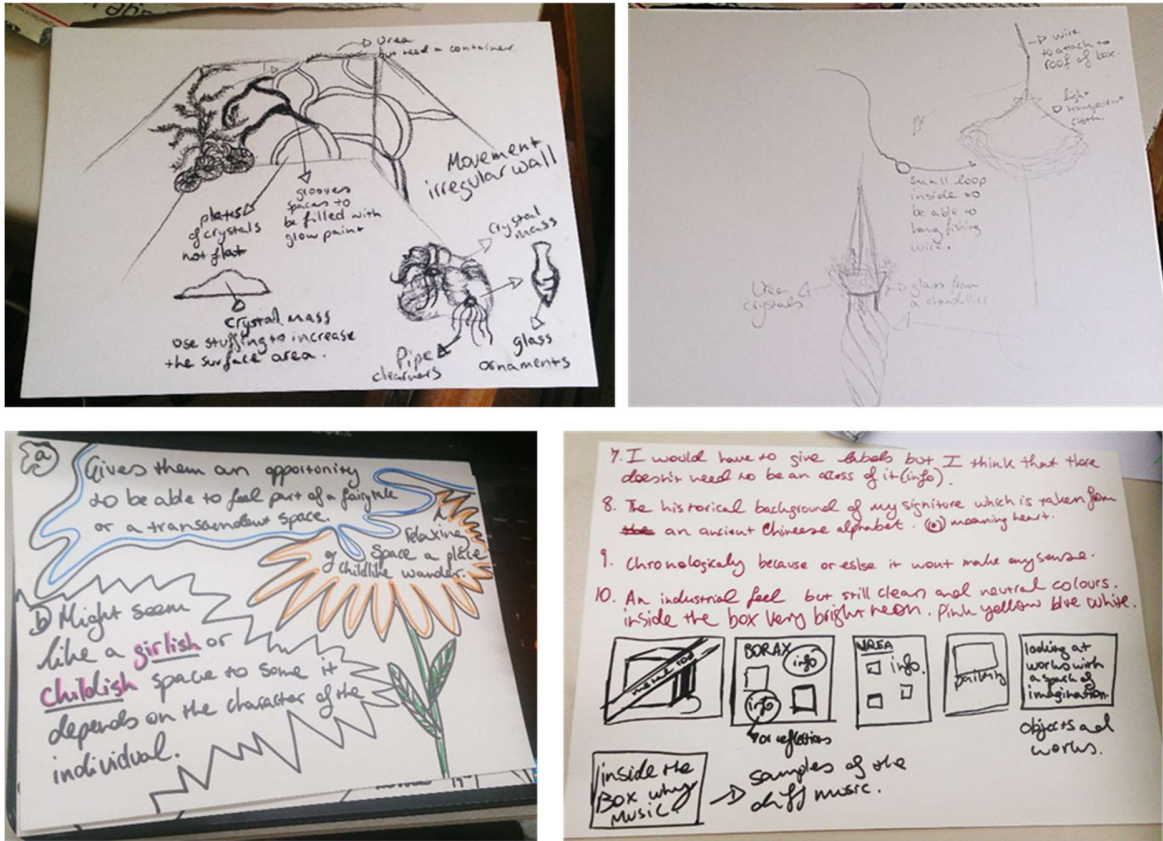


Fig.4.49b Participant 7's sketches showing studies, reflections and plans.



Fig.4.49c Participant 7 creating a tangible mind-map.



Fig.4.49d Participant 7 creating a digital mind-map.

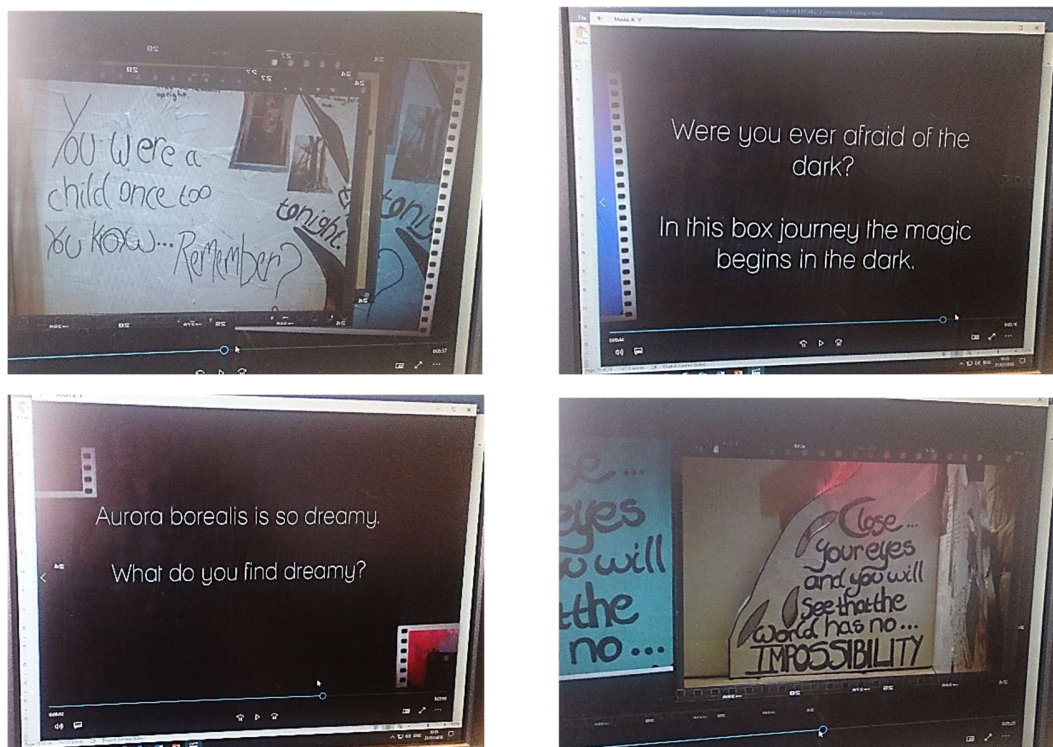


Fig.4.49e Snapshots from Participant 7's VE showing inclusion of her creative process.



Fig.4.49f Snapshots from Participant 7's VE showing her effort in engaging the viewers.



Fig.4.49g Snapshots from Participant 7's VE showing the inclusion of her exhibition.



Fig.4.49h P7's chosen artwork from the museum collection.



Fig.4.49i Snapshots from Participant 7's VE showing her link of an artwork from the collection.

4.2.11 Challenges of the Project

In the absence of the museum premises, to facilitate the participants' engagement with the collection, I could only project digital images of the collection and provide them images of the ones they chose. These digital images were carefully selected to represent baroque, renaissance, modern and contemporary works, as well as to portray social issues related to the generic themes. Unlike the participants of Projects 1 and Project 3, since the participants of Project 2 could develop their theme further beyond the workshops, they could access the images whenever they wanted throughout the project. Yet, the participants of Projects 1 and Project 3 connected their work with the collection to a greater extent than the participants of Project 2. Could the knowledge of art and art education have inhibited Project 2's participants from connecting with the museum collection? Could their awareness of what the NMFA lacked when compared to other similarly sized international museums also have contributed to this disconnection? Through my observations I noticed that their art education training, and their experience in providing educational resources, led them to focus more on the educational aspect of their theme rather than linking it to the collection.

4.2.12 Outreach Within and Without the Museum

Just like Project 1, Project 2's discussion of findings also made me wonder whether a holistic museum educational programme necessitates young adults engaging with a tangible collection at the museum premises. This concern became stronger through Project 2's findings which revealed that the participants could connect more with the collection when given the opportunity to observe at leisure its digital images. In the next section, the discussion of findings for Project 3 could not continue to explore this concern. Due to the total absence of the national art museum premises at the time of Project 3, I could no longer investigate other educational strategies within the museum premises.

In the next section, the discussion of findings will be concerned with the educational strategies explored beyond the museum, through using printed images of selected works. Moreover, it will also discuss ways through which the VEs created by the participants of Project 2, served to inspire the creative process of the participants of Project 3.

4.3 Project 3

4.3.1 The Purpose of Project 3

The purpose of Research Project 3 was to investigate museum educational strategies to reach out to a community of ten young adults who were inmates at Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF) in 2017. Project 3 gave these participants the task of developing social themes with reference to the art museum collection. Later in the project they could also explore the themes through photography and comic art techniques in collaboration with local artists. Appendix 3.1 shows further details about the project context.

4.3.2 The Participants' Identity

Two days before the start of the project, during the information session, I became aware that some of the applicants for the project had expectations of learning photography techniques as the project

has been promoted in that way. However, the ten participants who signed the consent form were the ones who expected much more than photography techniques throughout the project. At first most of them passed crude comments, most probably because of their insecurity at facing a female stranger on a small island where they could be easily identified. A few even asked me whether my role was that of an undercover psychiatrist, to study their minds and behaviour through art. Using an inquiry-based approach and showing interest in their reactions to art might have triggered this impression as they were not used to art education beyond its technical aspect. After the first two sessions, during which I kept reminding them that our roles was to exchange knowledge and that I was also learning from them, they gradually showed more trust and started opening up more.

The group consisted of a mix of international and Maltese participants. Bearing in mind the importance of language for articulating one's thoughts with others and ensuring that ethnic statuses would "not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential" (OECD, 2019: 2), both Maltese and English language were used in this project. Some participants did not mind talking in English with foreign participants, but a few expressed their irritation with the fact that both languages were being used in the workshops. This irritation at times caused conflict between them. Moreover, the CCF directors urged me to be strict with them due to their unpredictable conduct. They also insisted that I count all distributed material when collected, in order to prevent sharp materials getting into their lockups. Appendix 3.1 (Project 3) provides further details about the participants' identity and context.

4.3.3 Discussion of Findings

As in the previous two projects, the participants of Project 3 were also engaged through a learning process which involved the development of a theme they chose vis-à-vis artwork/s they selected from the museum collection. However the analysis of Project 3 is carried out on the lines used in Project 1. Hence, when analysing the effectiveness of the strategies applied in Project 3, account would be taken of the direct results gained from the learning benefits achieved by the participants. As shown in Fig.4.50 and as listed below, six main categories of findings have emerged from the combined coded data of Project 3 (presented in Appendix 3.2 and 3.3):

- Meeting the participants' expectations of the project;

- Recognition of the project's holistic learning process;
- Practising transferrable skills throughout the project;
- Relevance of the museum collection and collaboration with local artists;
- Challenges of the project;
- Effective educational outreach strategies as a result of the project;
- Suggestions for museum education outreach.

Each of the above six categories is discussed in further detail in the sections which follow. Despite the different findings, the categories echo those discussed for the previous two projects, with the exception of the collaboration with local artists which was a strategy explored only during Project 3.

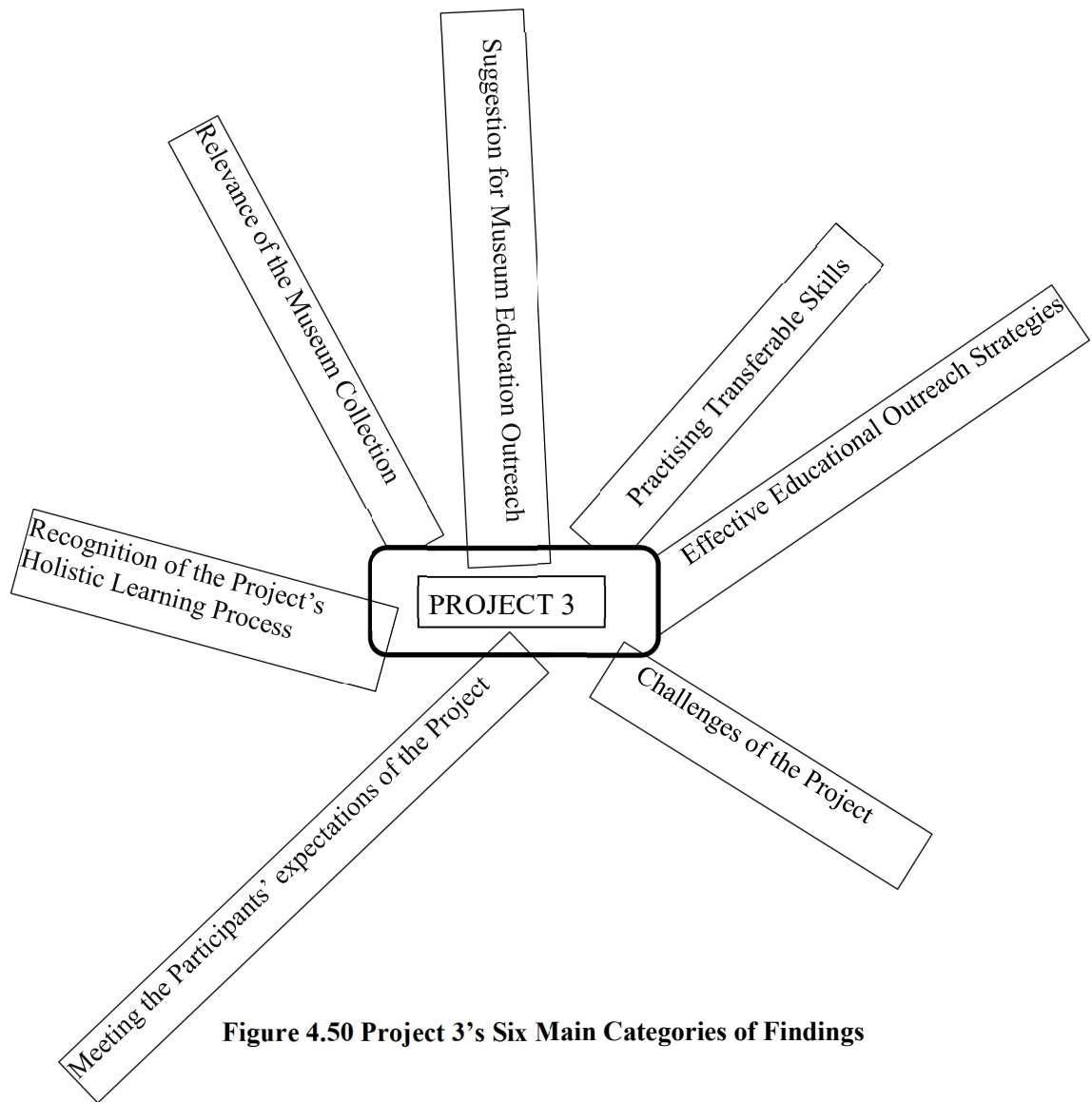


Figure 4.50 Project 3's Six Main Categories of Findings

4.3.4 *Meeting the Participants' Expectations*

Although meaning has always been essential for art, traditionally art education has often focused on technical skills, “not the meaningful interpretive experience that makes art fundamental to human existence” (Freedman, 2000:317). When asked about their project’s expectations during the initial interviews (Appendix 3.2, Project 3), four out of twelve participants expected to learn the technical aspect of art, particularly drawing and photography techniques. For instance, P9 said he

wishes “to improve my skills in drawing and photography”. Similarly, P10 mentioned his willingness “to continue to learn... graphic arts and photography” while P5 insisted that he “heard that it involves photography” and P7 mentioned he understood” it is about art... to shade in pencil techniques”. Apart from the influence which past schooling had on the art education of participants, their expectations stemmed from the way the CCF staff had promoted the project’s call for application, namely emphasising the technical aspects of photography and drawing skills.

Three participants mentioned their expectations of the project’s creative aspect, meaning-making of life, and helping others to learn. This made me wonder whether there would have been any applicants if the CCF staff had not promoted the project through the technical aspect of art, which is often what comes to mind when the word ‘art’ is mentioned. Despite several meetings with the CCF directors prior to the start of the project in which I insisted on the holistic nature of art education, why did they still provide the inmates with the impression of a scope limited to the technical aspect? This misinformation gave the participants the false impression that they were applying for a photography or drawing course. Consequently, it became quite challenging to explain what the project really involved during the information session, and the applicants became visibly irritated at what they considered to be the deception committed by CCF staff in their regard. As a result, a few inmates refused to sign the consent form and left the project.

The ten who remained were the ones still interested in a potential learning experience, which would extend beyond the mere achievement of artistic technical skills. As the project unfolded, the participants noticed that practical skills were still incorporated in the project. Apart from photography and comic art technical skills, whenever they expressed their need to learn artistic techniques, I explained through eliciting the use of skills they already possessed. For instance, when they asked to learn to sketch quickly, I told them to draw lines and shapes. By emphasising their awareness of basic drawing skills which they already had, I could demonstrate ways in which one observes and uses lines and shapes to draw quickly and easily anything one wants. Evidence of their understanding could be seen in the quick sketches they made of the selected works from the collection.

When asked about their expectations of the relevance to them of a project involving a reference to the national art museum collection, P2 insisted that the relevance of the project would depend on the images of the selected museum artworks. P10 said art for him “is not simply drawing but shows the way one lives life”. Such reactions indicated the participants’ awareness of the project’s relevance in terms of exposing the connection between art and life. This recalls Biesta (2006) who argues that the lifelong learning agenda should be set by learners themselves based on what they find meaningful for their life. Throughout the project, the selection of themes and artworks from the collection was left up to the participants. In this way the workshops, which involved activities concerning their work development, and the connections they made between art and their life, became relevant. Moreover, P7 expressed his wish to be given the opportunity “to exhibit our art reflecting our life in prison” at the museum. Had MUŻA been open by that time, arrangements would have been made to use its entrance corridors (easing public accessibility) for their final exhibition.

The coded final interviews revealed that the participants derived certain unexpected benefits from their participation in the project, particularly by way of holistic learning benefits. For instance, P1 acknowledged that “the project encouraged me to reflect on my life” while P4 said “I could express myself better through art” and P2 realised that “one can send a message through art” . Some participants confessed that the workshops had encouraged them to practise abilities which they forgot they had. While recalling that the last time he drew something was 10 years earlier, P5 showed that the project had increased his awareness of learning about the creative process. He explained that the project provided him the ability to cultivate ideas and “learned that small thoughts can lead to great art... I learned about the development of art”. Others felt that they had attained certain skills for tasks which demanded observation and interpretation of artworks in relation to life, by reference to everyday life experiences. One participant’s response reflected the expectation, which is commonly encountered, that art education is an easy and relaxing ability. He admitted that at first he “thought the project would be childish” but later he “realised how detailed the connections are... deeper than expected” (P3).

The project's findings show that the participants' initial expectations, which were influenced by past school experience as well as the way in which CCF staff had promoted the project, were not met but had been transformed as a result of the project. While engaging with the collection and dealing with tasks that required the practise of artistic, cognitive and social skills, they noticed the "wider benefits of learning" (Biesta, 2006:74).

4.3.5 Recognition of the Project's Holistic Learning Process

Holistic learning in my projects referred to the process of addressing the learner's whole personality through emotional, practical and cognitive experiences that "stimulate creativity, empathy and passion" (Heublein and Zimmermann, 2016:10). This holistic process facilitated the participants' reflection on the relevance of their learning, by documenting it and applying what they have learned in the process of their theme development.

The participants' engagement in the practice of critical thinking was noted every time I watched them presenting their work-in-progress to the rest of the group, when they described 'what', 'how' and 'why' they have been dealing with the chosen theme. Their facial expressions indicated the enthusiasm and sense of accomplishment while they expressed the satisfaction obtained through the gradual development of ideas. During the final evaluation, some participants declared that while developing their chosen themes, they had the opportunity to think deeply about issues they consider important in life and which they would not have thought about had they not participated in the project. Moreover, some participants said the project's sessions of photography encouraged them to start noticing objects and symbols around them, which they would have otherwise ignored.

Besides the cultivation of awareness of social issues and objects around them, the participants also mentioned how the project helped them to nurture their sense of self-awareness. During the final self-evaluation session, they mentioned that the work on their chosen theme unfolded in parallel with a realisation that they were learning more about themselves. In addition, they said they felt accepted. No one ridiculed anyone during the role-play activity while they expressed their interpretations of the collection. As indicated by the initial interviews, the insecurities caused by the impression that a lack of art background would render them unable to interpret art correctly are

actually what prevented them from looking at artworks and visit the national art museum. Contrastingly, since “action-research turns all the people involved in a project into researchers” (Charman and Ross, 2004:4), confidence in art interpretation was facilitated through the relationship of trust which the workshops had helped to establish.

Throughout the workshops, on several occasions the participants raised the social aspect of the project activities. During the final interviews when asked about the learning experiences gained from the project, some of them said they had become more confident to look at, and interpret, art while listening to each other’s presentations. Others explained that they learned from the ideas and experiences they had shared during discussions. This aligns with the collective potential of lifelong learning as “learning with others and from otherness and difference” (Biesta, 2006:170) transforms individual issues into shared concerns.

Moreover, a few participants expressed their awareness of art as a mirror of life while they explained ways in which art reflects life and serves to connect people together and to their own life narratives. For instance, P1 said that “the workshops served to discover more about art and how art can develop while reflecting on life”. Meanwhile, P3 described his understanding of visual interpretation, stating that “art could be read, not simply appreciated for its beauty”. He explained that he “noticed the difference between trying to observe art by aiming to understand the artist’s message and to understand an artwork by seeing its effect on me”. Similarly, P4 described how “observing the art museum collection served as an inspiration to develop ideas both for drawings and life”.

4.3.6 Practising Transferable Skills

Considering the participants’ particular interests and needs, as in previous projects, Project 3 enabled the practice of transferable skills especially critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. For instance, the tasks of selecting a theme and choosing from the artworks of the collection led the participants to make connections between such selections and life. This constantly engaged them in the practice of critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making and problem-solving. Moreover, presentations of work-in-progress, presentations of self-evaluations and practical sessions led them to develop collaborative skills. For instance, they questioned and

listened to each other to understand the different methods used and the reasoning behind decisions taken.

The project's findings indicate that through its participative approach, the participants increased their awareness and understanding of transferable skills. For instance, during evaluation sessions, the participants said they could think deeply about life because they were encouraged to come up with issues which mattered to them - their own learning agenda. They said that issues concerning real life situations need to be thought about and shared so that one can learn from the other. Yet, they argued that they never had the opportunity to learn this way before. They also mentioned that learning to use mind-mapping and art-journaling techniques helped to clarify one's mind and develop ideas. In addition, they mentioned that presenting their work-in-progress through flipping art journals, encouraged others to provide guidance, including constructive criticism.

The coded final interviews reveal the awareness of participants that some skills which they practised in the project were already being used in life. I noticed that two participants (P1 and P5) referred to technical skills. However, although P1 referred to technical skills when mentioning that "throughout the project I discovered more photography skills", he later explained the recognition of interpretation skills when he stated that "every drawing I create contains a message... symbolic." While P5 immediately equated "drawing-skills" with the skills gained through the project, he continued to explain that "all my life is computer! But the project made me aware I can create art". He continued to refer to the awareness of the creative process which was gained through the project. He explained that "the importance for me is the development of art, not just to put an idea and draw but one has to think, decide and recognise mistakes to correct".

P3 mentioned the value of practising problem-solving while recognising mistakes during the work development process. He claimed that the project encouraged him to "reflect deeply and slowly... a sense of development while creating art, where I could reflect and notice what is wrong in order to correct it... this skill is valuable for life too!" P4 and P5 described their newly-acquired personal and social skills for life when speaking about showing tolerance and respect both for oneself and for others. P4 said that "showing respect while listening to others and expressing myself are useful skills for life" while P5 added that "when we draw we should not depend on others' judgment... we all see things from different perspectives".

4.3.7 Relevance of the Museum Collection

The coded initial interviews revealed that the participants, with the exception of two, had never visited the NMFA. The two who had once visited it spoke positively about the experience. One of them said it compares well with foreign art museums, while the other described it as a library with a story detailing the past, present and future. Their ways of describing the NMFA made me doubt whether they were actually referring to the NMFA or to another museum in Valletta. During one of the workshops, when I showed them images of the NMFA premises, none of the participants could confirm that they recognised it.

One of the participants said his reason for not visiting the NMFA was that he felt intimidated by detailed artworks as he would not understand them. Three participants who never visited the NMFA imagined it to be a cultural and educational place that contains paintings. Another participant indicated his awareness that the NMFA belongs to the culture ministry but still had no idea about it. One participant mentioned that once he watched a programme about the NMFA on TV and described it as full of surprises. Then again, he admitted he was not so sure whether it was the NMFA but his assumption was based on his memory that the place had displayed paintings. These replies to the initial interview question concerning the NMFA made me wonder whether, through the project, the participants would have found the museum collection relevant at all.

The first workshop of the project started by sharing the feedback obtained from the initial interview replies in the manner of a focus group. Since “relevance is in the life of the beholder” (Mayer, 2005: 14) and my projects aimed at encouraging the participants’ own meaning-making of the museum collection, this strategy served to elicit further reasons and suggestions concerning the museum’s relevance for their life. Besides, it also enabled them to confirm the validity of their contribution, leading to an atmosphere of trust. A discussion arose and the participants’ reasons for not visiting the NMFA were recorded in the field notes as follows:

“I do not like to visit a museum on my own. I need to be with someone else to discuss what I am seeing”.

“In Malta, there are no artworks by popular artists like Leonardo da Vinci”.

“The Maltese are not cultured, not even at school...we were never encouraged to visit the museum...we are more sports oriented here in Malta, especially football”.

The first reason indicates the importance given by the participants to the social aspect of visiting a museum, while the second reason shows the participants' belief that artworks worth displaying and observing are only those having an international reputation. As for the third reason, the participants, with the exception of the foreign ones, agreed that Maltese citizens in general are not being taught sufficiently to appreciate the arts. Moreover, they expressed their frustration that most Maltese people are inclined to watch football and identify strongly with international football teams rather than visiting museums or performances. While the culture track study (Halperin, 2017) shows that the main reason for participating in cultural activities is 'having fun', Falk and Dierking (2000) and Roberts (1997) insist that visitors go to museums predominantly for entertainment. This is not the case for Maltese citizens.

As pointed out by the project's participants, their choices for entertainment are not cultural events or venues. Moreover, a survey (Special Eurobarometer 466, 2017:50) shows that in 2017 only 37% of respondents in Malta visited a museum. With this in mind, throughout the projects I aimed to offer the participants an enjoyable learning experience with reference to the museum collection. 'Enjoyable' here is not the same as the sense of 'amusement' one derives through other means, but the stimulation of the participants' own creative ways to make the collection meaningful. Recent research shows that entertainment consumption is not only about having fun but is also related to the appreciation of meaningful experiences (Rieger et al., 2018) through contemplative and moving experiences (Oliver and Bartsch, 2010).

This project's participants, unlike those of the previous two projects, had no opportunity to visit the actual museum as MUŻA was still in transition. Meanwhile, the field notes indicate that unlike the participants of the previous two projects, these participants immediately chose images of the museum collection which resonated with their chosen theme. This made me wonder whether the high-quality images of the collection printed on foam board was making them more relevant, perhaps aided by the fact that they could hold them in their hands allowing them time to observe them. They could also tilt and rotate the images to continue to understand them deeply. Possibly even the fact that they did not have to go inside the building of a museum to view the actual artworks, which, according to a few of them would feel intimidating, could have facilitated connecting immediately with the images.

The participants' final presentations of their creative process as recorded in my field notes and in the photo-documentation found in their art journals continued to show how the museum collection was relevant to the participants. Moreover, the participants' own words (Fig.4.50a,b) were displayed together with their creative process (Fig.4.50c) and art journals (Fig.4.50d) at two exhibitions held as part of the project. Appendix 3.4 (Project 3) shows images of the participants' choices of artworks from the museum collection. Their selection of printed images of artworks was also displayed in the final two exhibitions, accompanied by text in Maltese and English inviting viewers to make their own connections with the participants' interpretations (Fig.4.51 a-d). These exhibitions embraced the participants' experience of the collection and provided a public display in which "interpretation is shaped as much by the life experience visitors bring to viewing objects as by the works themselves" (Mayer, 2005:15)



Fig.4.50a Participants' words displayed with their creative process.



Fig.4.50b Participants' words displayed with their creative process.



Fig.4.50c Exhibition of the participants' creative process.

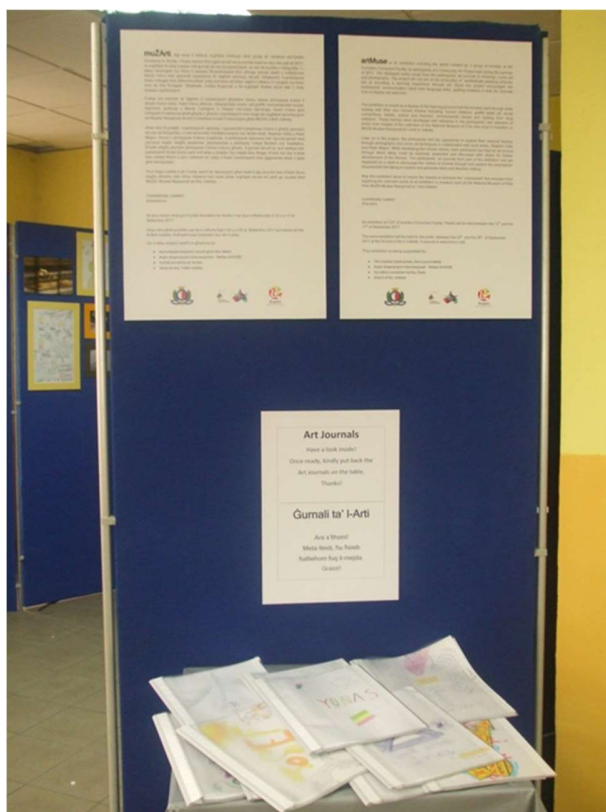


Fig.4.50d The displayed art journals.

Charmaine Zammit
 Young Adults Learning in a National Art Museum: a Holistic Approach



Fig.4.51a The participants' selected images of artworks displayed at the School of Art exhibition

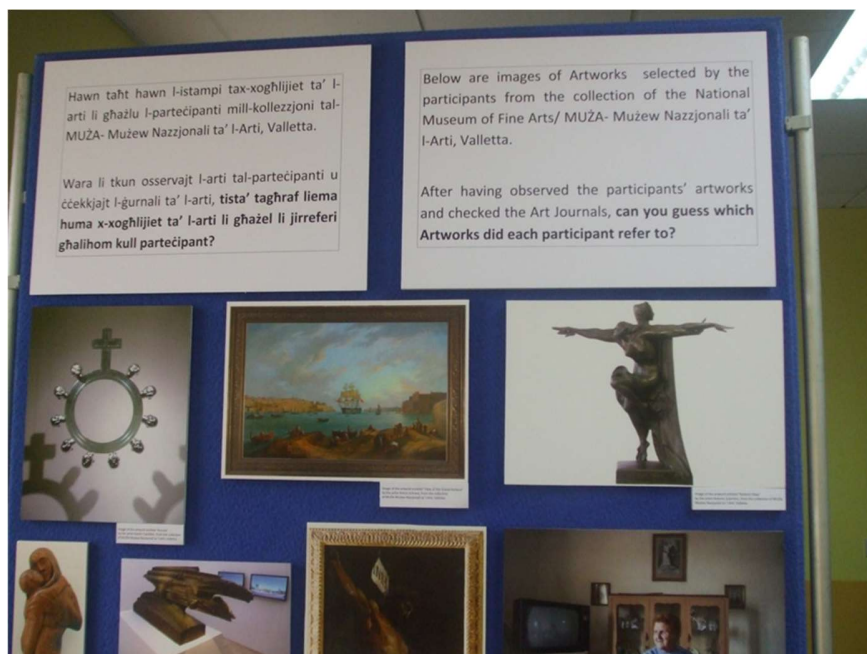


Fig.4.50b Displayed text inviting the viewers to make connections between with the participants' selected images of artworks and their creative process



Fig.4.51c The participants' selected images of artworks displayed at the CCF exhibition



Fig.4.51d The participants' selected images of artworks displayed at the CCF exhibition

Below are the findings on the connections which the participants made with images of artworks from the collection, while developing their selected themes. Fig. 4.52a shows the work of P1, who missed two workshops because he was being held at a detention area, but still managed to keep up with the rest. He chose ‘Getting healed’ as a theme and, guided by questions such as ‘what is needed for healing?’, he mentioned the need for prayers. As soon as he observed the image of Austin Camilleri’s ‘Kuruna’ (Fig.4.52b), he found it meaningful to his theme and could re-interpret its relevance through creating an artwork (Fig.4.52c) which also included written annotations in Maltese, translated to English as follows:

“Austin Camilleri’s ‘Kuruna’... God, hope, healing, happiness, peace, family, children, respect. When one has faith in God, one finds rest and healing for the rest of life.”

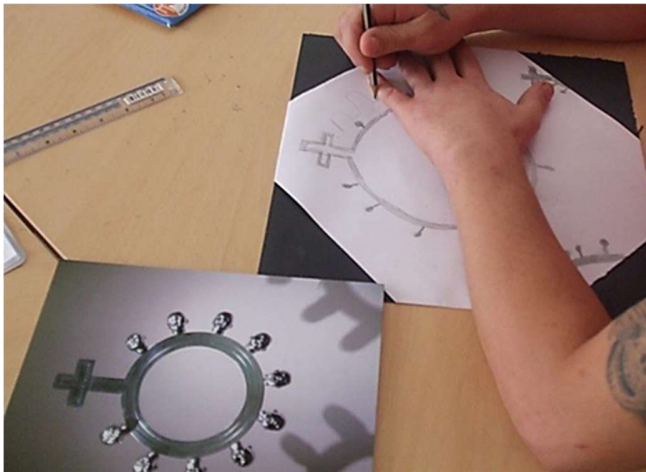


Fig.4.52a P1’s work in progress



Fig.4.52b P1’s chosen artwork

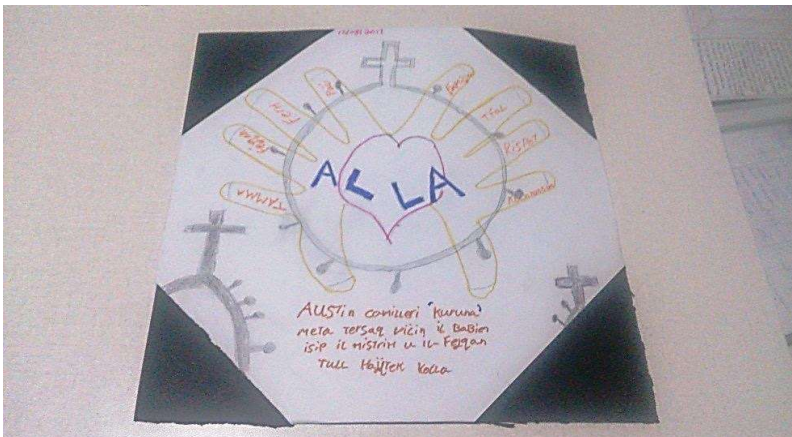


Fig.4.52c P1’s ‘Getting Healed’

As part of P2's creative process while developing his selected theme of 'Environmental Awareness', Fig.4.53a shows a mind-map while Fig.4.53b shows drawings of panels for a comic artwork, both concerning environmental issues. Later, he found a connection with the image of Albert Bierstadt's 'Floating Iceberg' (Fig.4.53c) in relation to his theme, which he could reinterpret in his drawing (Fig.4.53d, e). He wrote extensively about his work, while also referring to the selected artwork as follows:

"I chose Albert Bierstadt's 'Floating Iceberg' because it inspires me... nature is beautiful nature and it is a pity the harm we do to nature. My aim is to send a message by drawing to create awareness... to make a better world for us and for those that come after. We must protect more the ozone layer by not using heavy fuel oil. We must recycle more so those that come after us will find a better world... People around the world should contribute more for a better environment no matter what the colour, culture or religion... The world belongs to us, it's a place we came to live in for a short time so please do your best to save the environment."

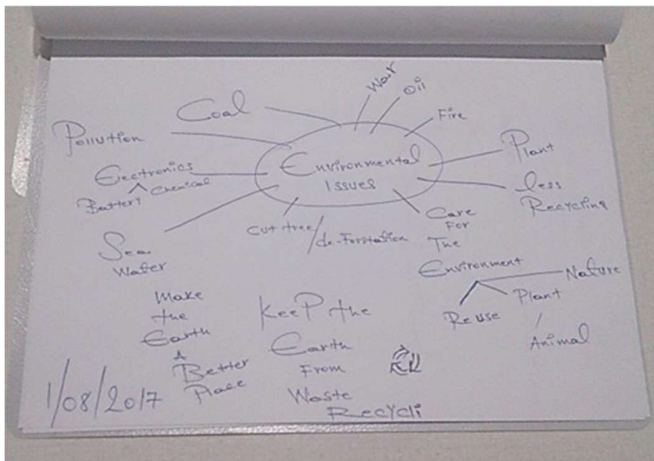


Fig.4.53a P2's mind-map of 'Environmental Issues'

Fig.4.53b P2's panels for a comic art regarding climate change

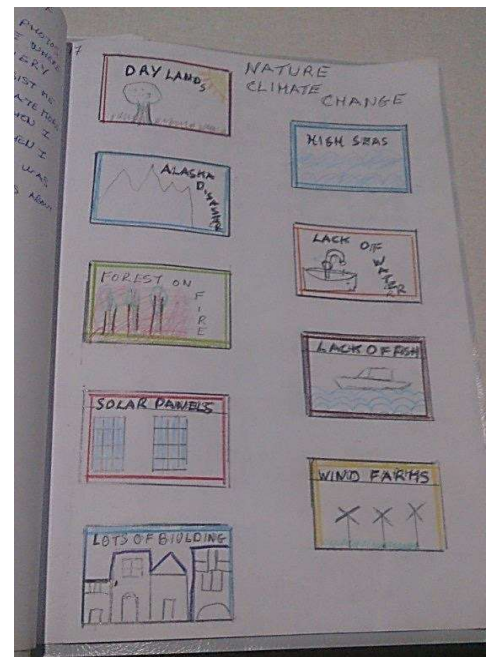




Fig.4.53c P2's Chosen Artwork

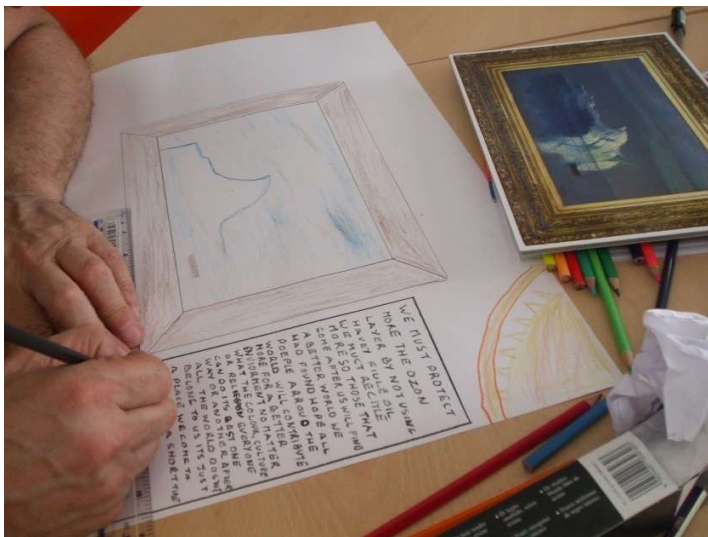


Fig.4.53d P2's reinterpretation

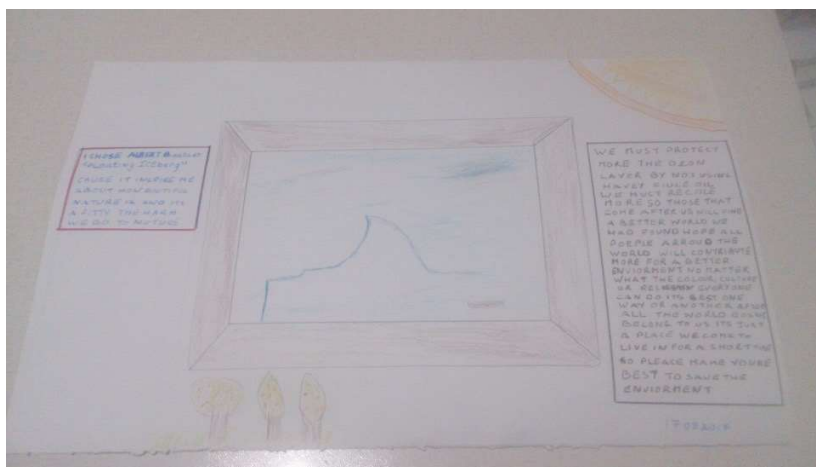


Fig.4.53e P2's
'Environmental Awareness'

In P3's work, there was clear evidence of development, as can be seen from his re-interpretation of the image from the collection and a subtle transformation of his chosen theme. He referred to the artwork of Samuel Bugeja's 'Mother and Child' (Fig.4.54a) as a starting point for dealing with his theme of 'Family' (Fig.4.54b), which gradually led him to express his emotional pain (Fig.4.54c, d). This was also revealed through his comic art (Fig.4.54e). He expressed the interpretation of his theme in the following words...

"I had many problems in life and my heart has been broken many times. Prison saved my life. In life we all have a choice... you have to choose the road you take. My road was the wrong way. I lost hope in life and went to prison. I lost everything but I never give up. I will always fight. I learned from my mistake. I find hope again in life. In God I become stronger, better life now, being a better man."

This participant explained how going through the creative process of re-interpreting an image from the collection, served him to expose his hidden pain and also an awareness of the pain he caused to his family. He felt safe to share it with others through drawing and text (Fig.4.54f,g), without the fear of being judged.



Fig.4.54a P3's chosen artwork

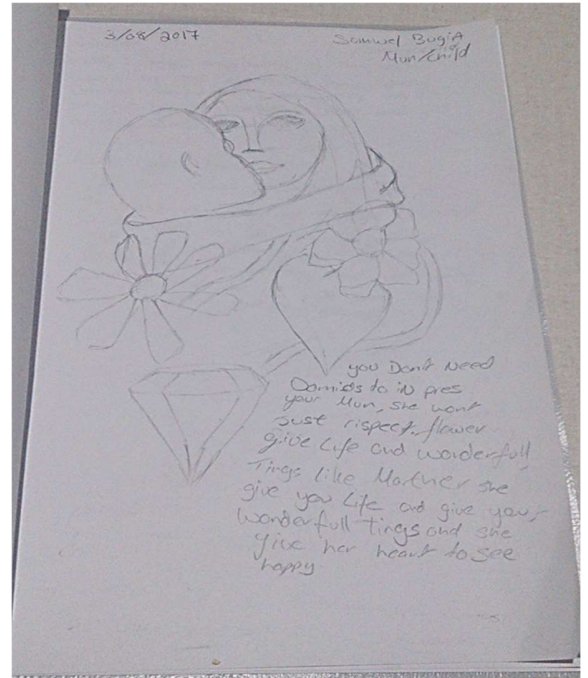


Fig.4.54b P3's dealing with the 'Family' theme

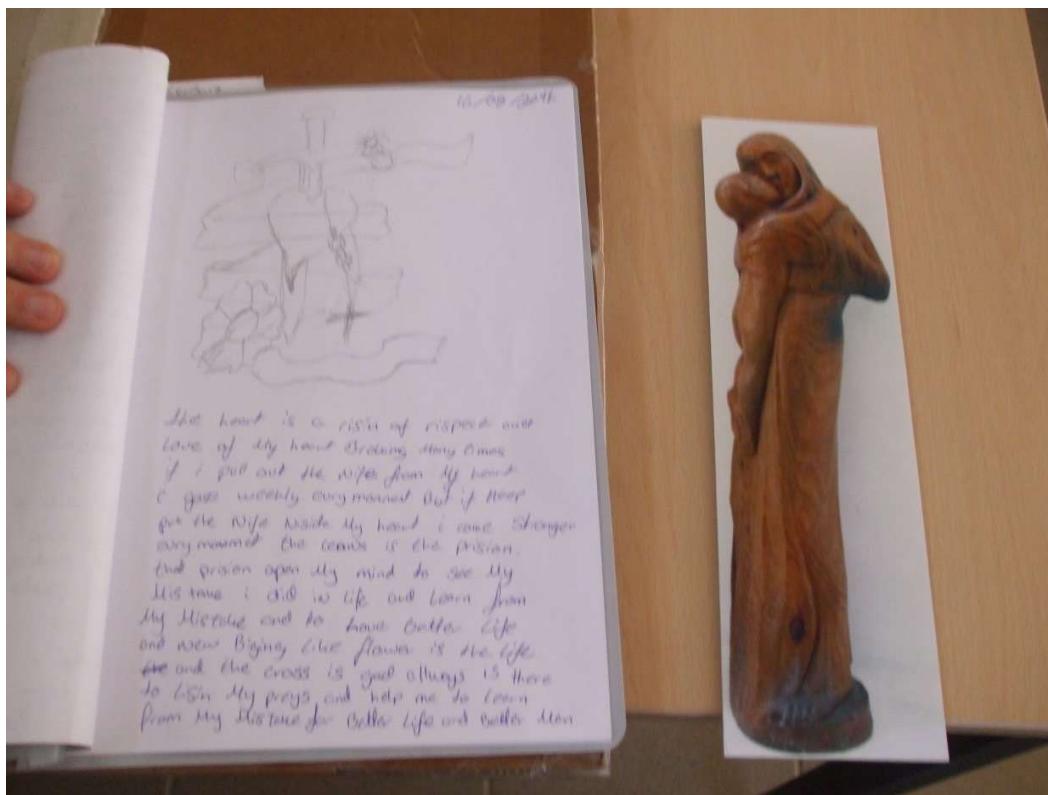


Fig.4.54c P3's development of work with reference to his selection from the collection

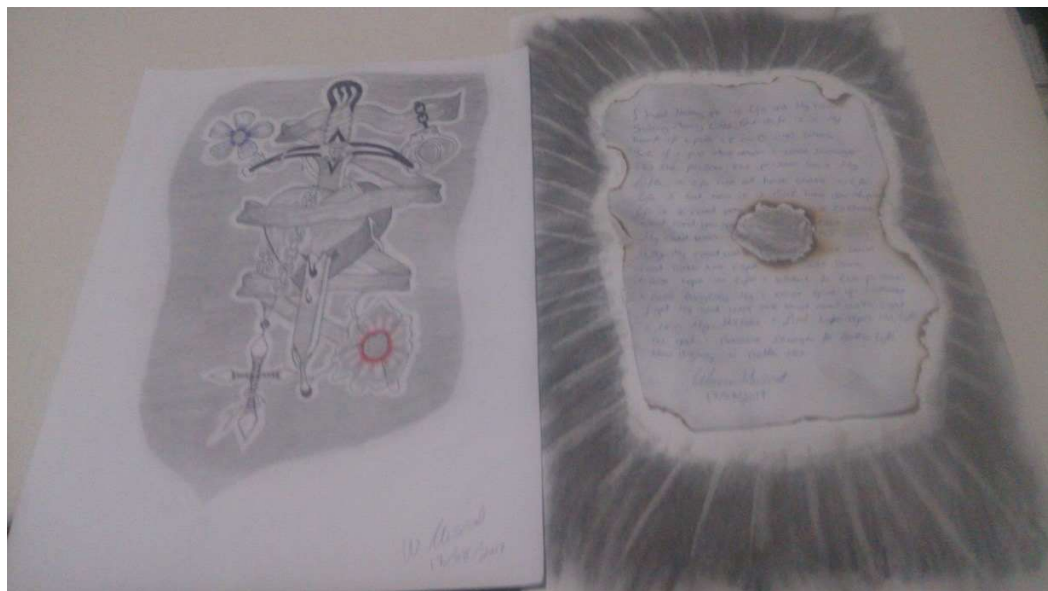


Fig.4.54d P3's development of work expressing his emotional pain

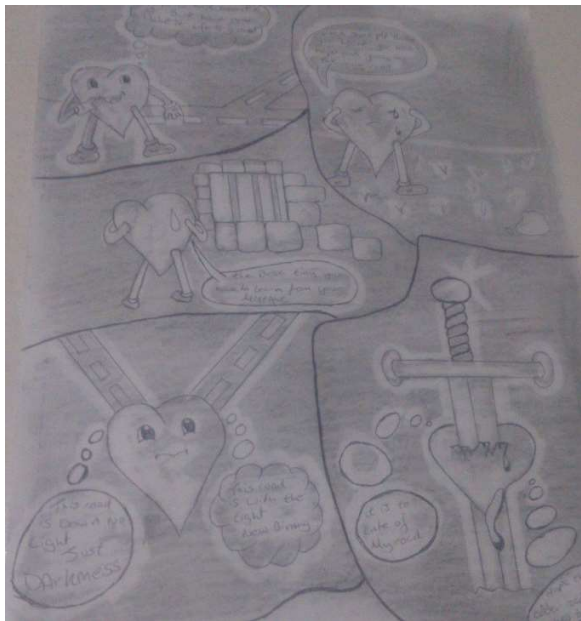


Fig.4.54e P3's comic art



Fig.4.54f P3's Development of theme transformed to the awareness of pain he caused to his family

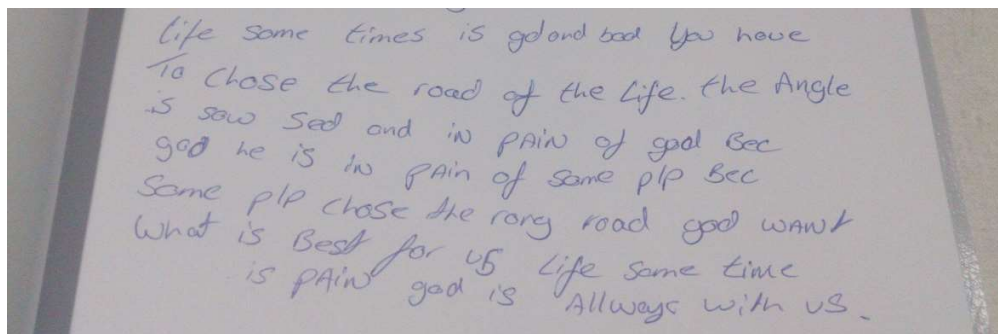


Fig.4.54g P3's Meaning-making of his own work and theme development

P4 interpreted Robert Zahra's 'Mkejjen Series' (Fig.4.55a) through dealing with the theme of 'light and darkness'. He reinterpreted this artwork by creating a drawing depicting light coming out of darkness, which he referred to as seeing the light in the darkness which was his life outside prison. During the final presentation, he explained that his own artwork shows his current feeling of seeing the 'light', but admitted that his next wish is to see 'life', something not possible in prison. In his art journal, he wrote:

"The artwork by Robert Zahra shows the meaning of going from dark to light. My artwork shows 'From dark to light... from light to life'. Justice is important for me, but the most important now is that I learn how to live, how I forgive and how I don't make mistakes."



Fig.4.55a P4's chosen artwork



Fig.4.55b P4's development of work

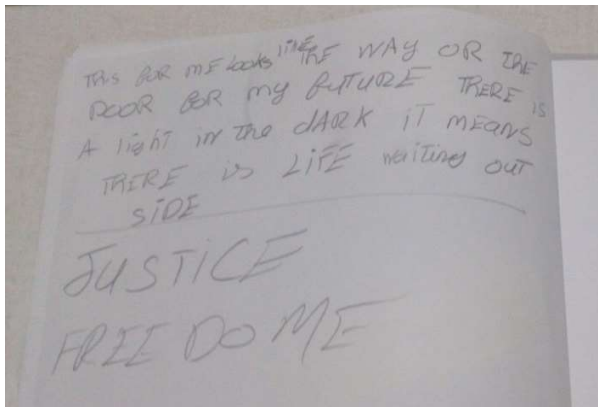


Fig.4.55c P4's meaning-making of his own work and theme development

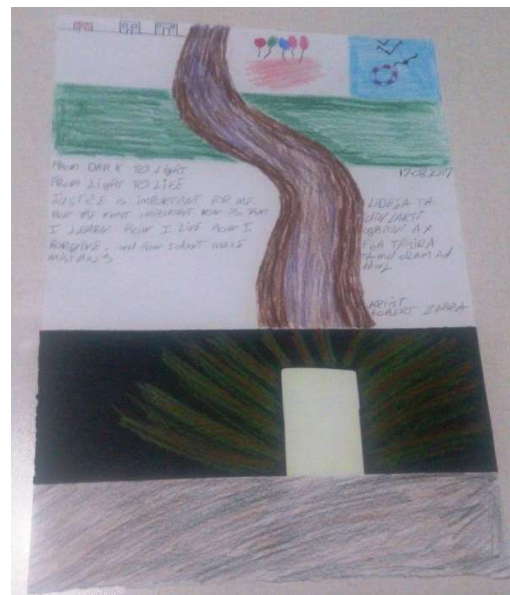


Fig.4.55d P4's Development of Theme

P5 gave an interpretation of his chosen theme of the ‘sea and death’ by looking at the images of John Paul Azzopardi’s ‘Curves’ and Anton Schranz’s ‘Grand Harbour’ (Appendix 3.4). These artworks somehow recalled his experience of death at sea while witnessing his migrant friends drowning. He reinterpreted them in drawings while developing his theme (Fig.4.56a, b). He related ‘Curves’ (Fig.4.56b) to his theme due to the bones used in the sculpture. ‘Bones’ immediately evoke ‘death’ and the image of the sea in the ‘Grand Harbour’ (Fig.4.56c) reminded him of the Maltese seas in which he had witnessed death. Eventually, he developed the theme in text and a drawing dealing directly with his tragic experience at sea (Fig.4.56d, e). The following interpretation is extracted from his art journal, which refers to the image of ‘Curves’ as a guitar rather than a violin:

“My drawing was inspired by the guitar done with bones and I ask myself ‘how many bones the artist used to create that art?’ and at the same time I remember... how many people I saw drowning in water when we tried to escape Libya? My picture is about the people who lost hope till they saw a plane across the sky... From the art of Anton Schranz's ‘view of the Grand Harbour’, I decided to draw the sea... the experience I had about the sea had so many different faces, but the most beautiful thing is you’ll get rescued in time. Thanks, first of all to God and secondary to the person who rescues you...”

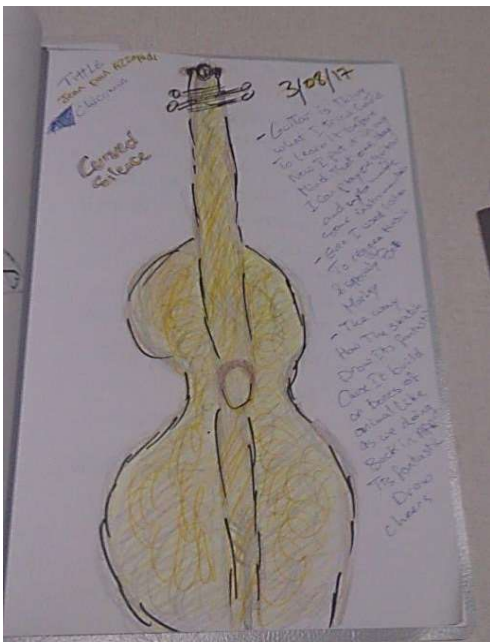


Fig.4.56a P5's Reinterpretation of 'Curves'



Fig.4.56b P5's Reinterpretation of 'Grand Harbour'



Fig.4.56c P5's chosen artwork



Fig.4.56d P5's chosen artwork

2: Evaluation 16.08.2017
1) I inspire my draw from the guitar
was done with Bones I ask my
Self "How Many Bones The artist used
To Create that art?" and in some
Time I remember How many people
I saw them drawing on water when
we try to skip from Libya
2) and The second art Its Mix
by alot of tools but at the
End Easy you can see Its Human
Picture so Its Make me feel that
from nothing you can Create some
thing value and positive
3) My picture what I draw Its about
The people who they lose the hope
Till they saw a plane Cross the
Sky at that time They get back
There feelings

Fig.4.56e P5's meaning-making of his work



Fig.4.56f P5's development of theme

It was interesting to note that although the available displayed images included those with a direct portrayal of migrants at sea, such as Darrin Zammit Lupi's works (Fig.4.56g), P5 still did not choose these images. During the presentation, he explained that as soon as he caught a glimpse of these works, he wanted to look away. He confessed that just a glimpse at these works saddened him because it rekindled images of his friends who drowned.



Fig.4.56g Darrin Zammit Lupi's works

One of the participants who was quite interested in graffiti text, chose Patrick J.Fenech's 'Qrendi Festa' (Fig.4.57a) as he found it similar to colourful graffiti art, which just like feasts, is also displayed in public spaces. Due to the way its technique has been executed he also found Norbert Francis Attard's 'PN loves MLP' (Fig.4.57b) as relevant to graffiti. His interpretation of the chosen works while his own work was in progress (Fig.4.57c) was also documented in his Journal (Fig. 4.57d). While presenting his theme development of 'Graffiti Street Art' through mind-mapping and drawings (Fig.4.57e,f,g), P6 explained:

"I chose Patrick J.Fenech's 'Qrendi Festa' in relation to my theme as it consists of people expressing themselves in the street, dancing next to the fireworks, which are bright and colourful like graffiti and street art".



Fig.4.57a P6's chosen artwork



Fig.4.57b P6's chosen artwork



Fig.4.57c P6's work in progress

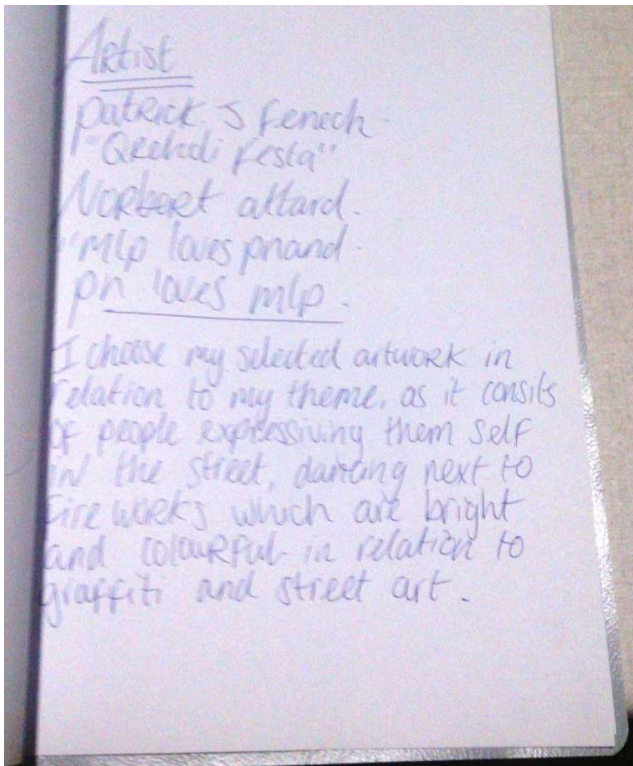


Fig.4.57d P6's relevance of the chosen artworks written on art journal

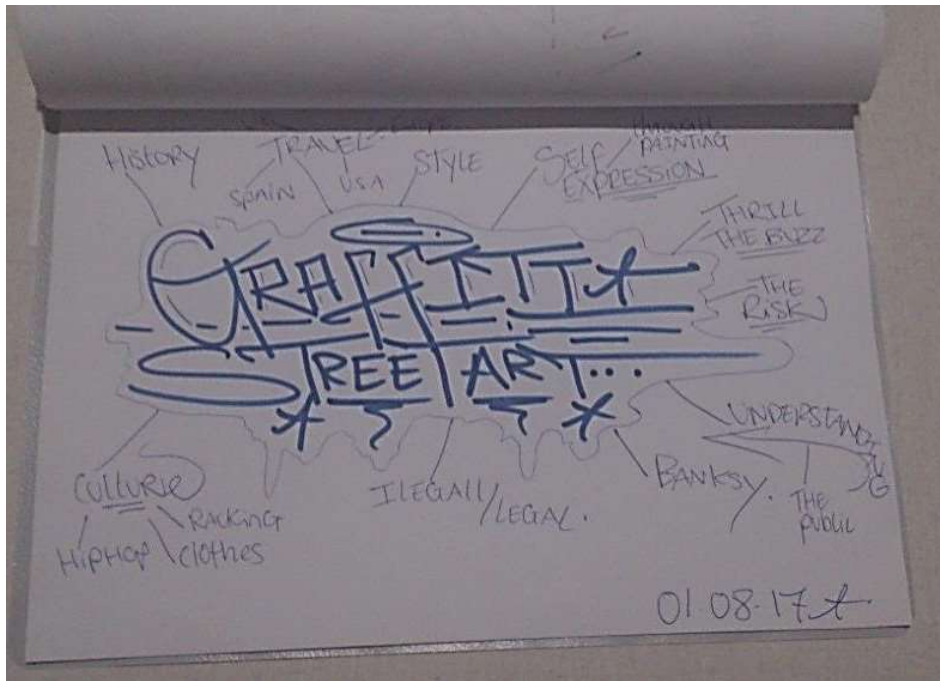


Fig.4.57e P6's mind-map



Fig.4.57f P6's drawing and development of theme



Fig.4.57g P6's development of theme

Another participant also chose one of Patrick J.Fenech's works. The work he found relevant to his theme 'Connecting with People' is entitled 'Ghaxaq' (Fig.4.58a). P7 re-interpreted this work while dealing with his theme through mind-mapping (Fig.4.58b), which at first concerned the love he has for the social dimension of his job, which he missed and felt passionate about. Later, his theme developed as he realised how he used to connect with a diversity of people during his daily job. Reflecting on this daily connection while drawing (Fig.4.58c, d, e) with reference to the relevance he found in the artwork 'Ghaxaq', P7 identified himself with the portrayed figure:

"It represents me as a barber looking out of my shop towards the next customer and also showing the way. I can connect with people who are from different cultures and ages."



Fig.4.58a P7's chosen artwork

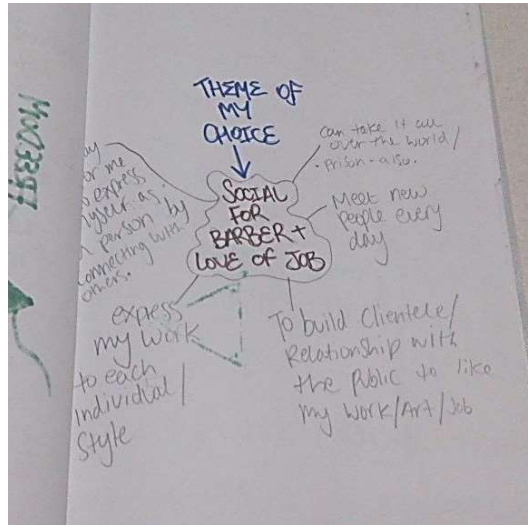


Fig.4.58b P7's mind-map evolving his thoughts

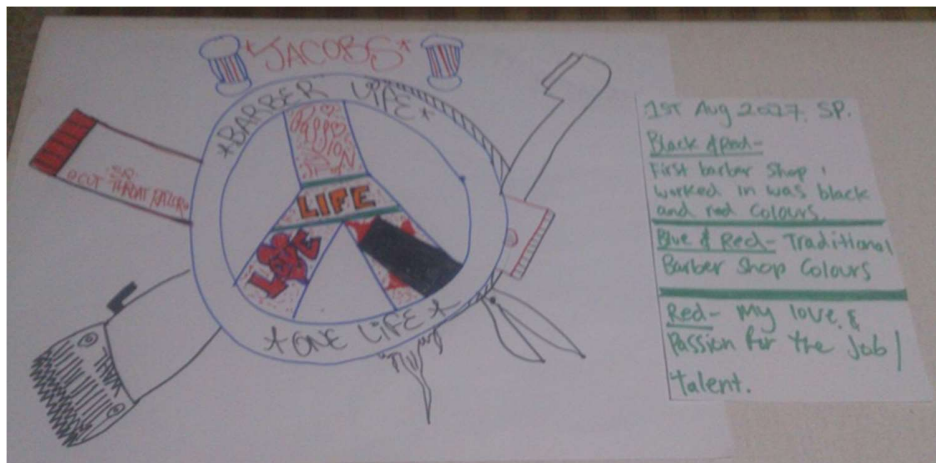


Fig.4.58c P7's artwork



Fig.4.58d P7's development of work

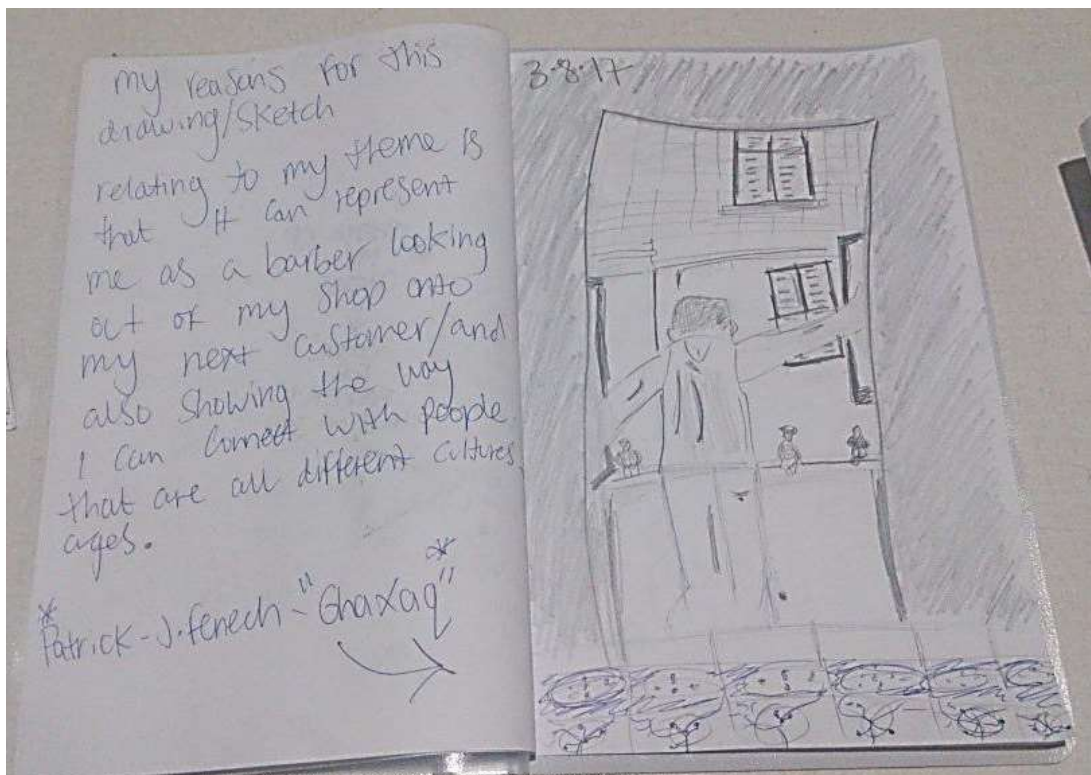


Fig.4.58e P7's theme development

While dealing with the development of his previously chosen theme of 'Beliefs', P8 decided to transform it to the theme concerning 'Good and Bad' (Fig.4.59a). As can be seen in his evaluation (Fig.4.59b), during a presentation he insisted that he wanted others to reflect while observing his artwork. P8 chose three artworks consisting of portraits in different media, which he could connect to his theme of 'Good and Bad'. The chosen artworks were Victor Diacono's 'Sir Temi Zammit' (Fig.4.59c), Antoine Favray's 'Portrait of Grandmaster Emanuel de Fonseca' (Fig.4.59d) and one of the photo-journalist portraits by Darrin Zammit Lupi (Fig.4.59e).

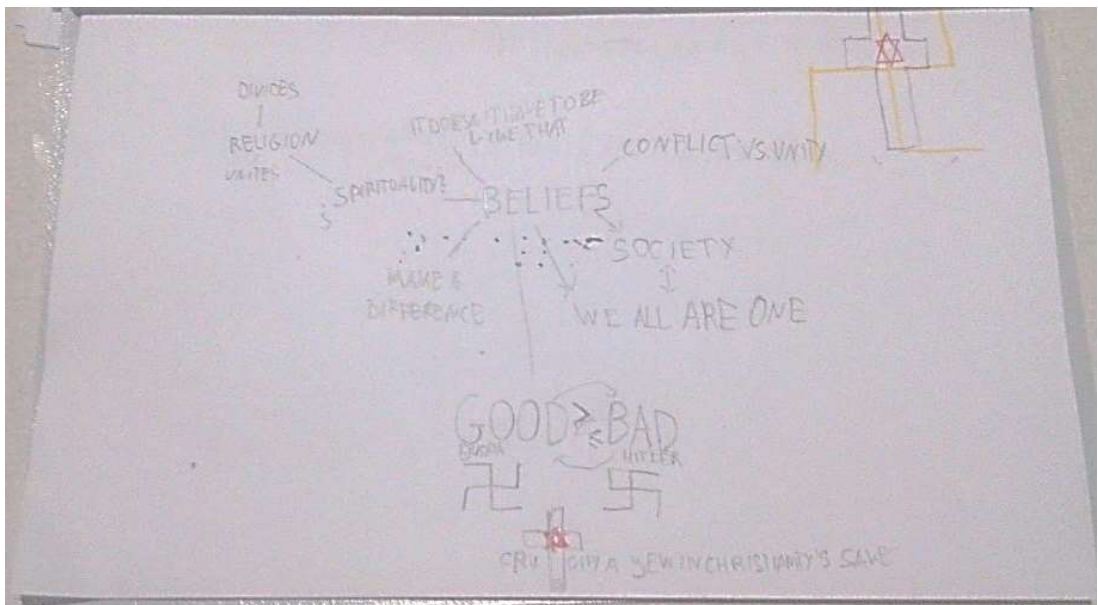


Fig.4.59a P8's mind-map

THIS GUYS ARE ALL RELATED TO MY THE ME
BECAUSE THEY ARE

03.08.17 EVALUATION
TO INCORPORATE THINGS THAT HAVE NO RELATION TO MY ORIGINAL IDEA YET I
CREATE/FIND SOMETHING TO BOND THEM. (NONE OF THE PAINTING WAS RELATED TO MY IDEA.)
(I DON'T NEED TO REFLECT -> I WANTED OTHERS TO REFLECT) THERE WERE NOT SURREAL/ABSTRACT ENOUGH
I HAD TO CREATE MY OWN ABSTRACTION

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO WISH -> I AM NOT ^{HERE} ~~NEAR~~ TO WISH
BUT TO CREATE.

Fig.4.59a P8's self-evaluation



Fig.4.59c



Fig.4.59d



Fig.4.59e

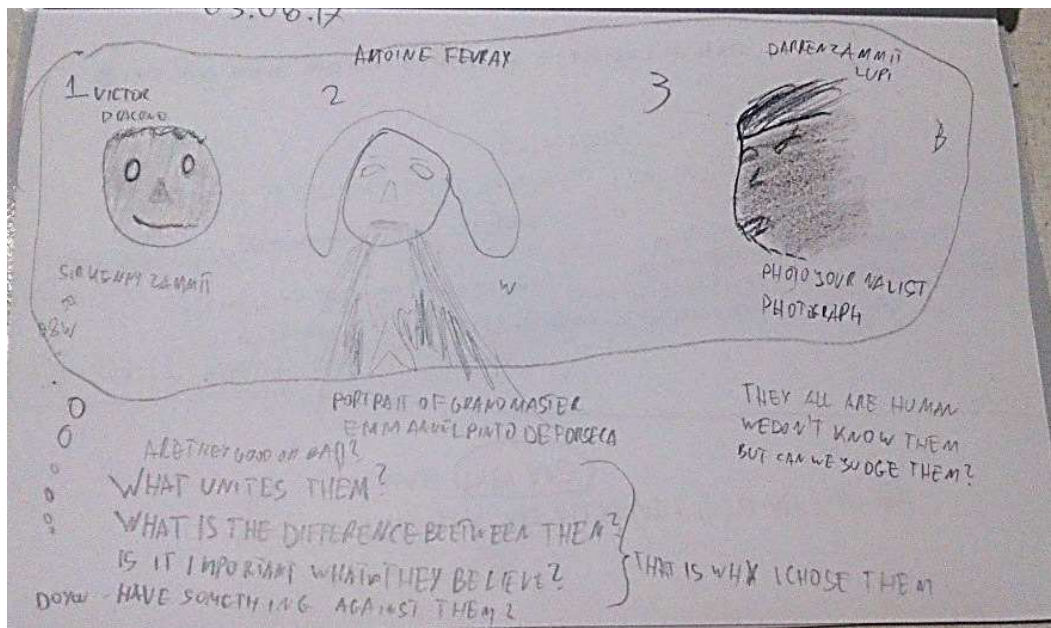


Fig.4.59f P8's reinterpretation of chosen artworks in relation to his theme

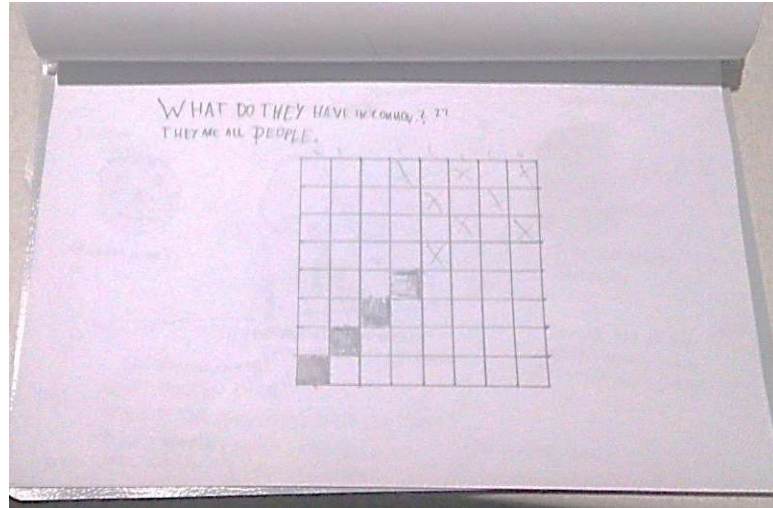


Fig.4.59g P8's theme development

While presenting his theme development, instead of explaining his reinterpretation of the selected artworks directly, as the other participants had done, P8 asked questions, also documented in his art journal (Fig.5.59f), such as:

“they are all humans, we don't know them, but can we judge them? Are they good or bad? What unites them? What is the difference between them? Do you have something against them?”

Through these questions, he made the rest of us reflect. A very interesting discussion was sparked about our tendency to judge and categorise people we don't even know, perhaps to somehow come to terms with our fear of the unknown. It was interesting to observe that the participants themselves started encouraging critical thinking by raising open-ended questions while observing the images from the collection and handling the multiple interpretations as part of the theme development process. This nurtured “a community of enquiry, in which discussion and debate were integral and each person's ideas were equally significant” (Charman and Ross, 2004:7). Later on, P8 drew a sketch of a chequer-board with black and white squares (Fig.4.59g). He explained that it would represent the fact that despite our differences such as skin colour, what we have in common is that we are all human beings. Unfortunately, this participant did not continue this work. He told me he

has plenty of creative ideas but it was difficult for him to realise his ideas due to the lack of material he planned to use. The issue of providing art materials, just like the inappropriate environment, limited the participants' work development within this project's context. Observing all the creative thoughts these participants generated while presenting, providing feedback to each other and discussing, I often wondered about the works they would have created if they were in a different context. If the necessary security and transport could be arranged by CCF authorities, in the same way that arrangements were made for the opening event of the public exhibition, the top-floor room at MUŻA would provide a better space to carry out these workshops.

The coded final interviews confirm the ways in which the participants made meaningful connections by relating the collection to life. None of the participants were reluctant to display their self-reflections through textual and visual expressions in public exhibitions. When interviewed, the participants explained that throughout the project they learned how to look at works of art slowly and interpret them with reference to their own life story, experiences and opinions about issues that concern universal needs such as 'environmental awareness'. The strategy of engaging the participants in developing their theme with reference to their interpretations of the collection eventually made them aware of the parallel interpretations they constructed of their own life narratives. Although the museum's transmitted knowledge has often been the official stated concern of museums (Roberts, 1997), Mayer (2005) argues that learning happens when visitors construct their own life stories.

During the final interviews three participants explained that by keeping in mind their theme, they could develop ideas by reflecting on life while observing images of the collection more thoughtfully. Moreover, P5 argued that a glimpse of images showing migrants (Fig.4.56g) made him feel depressed, recalling his "own tragic experience of losing friends at the sea". His comments during a presentation sparked a discussion on how images can have an immediate and powerful effect which evokes suppressed emotions. The impact of visual communication through the collection was further confirmed in the coded final interviews. For instance, P1 mentioned his own readings of narratives while observing artworks, by explaining that "every print of the museum collection... Christ crucified, the old woman with her cat... they are telling a story... like a movie.

The museum collection served for inspiration... it felt like they were talking to me”. Another participant mentioned that images from the collection enabled him to “not just see some random scribbles, but to go beyond, to read it, to understand it and create a work, inspired by it” (P3).

While photo-documentation of the participants’ creative process confirms the collection’s relevance in developing their theme, such relevance was not observed during the Comic Art activity. This lack of relevance presented a challenge in the project and is discussed further in the next section. Meanwhile, the documented images from the photography activities show evidence of the inclusion of artworks from the collection (Fig.4.60a,b,c).



Fig.4.60a P1’s photo of his chosen work (Austin Camilleri’s ‘Kuruna’) from the collection, which instantly reminded him of the power of prayers while developing his theme of ‘Getting Healed’.



Fig.4.60b Although eventually he focused on only one of them (Albert Bierstadt's 'Floating Iceberg'), P2 took a photo of his chosen works from the collection, showing landscapes, and thus related to his theme of 'Environmental Awareness'.



Fig.4.60c P3 took a photo of his chosen works from the collection which he found relative to his theme of 'Family'. Besides the work of Samuel Bugeja's 'Mother and Child' which he selected to focus on, somewhat the butcher and horses displayed in the other artworks reminded him of jobs which members of his family carried out.

Although the photos taken (Fig.4.60a, b, c) by three participants do not show a direct link between the selections from the collection and their themes, they still kept their selected theme in mind while choosing to take photos of the images from the collection. However, images of the photos they took show that, notwithstanding the guidance through an inquiry-based approach which both I and the collaborating artist provided, the participants remained more focused on the technical aspects of photography than their theme development (Fig.4.60d). The findings show that more time was required for constructing thematic links with the collection through photography.

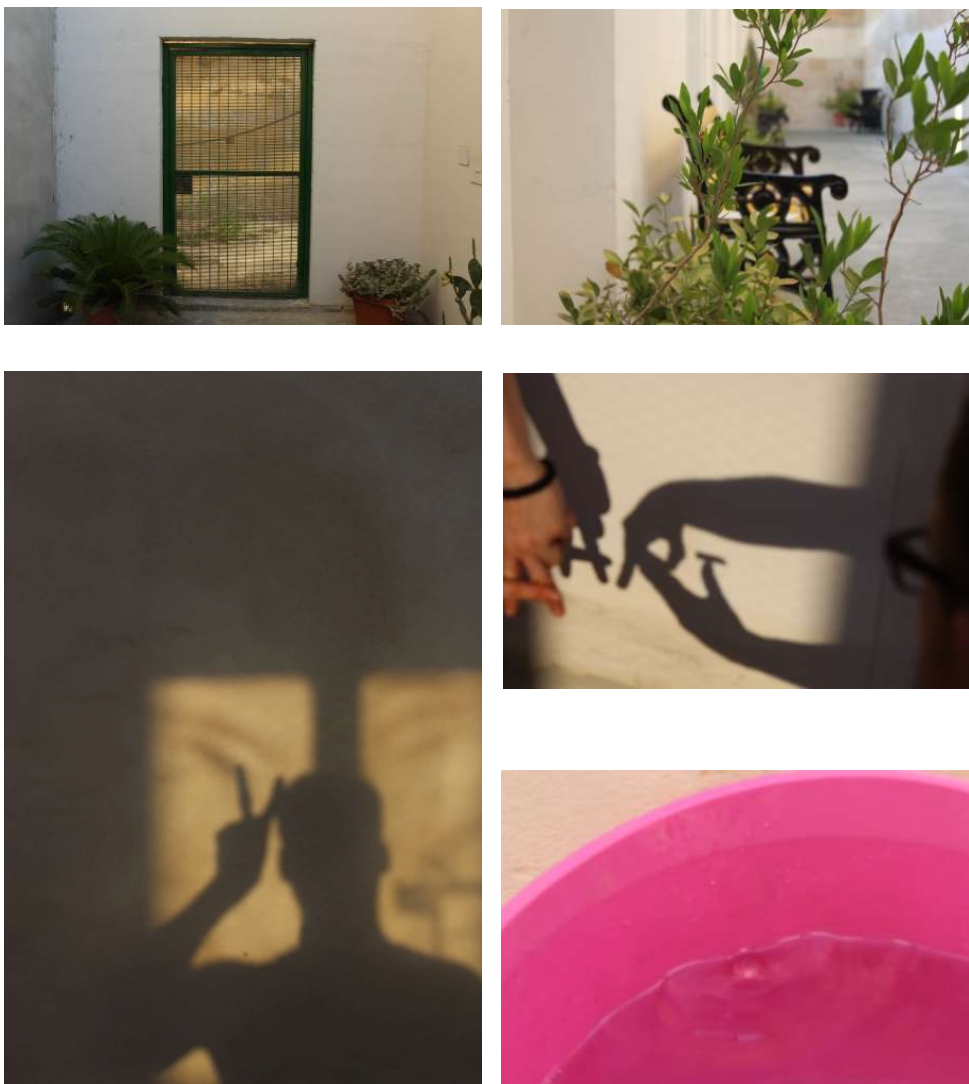


Fig.4.60d Photos taken by the participants

4.3.8 Challenges of the Project

One of Project 3's challenges was the unexpected irrelevance of the collection during the comic art activity. As with all the workshops, the printed images of the collection were displayed randomly at the back of the classroom (Fig.4.61a). Cramping the images was the only way due to lack of space. The aim was to make the prints available for browsing without any consideration to ordering the images according to category.



Fig.4.61a A random display of prints of images from a selection of the museum collection showing social issues relevant to the generic themes presented for the project.

Both during comic art and photography presentations, the collaborating artists provided examples of how artists included references to other artworks or were inspired by other artworks. For the photography activity, the participants referred to the collection by taking out the prints they found relevant to their theme and included them in their photo-shoots. During the comic art activity, no participant took inspiration from the artworks of the collection. Ultimately, the collection was meant to serve as a 'spark' that encourages the participants' expression of creativity in visual form.

Thus, with the exception of comic art, the rest of the activities still targeted the participants' creativity inspired by the collection.

Project 3's findings show that it is difficult for people with no art specialisation to use reproductions of artworks, mostly from the baroque era, as a springboard for drawings in a comic-book style. The comic art activity might have required a different strategy, which focused more on themes rather than the museum collection. In addition, the discussions that arose during the evaluation session of the comic art workshops indicated that comic art felt very personal. Hence, they had already enough collections of images in their mind stemming from their own life narratives which they could communicate. Perhaps, the comic art activity could be considered as a strategy, which stimulates the participants' pondering on themselves and their life, similar to the self-identity mind-map activity. Rather than expecting the comic art activity to engage the participants with the collection, it could be held at the beginning of the project to direct the participants' choice of theme according to what is most relevant to their life interests and needs.

Another challenge of the project was to follow the CCF policy stating that no art materials could be brought out of the classroom for security reasons. This limited the participants from having the opportunity to continue their creative process before and after the workshops. Another CCF policy prohibited browsing of internet and other media sources such as magazines. Thus, no research work for further development of work could be carried out. Unlike the two previous projects, the works created for Project 3 could only be created during the workshops' limited time. However, there was one exception of a participant who was allowed his own art material (drawing pencils and sketch book) in his cell. In fact, the images of P3's works (Fig.4.54a-4.54g), which do not include all written and visual work executed during the project, show a transformation of his theme which is more advanced when compared with the creative process of the other participants.

Despite the availability of several art media thanks to the funds acquired for this project from the Art Council of Malta, the participants were faced with the challenge of using limited materials due to an unsuitable learning environment. For instance, when the participants chose to use paints, they were limited due to the lack of space, they were required to cover desks' surfaces with plastic sheets before starting and to clean up afterwards. The CCF directors emphasised the importance of

protecting the five desk surfaces as they were brand new! It was also a challenge to find a place where to put up the paintings to dry. They were limited not only by the classroom space but also because of the air circulation from the electric fans. Thus, the medium of paints was only used once. The participants said they got discouraged by having to repeat the time-consuming process. They explained that it was not worth the effort required to get plastic sheets from the office, fill up water from the lavatories, clean brushes and palettes, remove and fold plastic sheets to avoid staining the desks and holding the paintings patiently to dry.

The classroom allocated for the workshops was too small for 10 young male adults, who, despite the summer heat had to sit close to each other. There was no air-conditioning facility and only five tables were provided as working surfaces. The three electric fans were noisy and we had to hold on to papers all the time to stop them from being scattered. Since there was no alternative classroom, I was presented with only two choices – either enduring this unsuitable learning environment or quitting the project. I decided to face it and, although several times I observed the participants' anger and frustrations, I appreciated that they persisted.

The recurrent heat wave in August 2017 added to the unsuitable learning environment. On a particular day when only one fan was provided in class, two participants got very angry at a CCF officer. They expressed their anger by shouting at CCF officials that they should not treat people like animals. They showed concern for me by demanding the officer in charge to respect educators who, unlike prisoners were there to provide a service. Two additional fans were brought immediately in class. It was interesting to note that when I asked the officers politely for at least one more electric fan, no action was taken. Did the CCF Education Department try to send a message that shouting in anger is more valued than good manners? The CCF context itself presented several challenges for an educator who tries to lead by example.

While carrying out this project, I realised that educators willing to carry out projects in a prison context have to be ready to endure conditions that are similar to those faced by their participants, such as poor environmental conditions. Educators must also obtain permission to include materials and must make special arrangements for the use of personal technological devices months before embarking on such a project. One also has to factor the waiting time involved to be searched and

escorted around the prison premises safely. Other challenges involve the extra responsibilities related to checking materials to ensure that everything is returned and respecting security policies.

4.3.9 Effective Educational Strategies

The educational strategies considered as effective resulted from comments documented by the participants in their art journals, interview replies and my own field notes of observations. Later on in the chapter these are compared with effective strategies which resulted from the findings of the other projects. Eventually the analysis of these findings leads to a set of recommendations for museum educational outreach strategies. However, these cannot be generalised. They could be adapted according to considerations such as the particular community's context, interests and needs.

4.3.10 Focus Groups

Right from the first workshop, the open discussion and the focus groups among participants, generated a relationship of trust among them and also with me as researcher/educator. Not only did the participants feel that their feedback contribution was valid but it also served as a first opportunity to further clarify our roles in the project while exchanging knowledge. The strategy of the focus groups was based on the sharing of the feedback gained through the initial interviews. However, despite its benefits in terms of social learning, one must consider the drawbacks of this strategy. As pointed out by Baral et al. (2016) some participants may act unnaturally in front of others and may be unwilling to share sensitive concerns. Although within the project's context, this strategy has been applied as part of my methodology for stimulating further questions concerning the participants' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs it could still be applied at the beginning of museum programmes to get familiar with participants and build a relationship of trust.

4.3.11 Mind-mapping

As with previous projects, the participants' interests and needs were considered a priority throughout the workshops. The mind-mapping construction elicited their interests, and this activity served as the basis for the creative process. It also stimulated their sharing of personal narratives, which eventually guided their theme selection.

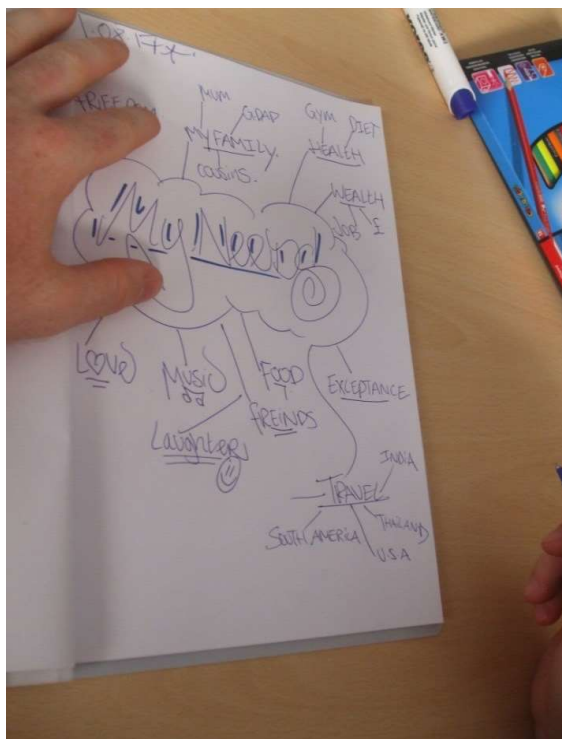


Fig.4.62a mind-mapping needs

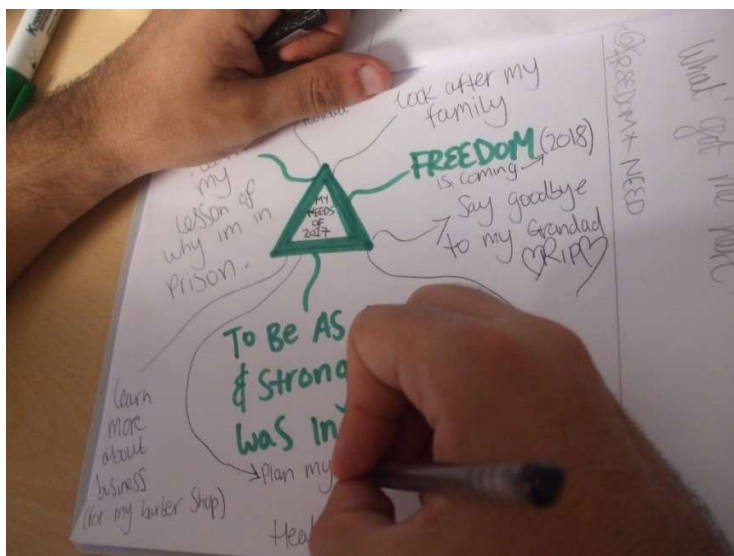


Fig.4.62b mind-mapping needs

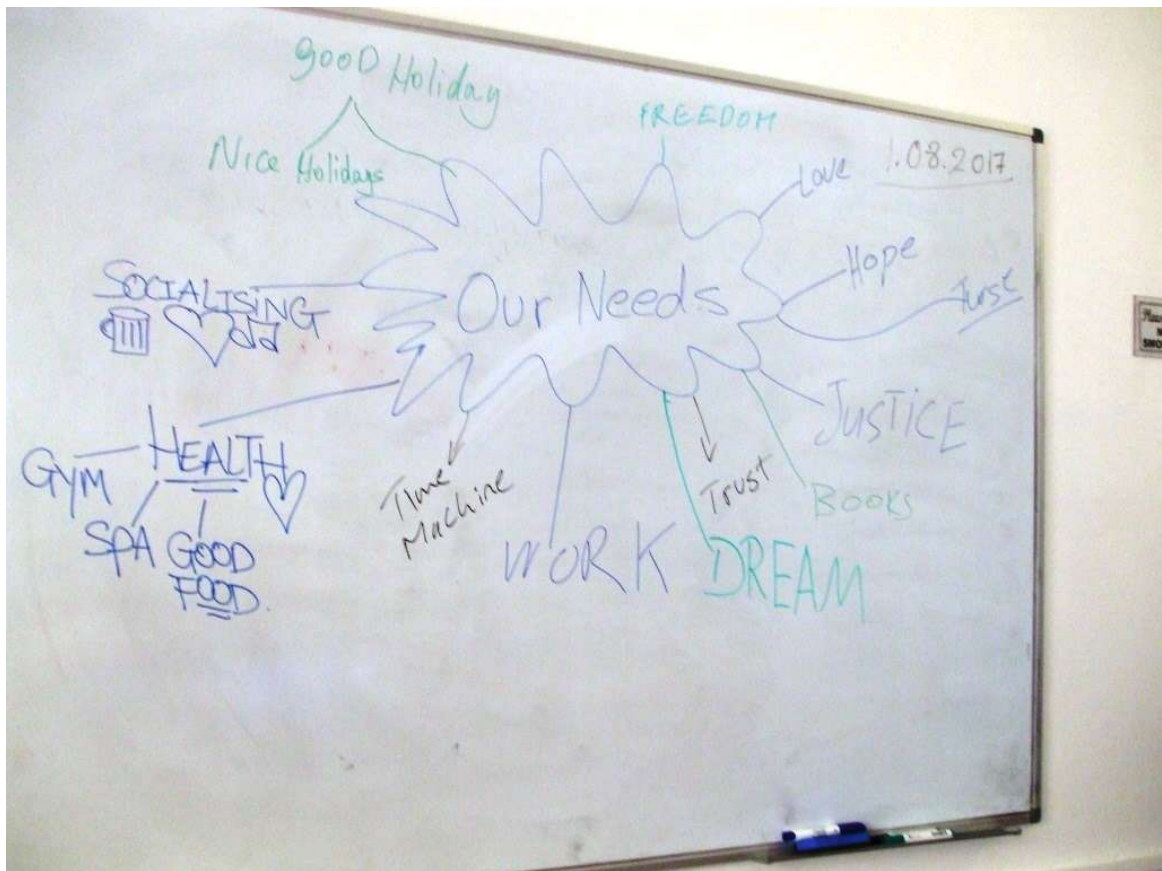


Fig.4.62c Participants' mind-mapping of collective needs on whiteboard

The participants remarked that constructing the 'Personal Needs' mind-map on their art journal (Fig.4.62a,b) before constructing a collective one, gave them the confidence to contribute to a larger mind-map of collective needs on the whiteboard (Fig.4.62c). While constructing the collective mind-map, I observed the participants eagerly pointing out similarities and differences between their needs. Besides leading them to think about and share their thoughts on collective needs within their context, the strategy of mind-mapping construction helped the participants to visualise the root connections between personal and collective interests and needs. This recalls both socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) where knowledge is co-constructed, as well as the contextual learning model (Falk and Dierking, 2000), where learning is both personal and social. While constructing and sharing their mind-maps, the participants' individual interpretation of their experiences and beliefs were challenged, developed and/or transformed as they negotiated them with each other.

The frequent reference to the mind-mapping technique throughout the coded final interviews reveals how much the participants valued its importance, as it enabled knowledge construction by drawing and reflecting upon the visual connections. For instance, P3 referred to mind-mapping while explaining his way of dealing with theme development, stating that “the mind-map leads to the planning... this helped me a lot. I had no idea of the mind-mapping technique before... I can also use it in life”.

4.3.12 Evaluations and Art Journals:

During the first self-evaluation discussion session, two participants argued that they do not need to write down their reflections as they are all present in their mind. Later on, they admitted that this stemmed from their laziness to write and their insecurity at having spelling mistakes revealed. I constantly reminded them that mistakes on an art journal are a sign of learning through trial and error. After the first evaluation session, the participants expressed their awareness of the value of documenting self-evaluations. They said that documenting their reflections helped them to pause for a while and reflect deeper, eventually making more connections between art, their theme development and life. This explanation recalls John Dewey (1934) who said that an aesthetic meaningful experience does not only require an awareness of emotions and reflections but also their translation using outside tools. In line with this, the art journal is a tool with which to document the awareness of the learning process through thoughts, feelings and discoveries (Irwin and de Cosson, 2004).

Unfortunately, during workshops the participants’ reflections, connections to art and ideas could only be documented in their art journals (Fig.4.63a,b,c). Due to CCF policies, they were not allowed to take any materials out of the classroom, so they could not continue to develop their work beyond the workshops. For some particular reason, only P3 was allowed drawing materials in his cell. It was encouraging to see this participant’s enthusiasm to continue his creative process. P3 expressed a sense of self-worth whenever he flipped his art journal to explain the continuation of his creative process beyond the workshops. Such sharing served as an exchange of knowledge. While encouraging the rest to reflect deeper in order to come up with further connections and ideas, he was provided with constructive criticism through the feedback from the other participants.

Moreover, this enabled the participants to appreciate that the creative process of developing a theme is infinite and does not end with a finished drawing or painting.

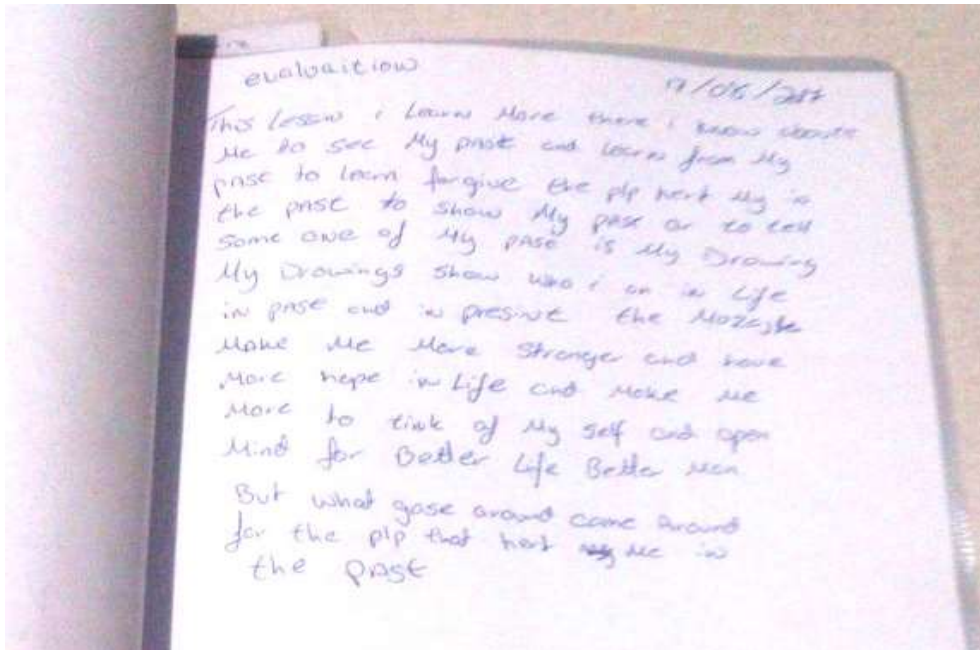


Fig.4.63a Self-evaluations documented on art journals

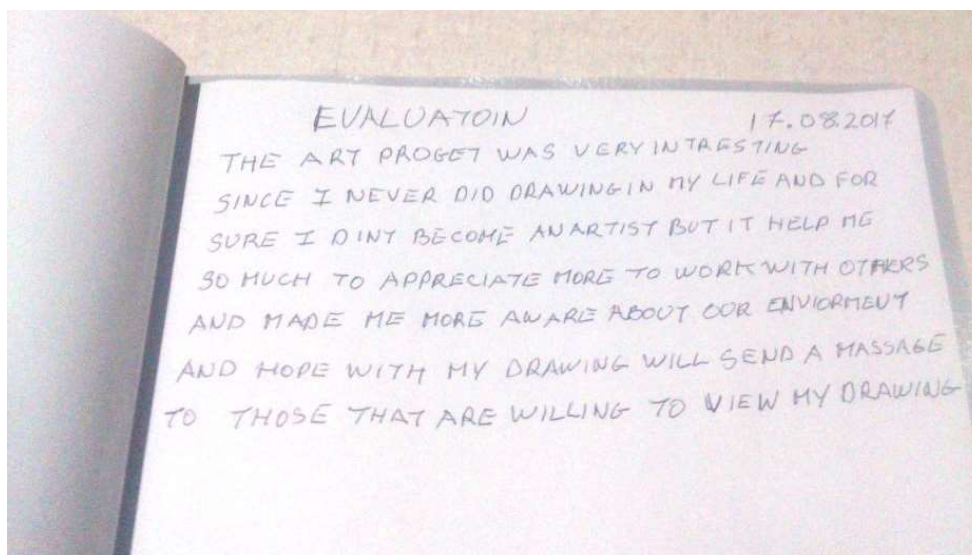


Fig.4.63b Self-evaluations documented on art journals

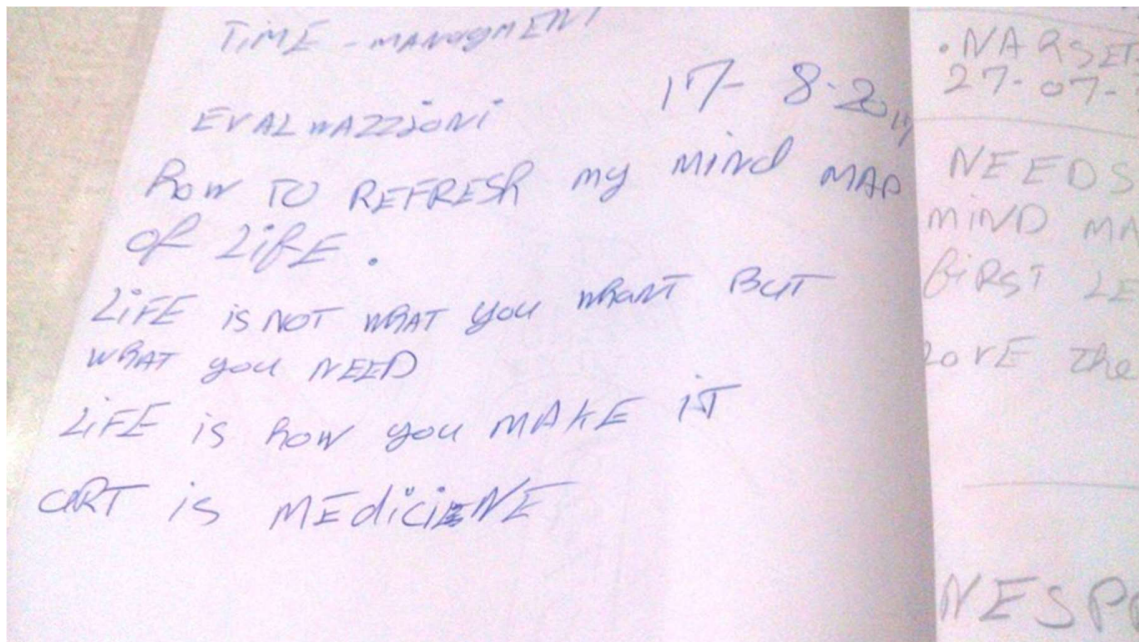


Fig.4.63c Self-evaluations documented on the art journal

Both during their final evaluation session and the final interviews, the participants indicated awareness of the value of the creative process. They felt that their ideas and meanings evolved as a result of keeping a record of their observations in the form of a dated collection in their art journals. They also said that the value of learning lies through reflections made and shared with others throughout the creative process, not the finished work. In fact, both during the final interviews and also while installing their exhibition's creative process they expressed satisfaction that their work development was also being exhibited.

During the exhibitions' openings, I observed that visitors appreciated the multiple narratives by participants of the collection as they read the participants' meaning-makings through text and drawings (Fig.4.63d,e). Some visitors provided me with informal feedback concerning their impression of observing art side by side with narratives. They said that reading the participants' narratives related to artworks illustrated an alternative way of looking at art and getting to know about other realities. I also noticed the participants explaining their developed ideas to their close relatives while proudly pointing to their work in progress and flipping through their art journals, which showed the relation to their selected artworks from the museum collection. The participants' active interaction with the audience during the opening of the public exhibition (which could not

be photographed in order to respect CCF policies) echoed Simon’s participatory strategies. She urges museums to provide opportunities where visitors/participants can “share their own content in meaningful and appealing ways” trusting their “abilities as creators, remixers and redistributors of content” (Simon, 2019:online).



Fig.4.63d Visitors at the exhibition



Fig.4.63e Visitors at the exhibition

4.3.13 Printed Images of the Museum Collection

In the absence of the national art museum building, throughout the CCF Project, the reference to the collection was available through a random display of a selection of around 60 images (Fig.4.61a). The selection of images was based on a selection of artworks from various eras and media including paintings, sculptures and photography, all of which related to social issues. These were printed on high-quality foam-boards and displayed randomly at the back of the classroom. The project’s findings show that the strategy of making available these high-quality printed images rather than projecting them through a slideshow presentation, enabled the participants to be engaged by holding the images and looking deeply. While holding the images, the participants could take time to reflect on their selected themes and thus to interpret, make connections with the artworks and construct meanings. As soon as they found links between their theme and the collection, the participants took the selected images to their table (Appendix 3.4, Project3). They observed and reinterpreted their selections by sketching. Later, their presentations concerning the

connections they made between art and themes provided them with peer constructive criticism. This led them to add new selections of artworks, and possibly rethink their ideas and proceed with their theme development.

With reference to earlier images from Fig.4.52 till Fig.4.59, the artworks created for this project confirm that the participants found more relevance and made more reference to the collection than in the previous two projects. Unlike the other participants, the CCF inmates did not have the opportunity to observe the actual artworks as the museum was closed at the time of the project. Yet, it seemed as though the use of the hand-held images of the collection provided valuable time to explore connections with their selected themes.

The advantage of allowing time to observe images instead of moving from one artwork to another at the museum premises was also mentioned by the participants of Project 2. In this case participants could appreciate the collection better as they took time to watch it on their screen. According to Rosenbloom (2014), similar results concerning appreciation and connections to art were found by psychologists and philosophers, who say that the slow pace of art observation in museums connects people with art, with themselves and others. Moreover, researchers such as Daniel Fujiwara (2013) at the London School of Economics and Political Science have remarked on the impact of the museum on well-being and happiness when people slow down to observe art. It is therefore not surprising that a number of museums are now offering ‘slow art’ sessions, encouraging visitors look at art at a slower pace (Rosenbloom, 2014).

4.3.14 Project 2’s Creations as inspiration for Project 3’s Creations:

As was agreed with Project 2’s participants, their virtual exhibitions (created as part of the project) were shown to Project 3’s participants for inspiration. These could not create similar virtual exhibitions, not having access to computer technology. Nevertheless, the strategy of showing them the virtual exhibition was still very effective to inspire them. I could observe that the participants gave full attention while watching the virtual exhibitions and found them to be relevant while continuing to raise questions and discuss ideas. They mentioned that by observing these exhibitions, the images from the collection could serve as a starting point to construct different meanings as an alternative to the obvious story-telling illustrated by the artworks. Hence, the

strategy of showing the creative process from Project 2 provided a concrete example which guided Project 3's participants with their theme development. It also gave the participants more confidence in reinterpreting the images and connecting between their chosen theme and the collection. Adopting a constructivist learning approach, as an educator, I intervened only "as required to guide them in the appropriate direction" (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142), presenting them with tasks supported by practical examples from Project 2 to ensure what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as scaffolded learning. The participants were therefore still the explorers of their own learning process, discovering ways to connect to art, life and each other.

4.3.15 Interpreting Art through Role-Play

Another strategy which helped participants reflect further on art and life was the role-play activity. Unlike the role-play activity carried out for Project 1, which could be held within the museum premises, that for Project 3 was held within the limited space of the classroom allocated at CCF. With the participants' collaboration, tables and chairs could be moved aside to create a space where they could arrange their selected prints and imagine taking the role of a museum guide leading the rest of us. They took turns to explain how they made meaning of their selections and the links they made between their chosen images and selected themes. Most of them asked questions and raised discussions which helped their way forward with theme development. Despite the space limitations and not being able to refer to actual artworks within the museum premises, the participants still found the role-play activity very engaging.

They also mentioned that being printed on foam-board, the images could be hand-held and touched to refer to parts of their details — museum artworks cannot be touched! The final interviews reveal that the participants found this activity very stimulating and it enabled them to think more deeply about the interpretation of the collection. After each guided tour they praised each other with applause, and offered constructive feedback. This included pointing out alternative or additional prints of artworks which link with particular themes.

4.3.16 Collaborating with local artists:

Before the start of the project, I liaised with two local artists (Fig.4.64a,b) who accepted to collaborate in the project. They were involved in the planning and adaptations of the workshops so

that the interests and needs of participants would be addressed. This collaboration was quite effective as the participants had the opportunity to relate with local artists and experience new art techniques with which to further develop their themes.



Fig.4.64a Collaborating photographer



Fig.4.64b Collaborating comic artist

In the absence of digital resources such as basic photo-editing computer programmes, the only way for participants to manipulate their photos was through manual editing. Since no pen-drives or emails were allowed, a CD was collected from the CCF office before the workshop with approved photos which could be printed beforehand. The participants went through a creative process of observing the temporarily printed photos, selecting the ones they found relevant and editing them using drawing materials and safe rounded-corner scissors (Fig.4.64c-f). These were digitally manipulated by the collaborating photographer and sent for professional printing on foam-boards. These high-quality printed photos, together with materials related to their creative process were included in the final two exhibitions, next to the selection of artworks from the collection (Fig. 4.65a-c).



Fig.4.64c Manual photo-editing



Fig.4.64d Manual photo-editing



Fig.4.64e Manual Photo-editing

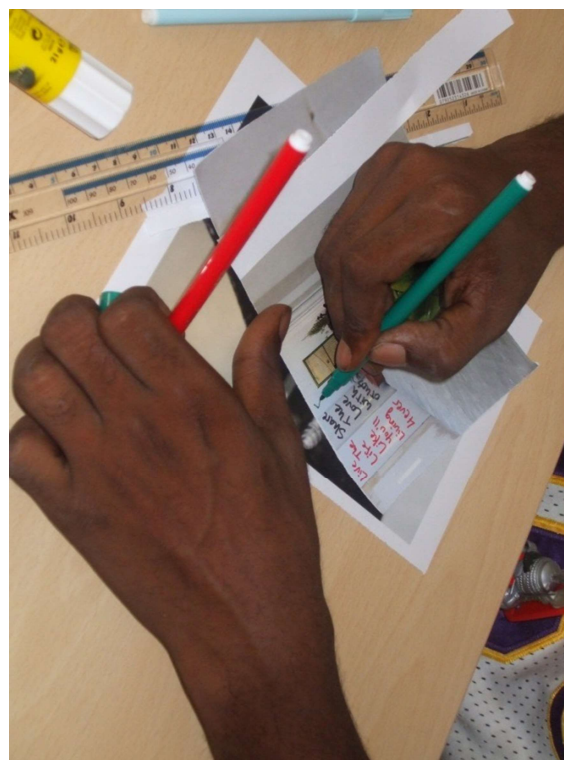


Fig.4.64f Manual Photo-editing

Collaborating with the comic artist was an effective strategy which guided participants to reflect and make meanings of life through art practice but did not inspire connections with the collection. The participants noticed that some of them preferred to write down the story in points (Fig.4.64g,h) before creating the drawing panels of the comic, while others worked the other way round starting from the drawing (Fig.4.64i,k).

Roberts (1997) maintains that learning happens when visitors create their own narratives based on what they see. Unlike the photography activity, the comic art activity did not stimulate the participants to create narratives based on images of the collection. They based their narratives introspectively — on what they saw within their own life. Hence, I think that the inclusion of the comic art activity would have been more efficient at the beginning of the project. Similar to mind-mapping, if it were held at the beginning, it would have served the participants as a tool to explore their self-identity, their life narratives and their interests and eventually would help them to choose the most relevant theme.

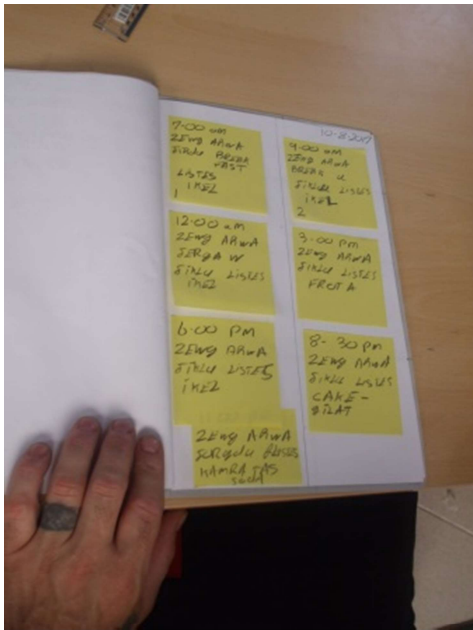


Fig.4.64g Preparing for comic art

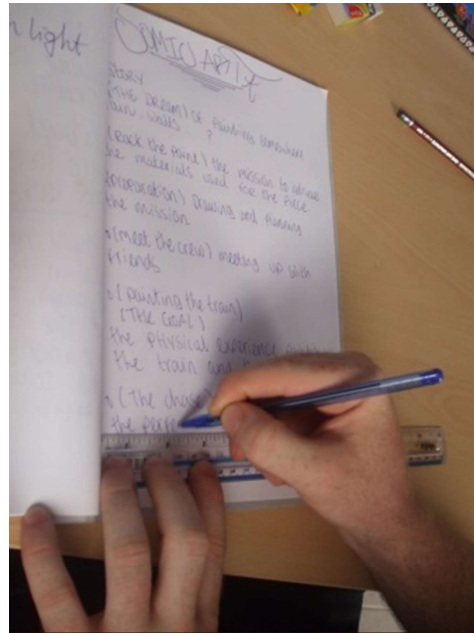


Fig.4.64h Preparing for comic art



Fig.4.64i Preparing for comic art



Fig.4.64k Preparing for comic art

While evaluating the project, both the collaborating artists and I agreed that the inclusion of the comic art and photography sessions for such a short project, and within such a limited context, were only partially effective. Although the two art sessions added variety to the project and certainly engaged the participants actively, yet they only served as a taste of techniques rather than providing the participants with a means for developing further the theme and find links to the collection. In fact, while presenting their work development, the participants still chose to refer to their reflection notes and the drawings on their art journals, which did not include references to the comic art drawing. Even though the photos they had taken had been printed temporarily for their manual manipulation and editing, no participant made reference to them while presenting his creative process. This indicates that the participants did not consider comic art and photography sessions as part of their creative process. Nevertheless, the participants' comic art and photography were still included in the exhibitions (Fig.4.65a-c) as the aim of the exhibitions was to show all aspects of the participants' learning experience throughout the project.



Fig.4.65a Exhibition boards displaying drawings, written reflections, photography and comic art



Fig.4.65b Exhibition boards displaying drawings, written reflections, photography and comic art

4.3.17 Presenting the General Themes:

Throughout the project it was effective to present general themes and eliciting opinions on each of them. This raised discussions and encouraged participants to think about the themes they found most relevant, and how to deal with them. The coded final interviews indicate how the themes enabled the participants to become aware of the connections made throughout life. For instance, P3 said that “the themes served me to recognise how one thing is connected to another... I started from a theme and ended up developing another theme”. Another participant described the therapeutic connection he felt while developing his selected theme, while explaining that the theme he chose - ‘Getting healed’ - referring to healing from drug addiction “is quite needed for us here” (P4). Meanwhile, P5 talked about his difficulty to choose a particular theme as “all themes were relevant for me, because I have been through all in life... every theme is connected to another”.

The participants chose to deal with the themes listed below:

- ‘Family’
- ‘Graffiti and Street Art’
- ‘An ideal world: Peaceful’
- ‘Good and Bad’
- ‘Connecting with People’
- ‘Light and Darkness’
- ‘Getting Healed’
- ‘Environmental awareness’

Table 4.7 indicates how the presentation and discussion of the generic themes enabled the participants to come up with their choice of themes, which at times stemmed from a combination of the generic themes.

The Participants' Chosen Themes	The Generic Themes
Light and Darkness	Representation of the Self
Family and Friends Graffiti and Street Art Connecting with People	Human Relationships
An Ideal World: Peaceful The Sea and Death	War and Violence
Good and Bad Getting Healed	Religion and Spirituality
Environmental Awareness	Environmental Issues

Table 4.7 The Chosen themes inspired by generic themes

Discussions stemming both from the general as well as the selected themes generated other points of debate among the participants, such as their intention for creating an artwork. After I informed them that their creative process would be exhibited in public a few weeks after the end of the project, they reflected more on the impact that their artworks could have on the public. They also discussed ways in which their work could serve to raise awareness about life issues.

4.3.18 Participants' Suggestions

During the first workshop's focus group activity, the participants mentioned suggestions for the art museum's public education outreach. These were summarised and listed in my field notes as follows:

- Organised workshop sessions dedicated to family and kids;
- Creating more awareness of the national art museum as a public learning resource;
- Open-days (free of charge) at the national art museum.

The coded field notes and final interviews indicated the following suggestions for the national art museum to reach out to a community of young adults at CCF:

- Comic art activity at the beginning of the project;
- Enough digital equipment for all participants to carry out the photography session;
- More areas around the education block to be made available under supervision of guards to carry out the photography session;
- Allowing enough time to use materials and art journals in the classroom under a guard's supervision, beyond the project's workshops. This would help in the continuation of their work development;
- More spacious classroom at CCF or a studio at the museum for community outreach workshops. CCF participants could be transported together with their guards to the museum entrance nearest to the studio (just like they did for the public exhibition's opening);
- Air-conditioned classroom / studio if the project is carried out during the summer heat;
- A workshop should be allocated more than two hours and all-year-round.

The next section deals with the analysis of discussion of findings of the three projects in view of the coded interviews, namely the one with the CEO of the local youth agency AŽ and another with the senior curator of the national art museum MUŽA. This analysis will eventually lead to recommended strategies for museum education outreach.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSING THE THREE PROJECTS

This chapter sums up common findings concerning young adults' learning through the national art museum as a result of the three projects. Insights gained from the two coded interviews carried out with the CEO of the local youth agency AŻ (Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ) and with MUŻA senior curator (Appendix 3.2) are compared and contrasted with the findings of the three projects.

5.1 The Interviews with CEO (A.Ż.) and MUŻA Senior Curator

Both the interview with the CEO (AŻ) and with the MUŻA Senior Curator were held during 2016-2017, at a time when the national art museum was in transition. The main intention of interviewing the MUŻA senior curator was to understand the museum's educational outreach plans. The interview with him kept my study up to date with his visions as MUŻA's project leader. In addition, interviewing the CEO of AŻ provided me with better understanding of today's young adults' needs and trends.

Eventually, my research projects' findings can be understood in the light of the two local consultations together with a literature review of international studies and learning theories. The replies of the CEO and the curator also envisioned strategies. When these were compared to the findings of the three projects three main categories emerged. The rationale for the selection of these main categories was based on how frequently they were mentioned. There were also common findings among all categories. The three main categories, which will be discussed in detail further on, are as follows:

- The Relevance of the National Art Museum for Young Adults;
- The Challenges of Providing Museum Educational Outreach for Young Adults;
- Suggestions for Museum Educational Outreach targeting Young Adults.

5.2 The Relevance of the National Art Museum for Young Adults

Influenced by Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experiential learning, grounded in constructivist museum education theories (Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 2006), socio-cultural learning

(Vygotsky, 1978; Falk and Dierking, 2000) and lifelong learning principles (Biesta, 2006), my research projects aimed to find out the relevance of the national art museum for the participants' lifelong learning (learning throughout life). Hence by 'relevance' I mean that the museum is valued through its collection not only as a space to appreciate art but also for personal development, achieved by having the participants share interests, connect with themselves and others to generate understandings and ideas about life.

During the interview with the senior curator of MUŻA, he simplified the concept of the new national art museum by referring to what he called "an equation: MUŻA = Art + discussion". Similarly, Kamps and Weide refer to museums as "an ideal platform for communication and debate... using their collections as background, they can invite discussion" (2011:32). In addition, the senior curator explained that "the MUŻA model is not about creating collections, but about creating space and contents". His definition of contents included "the objects, the collection and the people who are within that space". He envisioned MUŻA as a space bridging the collection with people and their life. On the other hand, "objects do not speak for themselves... they are given meaning" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006:236). How will MUŻA facilitate the public's engagement with its collection in order to give it meaning?

Considering that museums are "an ideal environment for personal development and fulfilment" (Kamps and Weide, 2011:52), they can be regarded as relevant for everyone's life holistically (life-wide) and eventually transformative for life (lifelong). However, Aruna d'Souza asserts that "what institutions hang on their walls or put on their pedestals is a clear articulation of who they imagine their audience to be" (quoted in Cohen, 2018:online). This parallels my projects' question concerning strategies through which the MUŻA collection could be made relevant to young adult communities. Throughout the projects, I explored the participants' ways of constructing their own 'relevance' with regard to the national art museum collection, based on their learning process, while giving meaning to life through art.

During the time the projects were carried out (2016-2017), according to the few participants who attended the NMFA before taking part in the project, they did not consider the NMFA as being relevant to them as young adults. They based this judgement on its "unwelcoming" and "sad" atmosphere; its mainly baroque collection and the lack of support and guidance for those who do

not necessarily have an artistic background. The projects' findings reveal that most of the participants would not have taken the initiative to visit the national art museum and engage with its collection, had they not been stimulated by the projects' tasks. Furthermore, I noticed that the reason why the participants considered the museum to be irrelevant did not mainly stem from their lack of interest in art. This could be especially confirmed by the participants of Project 2, who, in spite of having chosen art as their area of study, still admitted that they found the NMFA irrelevant both to their lives and to their art studies.

The fact that throughout the initial interviews, the participants of the first and third projects hardly had a clue of the NMFA's existence provides confirmation of the fact that they were never attracted to visit the art museum. Some of them said this was because they do not understand art, or were otherwise 'not good at art'. They perceived art and art museums as places suitable only for artists and art experts, thus their reason to consider the art museum as being irrelevant from a wider social context. In fact research considers such preconceptions as "harder barriers to overcome" (Gibbs, 2007:16) as they involve assumptions based on deeply held values and attitudes, strongly influenced by family, social class and school experience. Additionally, research by Bourdieu and Darbel (1991) and Lamont and Lareu (1988) shows that although public art museums seem to be culturally inclusive, much of their collections still favour a social structure which remains grounded in principles of exclusion. In fact, in spite of projecting a superficial image of cultural inclusivity, museums still have a reputation of being elitist institutions (Whitaker, 2009; Thea, 2009).

In her article dealing with the ways in which art museums can remain relevant in the 21st century, Cohen (2018) asserts that museum strategies to promote inclusivity should stretch beyond one's socio-economic status and education level. For my projects, I considered that an awareness of the relationship between the participants' culture and the wider social context was essential while exploring the ways in which participants looked at the relevance of the national art museum. In line with Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1974), the meanings which the participants brought with them to the projects' workshops stemmed from their social upbringing — their inheritance of the meanings generated by their family backgrounds and schooling. The lack of cultural capital in the lives of some participants strongly influenced their perception of the 'irrelevance' of the NMFA, as revealed during the initial interviews. However, throughout the projects, this changed as the collection's relevance was facilitated within the participants' own

context. Engaging with the NMFA collection provided the participants with new ways of looking at art through those ideas which they found to be relevant in developing their chosen themes. At times, the collection inspired them through the use of materials and techniques, while at other times it provoked debates parallel to the themes they were developing. In dealing with their creative process of theme development, the collection served as a mirror for the participants' own interpretations of art, themselves and life. It echoed their interpretations as they reflected on, and challenged, each other's meanings with regard to contemporary life issues, such as migration, relationships, unconditional love, environmental awareness and whether schooling leads to real success in life.

The final interviews and final presentations indicate that throughout the projects a non-formal transformative education had taken place. This is because the participants came to realise that the museum could indeed become relevant for life when one engages with its collection through thematic contexts in mind. They mentioned that their several interpretations of the artworks' narratives could be linked to life narratives and social issues that mattered to them. The fact that the participants explained how the collection mattered to them indicates that the project did not impose museum learning "standards set by the art professionals... who can impose a certain cultural value" (Acord, 2010:448). Led using a constructivist approach, the projects facilitated the participants' construction of meanings by engaging with the collection, as they recalled their own multicultural values, challenging and supporting them, rather than reproducing an already set standardised culture.

The CEO of AŽ also spoke of the importance of supporting the participants' own cultural values. When asked about the national art museum's relevance for young adults, she insisted that "first and foremost the art museum needs to explore the trends of young adults and keep updated with them". However, during his interview, the senior curator enthusiastically recalled how the NMFA used to connect with the trends of young adults. He proudly revealed that at the NMFA, he "didn't shy away from having a disco-party, but we had a treasure-hunt first... so they discover the museum, then they took their costumes, took group photos, selfies". On the other hand, the CEO of AŽ emphasised the present-day challenge of young adults having several places of entertainment from which to choose, such as dancing clubs and sports events. This makes it harder to attract them to

museum events as they are already committed to other places of their choice. She explained the importance for a museum to identify ways to attract them, for instance by using “publicity through the social media”. This made me reflect and research whether the role of an art museum, in striving to be relevant for young adults, needs to serve as another place of entertainment, advertised by social media.

While the 2017 culture track study (Halperin, 2017) shows that main reason for young adults to attend a cultural activity was entertainment, the projects’ findings show that the participants found my projects concerning the museum collection relevant in spite of the fact that they lacked the element of entertainment. In addition, the Museum Audience Report (2018), based on a sample of 39,318 visitors from 105 varied museums, collected in 2017/18, indicates that museum visitors are significantly more attracted by learning than by entertainment. This report also shows that through museum learning, visitors are most often seeking social interaction.

The results of a London survey (MLA, 2001) show that intellectual motivations, especially to improve one’s own knowledge, and social motivations for leisure, were given as the most significant reasons for visiting museums. These were followed by emotional motivations, mainly to get a better understanding of other cultures and also by spiritual drives which stimulate one’s creativity through contemplating the collections. In a UK museum survey, McIntyre (2007) found that those who attended a museum or gallery at least once during a year described their main reason for visiting as ‘to see an exhibition closely’ followed by ‘general interest’. Furthermore, McIntyre observed an increasingly important trend of visitors wishing to see real objects rather than the virtually-accessed and screen-based museum exhibits. Thus, another reason given for visiting museums comes from realising that a digital access to collections can never replace the relevant experience of observing or interacting with real artwork. This was also mentioned by the participants of Project 2, who eventually considered their virtual exhibitions as a means to attract other young adults to visit the real artworks at the national art museum.

The 2017 culture track study revealed that what most impeded participation was a feeling which considered the cultural institution to be “not for someone like me” (Halperin, 2017). This echoed the reactions of the first and third projects’ participants during the initial interviews, when they spoke of the NMFA’s irrelevance and their feeling as outsiders, since they lacked an art

background. This feeling of insiders or outsiders is also mentioned by Dangschat (2009) which is attributed to internal and external social symbolism housed by museums. The three projects' findings indicate that if museums provide activities that connect to young adults' own interests and learning agendas, they would provide a sense of belonging which is induced by connections to their life values and multiple identities.

The dilemma between finding ways to attract young adults to the museum and how the museum might provide relevance for their life is similar to the issue of the virtual museum, which most participants had immediately suggested as a way for the museum to become relevant for today's young adults. It is intriguing that people instantly think of the 'virtual' as the main way to connect to today's young adults while at the same time there is an increasing demand for alternative spaces where young adults could break off from digital addiction. According to Pico (2012) young adults are not turning to new age digital trends in order to unwind but instead they are returning to the old world by engaging in meditation and long, weekend walks. It could be argued that museum programmes could likewise offer experiences which provide visitors with a space for disconnecting from digital addiction, which in some countries is officially recognised as a serious condition. For instance, in South Korea, students diagnosed with digital addiction are sent to government treatment centres. In China, militaristic government boot camps have cured several children and in Japan, an internet fasting camp is provided for young people. (Tsukayama, 2016).

Elizabeth Merrit and Philip Katz, authors of the Centre for the Future of Museum's (CFM) Trends Watch report in 2013, hypothesise that there is increasing realisation of the consequence of excessive time spend engaging with digital technology (Merrit and Katz, 2013). According to these authors, an emerging trend may shape the future of museums in the arts and culture sector as more individuals are intentionally spending time away from their phones and other forms of digital technology. This made me wonder whether MUŻA could provide educational programmes using its tangible collection as a basis for providing a 'digital detox' service for digitally-addicted young adults.

While discussing her observations of what are commonly considered to be the latest trends among young adults, the CEO of AŻ argued that nowadays there is "the increasing trend to detox from the internet and from Facebook addiction." Then again, not all young adults have the same

opportunities and interests, so they cannot all be expected to be interested in propositions such as the digital detox. For instance, the participants brought to each of the three groups their different lifestyles and trends. This encouraged social learning due to multicultural interests which enriched debates concerning several beliefs and ideas about art and life. This multicultural social aspect is part of the learning opportunities that MUŽA can provide through encouraging “an understanding of backgrounds and a context for social trends...in our fast-paced, busy world” (Kamps and Weide, 2011:53) while young adults engage with museums’ physical objects. In addition, a study concerning digital detox and art museums (Duncan, 2014), grounded in three different museums’ case-studies, revealed that providing museum programmes which focus on physical objects rather than technological devices can lead to a more fulfilling experience.

Contrastingly, during the focus group held with Project 2’s participants, where I asked for feedback concerning the interview replies of the CEO of AŽ, they disagreed with the museum being used as a space for digital detox. Instead they advocated for the digital aspect of the museum since it leads to self-directed learning which they valued. This recalls the promotion of museums’ digital realm as a participatory model, already mentioned in the *Literature Review* Chapter, which can lead young adults to construct knowledge, naturally stimulated through an efficient blend of art and digital technology. Then again, the participants of Project 2 could have also been biased by the task of their own project which was to create virtual exhibitions with reference to the museum collection.

Quoting from their discussion, they agreed that “if the museum staff organises online programmes and virtual tours, it would be more interesting for young adults”. Besides, they added “it would also reach more young adults as they do not have to pay an entrance fee”. Correspondingly, the MUŽA senior curator stressed: “obviously, social media is a must!” He added that since the young adult population is on Facebook all the time: “you have to be there”. This reveals that rather than expecting young adults to take an initiative in visiting the museum, the museum staff needs to find significant ways to reach out to several young adult communities. On the other hand, if by the use of social media, the museum manages to attract a good flow of young adults’ bodies through its doors and corridors, would numbers guarantee that those young adults are experiencing learning which is relevant for life?

The senior curator pointed out that evaluating the art museum's relevance is in fact one of the challenges. He argued: "we cannot just continue to say we had 60 visitors, 80-100 participants and we're doing so much and we delivered so much... I think that is very superficial." Similarly the process of evaluating the relevance of my study's three projects in terms of providing effective museum holistic education also presented a similar challenge, together with other challenges which are discussed in the next section.

5.3 The Challenges of Providing Museum Educational Outreach for Young Adults

There were mainly five challenges in common that resulted from the projects' findings, categorised as follows:

- making the museum collection relevant to young adults;
- recognizing and addressing young adults' multiple identities and needs;
- managing the time-duration of the workshops;
- adjusting activities according to the allocated space and resources;
- evaluating the projects' holistic educational strategies.

5.3.1 Making the Museum Collection Relevant for Young Adults

The word 'relevance' refers here to the value which young adults' consider the museum collection to have for their life. The senior curator advocated the relevance of the museum collection for today's young adults not in terms of the subjects it features. He said: "when I say that the collection is a resource, there are many access levels. The potential is beyond the traditional museum...beyond aesthetics". These words recall Wagner (2016) who states that visitors not specialized in the formal study of art-aesthetics can still receive the benefit of engaging with a masterpiece through their intrinsic human nature. However, according to Bartlett et al. (2000) the

interest of young adults lies in the present and in the future, and since they consider museums to be preoccupied with the past, they find them irrelevant.

At first, the participants of the first and third projects felt that their lack of art education background would make them feel out of place in an art museum. The participants of Project 2 complained that the genre of the NMFA collection was irrelevant as it was mostly baroque and consequently presented practically no connections to the contemporary themes on which they were working. The challenge was in encouraging the participants to discover their own ways to connect the collection to their chosen themes and to life. In other words, the challenge was in making relevant what at first glance the participants considered to be irrelevant due to their deeply held assumptions. Research shows that such assumptions “are useful to keep in mind” when designing museum learning programmes (Gibbs et al., 2007). In fact, by recognising and keeping the participants’ assumptions in mind, I was better able to explore those activities and tools which could encourage them to find their own ways of using the museum collection.

The senior curator argued that “from a curatorial point of view, the collection is recognised as a resource in its own right”. Judging from my projects’ experience, despite the flexible workshop activities which sought to make use of the collection as a resource, the links to the museum collection depended heavily on the participants’ meaning-makings through their own discoveries. The term ‘meaning-makings’ refers to the participants’ own ways of finding connections between the artworks and their chosen themes while reflecting on life and social issues. The participants took every opportunity to debate social issues with each other in order to attain clarifications. This eventually empowered them to come to their own conclusions and construct meanings. Hence, a museum educator can facilitate the learning experience, at the same time making the museum more relevant, by identifying the participants’ interests and needs and together with them explore ways to make the collection meaningful for life.

5.3.2 *Recognising Young Adults' Multiple Identities and Needs*

'Finding links with artworks' refers to the participants' approaches, guided by tasks, discussions, art making, reflections and observations in order to construct their own understandings of art and life. As they reflected, debated and challenged these links of interpretations within a community of enquiry, the participants delved beyond their internalised interpretive framework, or what Bourdieu (1984) calls *habitus* — cultural personality rooted in family upbringing and schooling experiences. Aligned with this, studies show that visitors from all social classes use museums to create meaning (Dicks, 2016; Smith, 2006). The validity of the efforts undertaken by the participants to create the links of meanings was indicated by their ability to talk confidently about their theme development vis-à-vis life issues and to share their interpretations while pointing at the whole or parts of the artwork/s.

The projects' findings show that the participants of the first and the third projects could find more links between the museum collection and their life when compared to the participants of Project 2. The latter participants were more focused on providing interaction with the viewers of their work and made little reference to the museum collection. Most of these participants found it hard to link the collection with their theme because they believed that Baroque artworks would eventually limit the viewers' connection to their virtual exhibitions. The findings of the three projects show that, when facilitated through constructivist tasks, engaging with a museum collection without having an art background evokes more personal and social connections with life, uninhibited by the struggle to interpret the collection in an intellectual way. Similarly, James Elkins (2001), author of *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Cried in Front of Paintings*, argues that a deep knowledge of art history and aesthetics may actually limit one's ability to experience art.

The participants' contrasting response to the collection was also due to a remarkable difference between the set task given to the participants of the first and third projects (participants lacking an art background) and those given to Project 2's participants (university level, with an art background). The latter participants strived to create virtual exhibitions with reference to, rather than creating a reinterpretation of, the museum collection, whereas reinterpretation was required in the task of the first and third projects. This confirmed the importance of being familiar with the

participants' background knowledge, identities and needs in order to adapt a museum project accordingly. Then again, one still needs to keep tasks flexible adjusting to the multicultural backgrounds and intellectual needs which participants bring along with their community group.

The challenge of familiarising with the participants' multiple identities in order to make the project relevant for them, recalled the point made by the CEO of AŽ who insisted that "it's not a one box fits all... because in reality one needs to understand different categories of young adults and see how to address each category". On the other hand, the senior curator argued that, rather than categorising the young adults, one has to focus on addressing identities. He explained that "with MUŽA, we're going for the 'Falk' model" (Falk, 2009), referring to John Falk's approach as the one that targets identities rather than age-groups – children, youth, adults, families.

Falk (2009) observed that people's motivation to visit art museums did not primarily stem from national, religious, gender, age or political identities but from identity-related needs such as a desire to indulge one's sense of curiosity or to temporarily escape the rat race. Due to my projects' action-research methodology and its participative approach, the participants were not limited to one-size-fits-all activities predetermined by their age-group as young adults. Meanwhile, although their multiple identities were allowed to shape up the projects, they still contributed to what they considered to be relevant for young adults' general needs in the 21st century. These include the need to slow down in today's fast paced world; the need for social face-to-face connection; the need to stop rushing through life, question, reflect and discuss real life issues.

Both the interview with the CEO of AŽ and that with the senior curator brought up the challenge of addressing young adults' needs within their context of community and of time. The senior curator talked about the young adults as posing "quite a challenging category because they have their backgrounds, they have their cultures" At the same time he showed concern about MUŽA's mission in reaching out to several public identities because "a Maltese can be Lithuanian by birth, can be Scandinavian... how are we going to reconcile that?" With this and other rhetorical questions, he indicated that until the time of the interview (2017) there were no clear plans concerning the ways in which MUŽA would attract and reach out to young adults.

According to the CEO of AŻ, young adults are not easy to reach out to. She explained that while it would be challenging to attract the most vulnerable young adults “as they would not understand the benefits of a museum programme”, the gifted ones would also be challenging to attract. She pointed out that the latter would be “already busy as they are often committed to a lot of other activities and programmes”. This recalled my own experience, when at the beginning of my empirical research I tried to recruit participants by issuing a public open-call for the participation of young adults in a free-of charge art museum project with the support of AŻ. The youth workers at AŻ, who helped in the promotion and processing of applications for the project reported that the young adults who showed interest in applying held back because they were already committed to summer jobs and voluntary work. Moreover, to abide by the University of Malta’s ethical considerations, the posters and all promotional material had to include information indicating that the participants would be part of a research project. This further discouraged the young adults, who understood that their participation would turn them into samples for some scientific experiment.

A similar disappointment was experienced while collaborating on a museum educational outreach project with the University of Leuven during Summer 2018. Bound by ethical considerations, the word ‘research’ indicated on the promotional material was misinterpreted and young people did not apply to participate, even if the project was advertised as free of charge, including breakfast, lunch and materials! Meanwhile I am confident that should MUŻA issue an open call for young-adults’ participation, it would be more successful as the promotional material would not need to use the word ‘research’. Nevertheless, the senior curator still showed his doubts when indicating that “there will be programmes... even beyond schooling, which is not an easy group to cater for”. On the other hand, during the focus group the participants of Project 2 insisted that if the new art museum “organises activities for free” and “free-of charge team-building workshops”, it would certainly attract young adults. Further ways in which MUŻA could attract the participation of young people will be addressed in the next chapter’s concluding recommendations.

5.3.3 Managing the Time-Duration of Workshops

As evidenced by my projects, the duration of workshops has to be well-thought-out for the museum outreach programmes to be effective, especially when addressing participants from communities

that are already limited by their institution's structured programmes. Allocating time for constructivist approaches presented certain time-related dilemmas throughout all three projects. The challenge of coping with limited time-durations was mentioned throughout the interviews among the participants of all three projects. A common complaint was the limitation of two-hour duration for the workshop. Some of them suggested the whole project itself should be carried out all year round. They considered time-duration to be a challenge, indicating an appreciation that holistic learning requires time for proper construction of knowledge through a creative process.

The projects' findings show that they appreciated how the learning process demanded time for observing, reflection, experimenting with ideas and materials, researching and discussing with others to keep developing ideas which emanated from a starting point – their selected theme. Contrastingly, during the interview with the CEO of AŽ, she emphasised that projects should be “short-term” and that “it is useless to try to foster the commitment in young people” as today's young adults generally wish to avoid long-term commitments in any aspect of their life. Moreover, she added that since young adults today are “self-motivated by intense periods” educational programmes should not be planned in “time per week, but intense periods of programmes, such as a weekend”. To check whether and how time-duration of outreach programmes was being considered for MUŽA's plans, I asked the senior curator. At the time of the interview, back in 2017, he said “there were no complete plans, but we need to have a plan”. When MUŽA opened officially at the end of 2018, I asked him again about educational outreach programmes. He said that there are still no plans yet and that these are early days as the museum organisation still needs to settle into its new premises.

5.3.4 Space and Resources

Another challenge in common among the three projects' findings concerned space and resources. This challenge arose partly because at the time of the projects the museum premises closed prematurely. Then again, at the old national art museum, there was no particular space equipped with suitable furniture and resources which could be used for educational outreach programmes. In fact, during Project 1, when the museum premises were still available, the curators did their best to provide a temporary space by setting up tables and chairs in the yard. The participants of Project 2 were the least who complained about space and resources because their workshops were held at

the Art Studio of the University of Malta. Being art students and owning laptops and art materials also mitigated this challenge. However, they still complained about not having other resources such as computers installed with programmes which would have facilitated the project's digital task. Besides, they complained of not having access to the digital images of the museum collection. These would have allowed the manipulation of the images to create the virtual exhibitions, as well as providing reference given that the museum premises was no longer available.

The first and third projects demanded adherence to strict security policies and, because of these restricted contexts, space and resources were more of a challenge for the participants. Despite the fact that art material was abundant for these two projects, as funds had been acquired, unlike Project 2, the participants were not allowed to bring materials from home or take materials from the workshops to continue their work. Many times, the participants of the first and third projects complained that they required materials which they considered necessary to develop their ideas in their preferred media and techniques. Though abundant, the material provided during the projects limited them to choose only from those items which I had selected beforehand, without the possibility to anticipate their learning needs and the ideas they would choose to develop. Hence, this was also a challenge for my project to achieve the set targets based on a constructivist approach — aiming to encourage participants “to set their own terms for inclusion” (Biesta, 2006:174) so that they construct knowledge through their own selections and decision making.

It may be possible to address the challenge of providing an appropriate space and resources for community outreach programmes within MUŻA's new premises. In fact, during the interview, the senior curator revealed: “I think that there will be a specific base within the building which is a community space... it will be a space available to different groups and people coming from different social classes.” Now that MUŻA is open, there is a room intended for hosting workshops in the ground floor. Whether it is serving as a community space is still a big question! Research shows that a revamped museum which aims to remain relevant to the public must do more than “just adding a programme, reinstalling a gallery... it is a systemic shift in attitude, purpose, alignment, and execution” (Anderson, 2012:2). In her article concerning museum management and curatorship, Kristinsdottir considers the relevance and the sustainable practices of museums in the 21st century as being interdependent on the central position of museum educators who can connect

museums and communities, being in a “position to close knowledge gaps and address diversity” (2017:432).

5.3.5 Evaluating the Projects’ Holistic Approach and Benefits

Unlike the learning content, museum learning experiences, owing to their unexpected nature, cannot be measured against a predicted set criteria of learning outcomes. In fact, as reported in RCMG (2004), the outcomes of learning are individually experienced as one learns using one’s own preferred learning styles, in response to what one wants to know. Hence, the evaluation of the impact of my projects included an observation of the transferable skills as applied by the participants through their creative process. Moreover, the impact was also evaluated through the verbal and documented feedback of participants on the learning strategies which were discovered during the project.

The three projects’ findings indicate the awareness of the participants regarding the transferable skills they had been practising combined with their constructive learning process. The participants mentioned the following skills which they believe will serve them throughout life (life-wide and life-long learning): mind-mapping; art journaling; time-management; evaluation; thinking (creative and critical); communication; social skills; observation; interpreting; problem-solving; decision-making; and resilience (to move on and not give up). These skills recall the “multiple process of meaning-making in the museum context... as paths to life-long learning” (Kristinsdottir, 2017:433). After all, the final goal of a constructivist approach is to cultivate lifelong learners (Wang, 2009).

Although the projects’ findings show that the participants enjoyed the workshops and hoped that the duration of the workshops could be extended, they also remarked that what they learned could be continued beyond the projects throughout their daily life. Meanwhile, further research would have been required to verify whether any of the participants continued to apply the transferable skills after the end of the projects.

5.4 Suggestions for Museum Educational Outreach targeting Young Adults

In line with Freire’s critical pedagogy theory (1978), the three projects aimed at maintaining a balanced power-relationship with the participants. This was achieved through an exchange of

knowledge, engaging in dialogues to facilitate their chosen theme developments and the exercise of meaning-making that is related to life, as it can be inspired by chosen artworks from the collection. Hence, the critical role of museum educators is to ask questions including “what”, “why”, “how”, “for whom”, “for what purpose” and try to answer them along with the learners (Freire, 1977). In fact, the participants were constantly reminded of their significant role in the projects by being consulted on the direction of the workshop activities. This shaping up of activities took place not only during direct consultation in focus groups but also while they presented their plans for their theme development. It also took place during the work-in-progress, as they raised topics for discussions, through expressing their learning needs for particular art techniques and also through their feedback while engaging in self- and peer-evaluation. The following list is a summary of suggestions, collected throughout the three projects through the participants’ exchange of knowledge concerning their learning strategies with reference to the national art museum collection:

- choosing a theme that resonates with your interests and beliefs will help you to reflect on yourself and life;
- drawing mind-maps guides you to explore ideas, memories and connections;
- reflecting on ideas, plans, discoveries and discussing them with others provides development of new meanings on art and themes;
- using an art journal helps to store the creative process of ideas, observations of artworks for inspiration, reflections, connections, mind-maps, different ideas, plans, related pictures and experiments with art materials and techniques;
- showing others pages from your art journal facilitates the exchange of discoveries, ideas, plans and feedback to explore alternative ideas for improvement;
- choosing works of art from the museum collection related to a chosen theme keeps the inspiration evolving;
- keeping the chosen theme in mind while exploring artworks raises questions about life issues;

- taking time to slow down and observe an artwork or its image provides more details to look at, and to find connections with thoughts about life;
- while looking at artworks with others, ask questions related to your chosen theme or theirs to discuss and develop further interpretations;
- taking time to develop an artwork provides deeper learning as the creative process leads you to think and understand further;
- presenting work-in-progress generates feedback from others, which can provide alternatives of choices of artworks that relate to the chosen theme.

The above list of learning strategies offers insights on young adults' ways of dealing with the national art museum collection in a holistic manner through a creative process facilitated by an educator. The following list of suggestions below resulted from an exchange of knowledge with the participants, concerning ways through which they think MUŻA could attract young adults:

- Technological devices, such as 'touch screens', that can facilitate interaction with the collection;
- Apps with QR code to access information about the collection;
- Organising 'selfie competitions' and activities, e.g. re-enactment and treasure-hunts with reference to the collection;
- The presence of museum guides to address visitors' learning needs;
- Talks by guest artists, architects, writers, scientists...;
- Free open days to promote the National Art Museum.

The insights gained as a result of my research led me to completely re-conceptualise museum educational outreach. Instead of perceiving museum educational outreach strategies from an educator's point of view, the research experience has grounded my perception in the participants' learning point of view. This recalls Hein (1998) that everything concerning visitors is the focus of museum education. Based on my projects' experience, a museum educator's role throughout the planning and delivery of a community outreach programme is to support personal multiple identities and facilitate holistic learning with reference to the collection through social interaction.

For social interaction, building a relationship of trust among participants to develop a community of enquiry is essential. They can then challenge each other's interpretations of life and the museum collection. In due course, their exchange of knowledge leads them to explore their previous beliefs and recognise misconceptions about issues concerning their identities, art, museums and life. Eventually, new ways of looking at themselves, others, art and life start evolving. This outcome of my research recalls the definition of museum learning as "a transformative experience" which leads to the development of "new attitudes, interests, appreciation, beliefs" (Lord, 2007:17). The outcomes of the research also aligns with a contribution to the participants' lifelong learning purpose "for personal development and fulfilment" (Aspin and Chapman, 2001:39) through art museum education.

Several suggestions also came up during the interview with the CEO of AŽ. She strongly believes that a museum could serve as an alternative place to offer social activities for young adults as long as it remains updated with their current trends. This aligns with international studies showing that since museums started recognising their role and their responsibilities to engage their visitors, they started to reconsider and adapt their strategies (Anderson, 2004). However, in order to successfully engage young adult audiences, regular research is required on how to target their needs and interests (Black, 2005). Furthermore, the CEO of AŽ argued that "the art museum on its own cannot organise effective museum outreach". She insisted that "it requires a form of interdisciplinary team" and explained that such a team should then also consult with other local entities, including AŽ, in order to come up with collaborative initiatives aiming to reach out to young adults. Referring to some good outreach practices abroad, the CEO suggested that the museum first needs to invest in "researching the young adults' trends". She added that, in Malta the only few reports concerning young adults' trends have not been government funded but privately "commissioned by big brands like the Coca-Cola company".

On the other hand, MUŽA senior curator admitted he has no idea what is trendy for young adults today. Meanwhile, he also insisted about "the need for research" so that a museum keeps track of young adult trends which could be followed up and explored. He confessed this has been lacking from Heritage Malta (HM) and is something that he has "been suggesting to happen within Heritage Malta for quite some time, similar to what the church authorities do" to constantly read the signs of the times. I think here he was comparing museums to churches whose authorities nowadays also

strive to keep up to date in order to attract young adults. Moreover, the senior curator explained that one has to adjust, to rethink, “otherwise we’re dead meat, I mean we’re fossils...we have to really keep in sync by 2025... 2030”.

In view of my projects, research could be initiated once a museum interdisciplinary team is set up by HM, “where multiple voices with various backgrounds have to participate in the creative process in order to guarantee that different issues are considered” (Mason, 2015:394). This team would include curators, educators and local entities. These experts would collaborate on planning and evaluating outreach programmes grounded in a participatory action research approach, which would automatically trigger the need to conduct research on young adults’ needs and interests. The museum educators’ role will still involve facilitating the outreach programme, researching in action together with the community of participants themselves. They would also be required to collaborate with an interdisciplinary team made up of curators and local entities such as NGOs to plan and evaluate the programmes.

For the third research project, I experienced the collaboration with such an interdisciplinary team involving an NGO (KOPIN, 2019), the correctional facilities’ directors and two local artists. We consulted each other before the project started, kept informing each other about the workshops’ progress and any changes required, consulted with each other about the public exhibitions and also assessed what was successful and anything which needed to improve. My role as educator / researcher involved the facilitation of workshops and the sharing of insights gained to the team members via emails and face-to-face meetings. Of course, at times there were conflicts of expertise, such as the wish to exhibit ‘beautiful and up to standard’ finished artworks in view of the presence of the Minister at the exhibition as opposed to exhibiting the participants’ learning process showing sketches, experiments and notes. Eventually, the public exhibition displayed the participants’ learning process, including their art journals (Discussion of Findings Project 3, Fig.4.50a-d) as a result of the interdisciplinary team having more members who valued the participants’ learning and recognised this to be the priority of a community project.

With reference to her vast experience with young adults, the CEO of AŽ suggested that the art museum should aim to reach out also to another category of young adults - the ‘working young adult communities’, by offering packages of ‘Corporate Team-Building activities’. She believes that the museum could provide an alternative venue for informal social activities instead of the

usual pubs or restaurants. The CEO of AŽ suggested that the museum team should organise creative events which can engage young adults, for example in the creation of costumes with which to participate in a museum Halloween costume party. Another activity she suggested was a ‘mystery activity’ which she insisted is nowadays perceived as a trend for young adults internationally. She explained that this often involves a call for participation of young adults aged 18+ to apply for a surprise, ready to abide by the rules of a concept and venue which would be chosen by the organisers. It could be “a mystery activity in a garage or a kitchen”. In the same way, the museum team may hire and liaise with event organisers, so that the mystery venue is hosted within the MUŽA premises and the ‘mystery concept’ could aim at engaging the participants with the museum collection.

Echoing the above suggestions by the CEO of AŽ, several researchers, such as Falk and Dierking (2000), Bradburne (1998) and Kelly (2001) have mentioned the need for museums to become less formal spaces inviting unintentional learning to address the needs and interests of fluctuating members of the public. Since the definition of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2007 included the word “enjoyment”, and in the knowledge that learning is best achieved in circumstances of enjoyment (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999) most 21st century museums started to feature ‘edutainment’ practices (including both education and entertainment) in the design of their programmes. Meanwhile, many discussions arose concerning whether edutainment practices can truly promote learning. Research shows that in many cases, learning is insufficient because the entertaining aspect often takes over (Goodlad and McIvor, 1998).

My research projects did not aim at entertainment. Although from my teaching experience I am aware that learning is achieved through enjoyment, I noticed that with all the easily accessible venues offering mass-entertainment and the increasing use of sensational digital devices, most of today’s young adults seek a sense of the meaning of life and identity rather than entertainment. The participants of all three projects wished for the projects to last longer, and believed that they had been meaningful to their life. They said the projects provided them with well-being opportunities they craved for at the time, such as social interaction, self-expression, time to slow down while looking at art, time for reflection about their life and their identities.

In view of my projects’ findings, MUŽA should not focus on being a venue for leisure activities because there are already enough places of entertainment. Mental disorders among today’s young

adults are on the rise. In her recent study, psychology professor Jean Twenge, found significant increases in serious mental distress including anxiety, hopelessness and suicidal thoughts and attempts among adults age 26 and older. In her view the increased use of digital communications has led to an increase in mood disorders among young generations (CBS News, 2019). In view of such urgent needs, MUŻA should aim at providing young adults with opportunities for well-being and self-exploration – a space where young adults can look at its collection to “support the process of relaxing the mind into the present... letting go” (Salom, 2008:4) of strong emotions and to “note unnoticed aspects of themselves” (Salom, 2008:3).

Then again, there is still the issue of attracting young adults to attend and participate in meaningful experiences at the museum. This was discussed in a focus group with the participants of Project 2. Mainly they vouched for digital technology and the virtual world as the contemporary attractions for young adults. Their suggestions included: online access to the museum collection; virtual museum tours; social media tools such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat and online games featuring the museum collection. Meanwhile, in her audience research study, Emma Shrapnel (2012) mentioned ways in which international museums had successfully attracted young adults, and which did not involve the digital realm. For instance, by focusing on Graffiti Street art — an art form popular with young adults, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles with its programme entitled ‘Art in the Streets’, succeeded in attracting a large number of visitors to create new graffiti art outside the museum. Through its inside/out initiative, the Detroit Institute of Art in Michigan displayed high-quality, life-size reproductions of famous artworks around the city, thus encouraging new visitors especially young adults to visit the museum and see the original paintings. Instead of creating programmes for young people, the Museum of London have had programmes created by young people. This ensured that museum projects, displays and events did attract young adults (Shrapnel, 2012).

When asked about her opinion regarding the virtual and physical museum exhibitions, the CEO of AŻ admitted that “technology is becoming very, very fast and is changing young people’s lives”. In her opinion the museum must “either go with the contemporary trend or else young adults would not be attracted”. Moreover, she explained that whereas some young adults would be inclined to the virtual, others would be more inclined to the physical exhibition. This was also confirmed by the participants of Project 2. Although their task involved the creation of virtual exhibitions, which

required the creation of work through technology devices, most of them still admitted that they preferred drawing and developing their ideas tangibly through the manipulation of textures and materials. In fact, their mind-maps were mostly drawn on their sketch books. Furthermore, concurrently with the project (Discussion of Findings Project 2, Fig.4.36a-d), their course-work engaged them in creating tangible exhibitions. On several occasions, participants admitted that the actual manipulation of tools like pens, scissors, glue and materials provided them with a sense of slowing down and nurtured their creativity, something they desperately needed throughout their stressful final year at University.

Despite the immediate stereotypical suggestion of digital technology being the main contemporary attraction for young adults — the so-called digital natives (Prensky, 2001), the participants of the first and third projects could not access internet or digital devices due to their particular contexts. Nevertheless, they still engaged with the national art museum collection. This recalls the previously mentioned issue of whether MUŻA should consider providing an alternative space for young adults' digital detox. Media professor Sherry Turkle (2015), who has researched the social and psychological effects of digital technology, states that due to the electronic devices depriving people of social intimacy, it is necessary to rediscover and promote face-to-face dialogue. Similarly, throughout all three projects, the participants often discussed what they saw as the irony of being overwhelmed with the demands of relentless digital connectivity and, as a result, being deprived of the physical connection to each other and the tangible world. The following two quotes were extracted from the focus group discussion held during Project 2:

“I think we miss the simple joys in life as we worry about staying connected through social media all the time...”

“...the joy of life is not only found on the internet.”

With regards to an interview question concerning the museum and the digital world of young adults, the senior curator admitted that “with an IT-savvy generation, which we call ‘digital natives’, I think we have to rethink our strategies”. Meanwhile, he revealed that “MUŻA galleries will have a hand-held device with recordings, videos.” Moreover, he described the museum’s Facebook page as “fantastic”. Later, he proudly said that the NMFA was the first museum in Malta to engage with Facebook. This made me wonder: Is a museum’s Facebook page really a means to

reach out to the public or only to MUŻA followers and the ones already inclined to art and museums? Is social media an effective means to attract new audiences to MUŻA's educational programmes and events?

According to the senior curator, the museum's aim is to find ways "to empower the audience to understand the collection and how they can use the collection" and for this to happen he suggests that the museum staff should be well trained. In his opinion since "so far, Heritage Malta has its educational unit which deals broadly with all types of educational programmes", it is very difficult to be more focused on a particular museum such as MUŻA. What he revealed regarding HM's plans indicates that during the time of my study, although there were plans for the provision of learning experiences at MUŻA, these are not specifically designed to target particular communities.

While referring to the museum audience as "participants", the senior curator clarified that one has to "participate in the museum experience" and that the collection has to reflect the demography of several identities. Then he asked what seemed at first to be a rhetorical question concerning whether MUŻA should include work by refugees in public collections in order to reach out to several identities in Malta. He immediately replied to his own question with a "yes, we can have great artists from Syria in Malta that we don't know about, but they are part of this community". This recalled my own reflections and research about the concepts of 'community' and 'young adult identities' at the start of the study. As mentioned in the Literature Review, an informal conversation I had with HM staff back in 2015 revealed that students and children are the ones most often targeted because they are the ones most likely to attend, whereas it is not so easy to reach out to young adults.

Recently HM organised outreach activities, including the *Comic Creation, Tell me a Story* and other events, between July and September 2019 (Heritage Malta Passport Events, 2019). This shows that at the time of writing, within the Maltese context, the cultural outreach target groups are still children and families. Although I am aware that museum visitors carry multiple identities and have different learning styles, one must categorise hard in order to reach specific age groups. Otherwise the 'young adults' age group is likely to keep being ignored within the Maltese context. According to Black (2005), due to a significant shortfall in young adults visiting museums, it is in the interests of museums to fill this gap and successfully engage the young adult audience. He said that in the past decade, international museums have tried to reach this target audience by

methodically researching their needs and interests in relation to museums. This made me wonder: are young adults in Malta even being informed about the national art museum as a place for public education?

In my study, the participants of the first and third projects were unaware of the existence of the national art museum. According to the participants of Project 2, most of their friends, also young adults, do not even know where it is. How can young adults, unfamiliar with the national art museum be expected to make use of the museum or participate in its programmes and events, when they are unaware that it could provide them with lifelong learning? The lifelong learning referred to here is concerned with self-development and fulfilment in terms of “finding the meaning of one’s life...and maybe even learning to live one’s life in a better way” (Biesta, 2006:173).

The exchange of knowledge carried out with the participants of the three projects, the insights concerning young adults gained from the interview with the CEO of AŽ, combined with curatorial issues and visions gained through interviewing the senior curator of MUŽA, somehow all generated further reflections and led to further research regarding international museum studies. In the next chapter, these reflections will be summed up together in view of the knowledge gained through the literature review and methodology, which guided the planning, delivery and evaluation of the three projects.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 The Holistic Educational Purpose

My study researched the educational strategies that I designed to cultivate the emotional, cognitive and social aspects of young adults' experiences with a national art collection. It aimed to provide the national art museum in Malta with a holistic educational framework for effective community outreach. Based on the constructivist educational model according to which humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences (Piaget, 1955; Vygotsky, 1978; Siemen, 2004), my study ultimately aimed to offer guidance to museum educators who focus on the holistic development and well-being of young adult communities.

Also referred to as 'transformative learning' by Mezirow (1996), 'well-being' in my study focuses on the participants' sense of achievement gained through constructive and interpretive learning while dealing with contextualised tasks. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) argues that all interpretation is historically situated and meaning is constructed through and within culture. This recalls John Berger's concept that our ways of seeing are "affected by what we know or what we believe" (Berger, 1972:8). Critical and constructivist pedagogies applied throughout my projects encouraged the participants to tap into their own narratives and cultural background while engaging with the museum collection.

Freeman Tilden, in his 1957 book *Interpreting Our Heritage* defined heritage interpretation as an educational activity that aims to expose meanings and connections through the use of original objects, rather than transferring factual information (Ham, 2009). In line with Tilden's concept, my educator's role was not instruction but the facilitation of participants' creation of meanings for themselves while connecting life issues to art objects. This echoes Hooper-Greenhill's (2000) expanded view of culture, considering culture holistically through a connection with all aspects of daily life to construct meaning of reality. Enabling participants to communicate their own understanding of culture made their connections to art and life feel valid. Participating in the study encouraged their confidence to look at art and talk about it. Furthermore, as explained in the

Analysis chapter, their involvement in evaluating and documenting their learning process through their art journals, provided them with a sense of self-worth.

My intention to make a knowledge contribution focusing on museum holistic education stemmed from a personal concern for people's increasing need for connection in today's digital age. Media professor Sherry Turkle (2015) spent the last 30 years researching the social and psychological effects of digital technology. She argues that in an age where we constantly communicate in a technological universe, electronic devices are threatening to make us less social as humans. Ironically, while attempts are being made on programming robots with algorithms to mimic human emotions and senses (Kurzweil, 2012), one often observes people becoming increasingly addicted to the products of digitalization up to the point of exhaustion. According to well-being expert and teacher Holly Niemela (2018), global companies, hospitals and governments such as the Mindful Nation UK have been striving to provide a balance to people's digital lifestyles.

Turkle (2015) insists that, with an increasing awareness of the decline in social intimacy due to digital technology, it is time to restore face-to-face conversation through the most basic technology – talk. Aligned with this, my study's aim in providing a holistic education through a national art museum promotes the concept of the museum as a space for regaining face-to-face conversations by engaging the public with an art collection. Nonetheless, museum educational strategies which make use of the digital realm were still considered in my study during Project 2, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.

The notion of 'space' has "decentred the focus on the object in museums" (Alexander et.al, 2017: 2). Knowing that holistic learning could arise within non-formal educational spaces provided by museums, I chose to focus on the national art museum in Malta due to its philosophical transformation to MUŻA - proposing itself as a community-based museum, happening at the same time of my study. Keeping my main research question in mind – *In what ways can young adults benefit from holistic education programmes with reference to a national art museum?* – allowed me to identify educational strategies targeting young adults' connection with themselves, each other and life through art.

The literature I reviewed recognised a shifting cultural landscape, challenging art museums' priorities worldwide to refocus their social responsibility to reach out to communities rather than continue with their historic role of interpreting their collection (Watson, 2007; Black, 2012; Govan, 2013; Lang et.al, 2006). Focusing on young adults' use of Malta's national art collection, my study's three research projects were aimed at addressing the participants' multiple interests and needs. Due to my study's reliance on developing theories based on communal understandings with participants, the projects called for multiple research methods, combining Action Research (AR) with Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). The study's analysis, carried out through a coding process involving the categorisation of data, generated theoretical ideas.

While progressing with the writing of the Literature Review, Methodology, and Analysis chapters vis-à-vis the empirical research through the three projects, I was actively involved in relevant conferences and projects overseas. The international scene of art museum education not only brought me more insights about outreach but also provided me with further connections to my investigations and empirical research.

6.2 Results

My study is not an end in itself. The project's participatory approach engaged the participants in thinking critically about themselves and life with reference to their ways of interpreting the collection through the development of social themes. The projects' findings support the ambition to holistic educational strategies that make a national art collection relevant by linking to participants' own narratives. The study's main research question was further explored through three specific questions:

1. In what ways can a national art museum serve as an educational resource that embraces contemporary young adults' needs and interests?
2. What kind of public service can the staff at an art museum provide for community outreach?
3. In what ways will the new MUŻA philosophy address educational community outreach?

The analysis dealing with the first question resulted in educational strategies (discussed later) that focus both on physical and virtual use of the MUŻA collection and its premises. The recommended strategies aim at public engagement, participation and an emphasis on visitor/ learner approaches, which shed light on MUŻA staff's roles and training. Subsequently, these recommendations answered the second research question, by indicating approaches the staff could apply to reach out rather than expect young adults' initiative to visit museums. Unlike museum and gallery education handbooks, my study's recommendations are based on strategies explored together with young adult participants from different communities within the Maltese context in the 21st century while engaging with MUŻA collection. This recalls Grech's (2015) critique that MUŻA requires more explicit strategies for community participation.

My research reached explicit conclusions involving some of the different social groups that Grech mentioned. Although the participants belonged to same age group (21-30 years), some lacked self-worth, others were stressed out with studies and needed an opportunity to slow down, others were foreigners craving connection, while some, especially those from a challenging background, struggled with mental confusion. Prior to the study, the first and third projects' participants had no idea how to look at art and reported their feelings of non-belonging with regard to art museums. Despite their art background, Project 2's participants lacked motivation to visit the art museum. Yet, once the participants started to work on theme-development tasks, their learning experience was facilitated, stimulating them to find their own ways of engaging with the collection.

My research revealed that if museum education outreach programmes were to be offered free of charge, aimed at facilitating young adults' connections of art to life, it could reduce what Bourdieu (1984) identified as the transmission of cultural capital. This is because young adults start feeling a sense of belonging at art museums as they learn how to use the collection for their own lifelong learning agenda.

By making reference to works on contemporary theories of Curatorial-Educational Mediation (Kaitavuori, 2013; Sternfeld, 2010; Lind, 2009), MUŻA staff could form an interdisciplinary team consisting of museum educators and curators. Together, they could aim at facilitating learning experiences and provide links to the collection by bridging activities to the participants' multiple

interests. Since to date, HM has still not introduced the role of museum educators, MUŻA could consider investing in services offered by freelance educators. Qualified in art education or museum education, these freelancers could provide human connection for visitors/participants and facilitate the development of a long-lasting relationship between the public and the museum. These should keep in mind the visitors' autonomy of choice for their own learning. Therefore, a single collection may offer more personalised experiences when engaging the visitors in interpretive tasks, such as 'role-playing the museum guide' (explored in Project 1, Chapter 4.1) evoking the visitors' own narratives.

In response to the third research question concerning how the new MUŻA philosophy addresses community outreach, my study indicates that its brand as the first Maltese museum typology of 'community curating' (Heritage Malta, 2019) is strongly rooted in being audience-based while "making art accessible to all" (Valletta, 2018). Yet, way back in 2017, while interviewing the senior curator, he said there were "no complete plans" for outreach educational programmes. In 2018, once MUŻA opened, during an informal conversation at the beginning of 2019, he said that there are still no official plans for them.

To date, the community curation concept has still not been realised at MUŻA. Education does not need to be institutionalised. In fact, with the exception of a role-play activity in Project 1, my study's three projects were carried out beyond the museum premises. I did not need to liaise with HM to organise, carry out or fund the projects. This means that suitable persons could be engaged on a 'freelance' basis to provide awareness of the national art collection as a public educational resource. My research findings show that a team consisting of educators, artists and an NGO can tap into funding opportunities such as the Arts Council Malta (ACM) funds to offer lifelong learning outreach programmes that engage the public with the national art collection. Ultimately the national art collection does not belong to HM but to the public.

6.3 Community Curation



Fig.6 Naqsam il-MUŻA (Photo credit: Inigo Taylor, Valletta 2018)

The ‘*Naqsam il-MUŻA*’ (NIM) project, conceived in 2016, displayed public billboards which showed MUŻA’s initial effort to address community outreach (Fig.6). The HM website (NIM, 2019), indicated that this project was intended to engage a number of communities in Malta with MUŻA’s collection. Described in an article appearing in newspaper Malta Today in 2016 as an “exercise in community curation” the NIM project aimed at connecting art and resident communities by involving individuals to select artworks from the national collection and share their thoughts with the rest of their community.

Beyond HM’s good intentions and what the media promoted as ‘community outreach’, I question the validity of such a project in authentically reaching out to the public. Probing the NIM billboards’ contents, people who featured in the promotion of the project included council mayors, bank managers, and a chairman of a philharmonic society. Displaying the quotes of these selected people might give the impression that it takes people with a certain job status to interpret the museum collection, while the rest can just watch. Since the billboards were displayed in prominent public spaces, the project could have reached out to people from all walks of life who stop to read them. But what about reaching out to those finding the billboards irrelevant due to their lack of

familiarity with museums and art? Did such an exercise once again only entice tourists and those interested in art towards MUŻA? After a year since MUŻA's official opening, it is clear that this initiative failed to draw more people to it.

During the interview with MUŻA's senior curator in 2017, he explained that MUŻA is about bridging the collection with people and their life. However, my research findings indicate that such bridging still requires professional guidance. As an educator, having identified the participants' interests and established an atmosphere of trust, I could set tasks relevant to their interests, such as 'theme development'. Guided constantly by an inquiry-based approach, the participants could think critically on their experiences and thoughts about life through interpreting art by communicating, discussing, documenting and creating art as well as presenting their learning process.

Sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 include evidence of the participants' reported feelings of confidence to engage with artworks and with each other once they realised that their own narratives were valid ways to look at art and construct meanings based on reflection and debating with others. Guiding them throughout their learning process, which they themselves evaluated and documented in their journals, facilitated the participants' discovery of ways of engaging with the museum collection. In fact, during the first and third projects, the participants admitted they would not have visited the museum or searched for its collection had they not participated in the projects.

The senior curator mentioned that museum staff need training to align with MUŻA's new philosophy. He showed concern that since HM's educational unit "deals broadly with all cultural sites' educational programmes", the HM staff cannot be specifically focused on MUŻA. Then again, participants of education programmes are not the only public that the museums need to reach out to. Although the number of visitors do not reflect the museum's success in reaching out to the public, it may still provide an indication of a change in the public's relationship to MUŻA. A year after it opened its doors to the public, MUŻA's empty exhibition halls show that the objective of building connections with the community has failed.

Personally, I visited MUŻA during weekdays and weekends, in the mornings and afternoons (entry closing time is at 4:30pm). I still felt like a ghost roaming on my own, just like I used to feel whenever I visited the NMFA. Since MUŻA's opening in December 2018, its Facebook page has been constantly promoting its public talks and its state-of-the-art premises. MUŻA galleries are

equipped with interactive technological devices with audio-visuals, videos and touch screens. Whenever I attend MUŻA talks I notice that the attendees/audience consist mainly of people I often meet at other cultural events. This brings us to the third research question: how is MUŻA's new philosophy encouraging the public to visit and participate? Based on my personal experience when I observed the visitors (mostly tourists) at MUŻA on the day of its official public opening, as well as based on my subsequent visits, the museum still seems to lack the connection with public communities who are not familiar with art and museums. The lack of time allocated for art education in local schools might also be a significant factor contributing to this state of affairs.

6.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Based on my study's findings, this section presents recommendations through which MUŻA could be used as an educational resource both within, as well as outside its premises by referring to its collection. Table 6 illustrates the main research goals, research findings and recommended strategies. These are discussed further on, followed by a description of subsidiary goals, findings and recommended strategies.

Young adult audiences are the focus of my recommendations as they bear characteristics similar to the research participants of three heterogeneous communities. These include young adults who are unfamiliar with museums or consider them boring which is also in line with my own projects' participants. They rarely respond to a Facebook event organized at MUŻA, even if it is free. These young adults could be among those who are accustomed to believe that art museums are only for those with an art background and who are interested in art's technical, historical and aesthetic information.

My research findings revealed that engaging with an art collection stimulated emotions, evoked evaluations and to some extent brought about transformations of thoughts and attitudes. These reactions, while interacting within a social context, differed greatly between individuals. My research showed that some young adults need, and welcome, a space in which to slow down from studies/work or social media addiction. For these, the art museum collection was therapeutic since art can be used as part of a healing process. Alternatively, for those young adults willing to bring

about social changes through developing art activism, an art museum collection could serve as a forum to debate political and social issues.

Groys (2014) explains that contemporary art activism is about making art useful, which challenges the criticism which regards art as useless. MUŻA's collection could be used by young adults for art activism. In this way art would serve as a process of change based on an awareness of prejudices. For instance, MUŻA's collection of landscape paintings showing what the countryside looked like before construction enveloped the island could inspire young adults to create art that draws attention to issues of ecological concern. The art which they create could then be displayed publicly outside MUŻA's main entrance door.

Table 6 Main Research Goals, Research Findings and Recommended Strategies

Research Goals	Research Findings	Recommended Educational Strategies
<p>6.4.1 Understanding communities' contexts and plural narratives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum activities that provoke participants' interests keep participants motivated to learn, as they make connections between art and previous knowledge, personal expectations and beliefs. • The participants gain confidence in looking and talking about art by linking it to their own interests and life experiences. This eventually may lead them to feel familiar with museums and enhance their visiting/participation response. • Contemporary artworks directly dealing with social narratives are often more relevant to young adult participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get familiar with/ elicit the participants' interests before and during the start of the project. • Plan activities related to the participants' interests and their chosen ways of referring to the museum collection. • Outside the museum venue, select and present images of artworks that show contemporary sociocultural contexts.
<p>6.4.2 Providing a space for social interaction and well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants gain awareness of their own learning process while engaging with art. • While developing their creative work, they engage in personal and collective commitment for in-depth exploration of the learning experience. • Their awareness of learning and committing to it may lead to unintended therapeutic outcomes, such as the feeling of worth when expressing themselves or being asked for advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness of the participants' ability to look at and create art, reflecting on its message/story, talk and question others about it. • Invite the participants to comment and forward their suggestions on each other's work development. • Focus activities/programmes and assessment of their impact on the learning process, even if participants' work is still unfinished by end of an activity/programme.

<p>6.4.3 Encouraging the Practice of Transferable Skills involving critical thinking skills, problem solving and social skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debating general social themes leads the participants to come up with a theme that is meaningful for them. • Their chosen theme and their choice of art from the museum collection often stems from their need to deal with personal or social issues. • The creative process of dealing with themes and art stimulates the participants’ practice of cognitive, collaborative and emotional skills in their effort to gain an understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present general social themes (eg. identity, environmental, religious beliefs) to stimulate reflections and debates on themselves, life and art that provide them with relevance to the collection. • Engage the participants in mind-mapping and journaling to document their reflections and ideas for further development of work. • Encourage participants to talk about their work-in progress through flipping their sketches/ plans documented on journals to gain clarity of ideas and move forward. • While the participants observe the museum collection, apply an inquiry-based approach and tasks that generate thinking, collaboration and problem-solving, eg. role-play, presentation of their creative process.
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6.5 Main Research Goals, Findings and Recommended Strategies

6.5.1 Understanding Communities’ Contexts and Plural Narratives

To explore ways that create valuable project workshops for the participants, I identified the participants’ interests and needs prior to the start of each project. This was carried out through conversations with each community’s leaders and initial interviews with the participants. During the initial workshop, the ‘self-identity and youth-identity mind-maps’ activities also provided me with insight into the lives of the participants, including their spiritual beliefs, jobs, body-image perceptions, relationships and hobbies.

In addition, expressing their ‘identity’ mind-map to each other enabled me to better understand participants’ sense of self as they were contributing to my study. Awareness of participants’ contexts through initial interviews and ‘identity’ mind-maps could provide MUŽA with a way to

plan and deliver its community outreach programmes. Relevant programmes can thus be tailored for the participants' interests and needs.

Apart from the initial process aimed at understanding the community's contexts in order to provide relevancy with the museum collection, my projects' workshops focused on facilitating learning experiences through art. They were kept flexible enough to allow a participatory approach such that activities could be shaped in accordance with the multiple interests and needs of the participants. In connecting with their previous knowledge and interests, the participants exchanged knowledge with me and each other. Based on my projects, a recommended way of encouraging such participatory approach is by eliciting the participants' own life experiences, interests and knowledge while engaging with the museum collection. This way, participants' learning can be facilitated not only through their connection with what is already familiar, but also the unfamiliar. Learning happens when previous assumptions get challenged. This echoes Biesta (2017)'s assertion that education prepares the individual's desire to be-in-dialogue with a world that at times interferes with one's ingrained beliefs.

Once knowledge has been gathered regarding the participants' different learning aims and interests one can find ways to cater for them effectively by providing relevant stimulation through a museum collection. For instance, some communities may wish to learn more about specific artistic themes, techniques, art historical facts, artists' lives, and so on. A way of addressing these interests is to elicit the participants' previous knowledge thus sparking debates and discussions on artistic topics. This can also inspire further research by encouraging the participants to use digital devices to search for information and later share their findings on historical facts, artists' lives, and so on.

As suggested by Project 2's participants (Chapter 4.2), a treasure hunt through the use of an app on mobile phones could also engage participants to discuss details on the artworks. Then again, this depends on adapting the activities to the participants' interests and learning aims, so in the case of those who want to slow down by disconnecting from their digital devices, this would not be the appropriate strategy. Moreover, this strategy would not apply in the context of young adults where the use of digital devices is prohibited, such as at a drug rehab (Project 1: Chapter 4.1) and at the correctional facility (Project 3: Chapter 4.3).

6.5.2 Providing a Space for Social Interaction and Well-Being

My study's findings show that debates and discussions among young adults lead them to richer interpretations of personal and social issues while engaging with the museum collection. For instance, a participant recalled that "looking at some artworks made me sad. I recognised one of my friends in the photo of the immigrants... he died then. So I drew the boat sinking... I didn't lose hope because I believe there is something beyond that put me in this situation. I am alive for a reason" (P5, Project 3).

Participants also feel a sense of validity and empathise with others when sharing knowledge, artistic techniques and life experiences. One confessed "...whenever I showed my work in progress and the others asked me for advice, it made me feel worthy... it felt like others manage to see the good in me" (P7, Project 1). Workshop activities can encourage social interaction through discussion and debates by showing a list of generic social themes such as the five broad themes used for the study's projects: Identity, Human Relationships, War and Violence, Religion and Spirituality, Environmental Issues. These could be then explored further through inquiry-based approaches which lead the participants to choose a sub-theme that resonates with them and to choose artwork/s from the collection that somehow reflect their chosen theme.

The project findings indicate that, by introducing participants to mind-mapping and art journaling techniques to develop the chosen theme, they can make plans for the creative process as well as give feedback for self-evaluation and peer evaluation. The participants' documented ideas and feedback facilitates their social interaction with others to present their creative process and to receive/provide constructive criticism of the work-in-progress. Setting up a public exhibition showing the participants' documentation of work-in-progress continues to boost the participants' self-esteem, facilitates social interaction with other public communities who in turn may be inspired by the museum collection to think, discuss and create. This recommendation may target young adults who wish to disconnect from digital addiction.

The above strategies grounded in my study's projects are based on the offering of workshops that actively engage communities in a creative process with reference to the museum collection. Apart from those addicted to digital technology, this recommendation could serve as the basis for MUŽA

to reach out to communities of young adults who need a space for social interaction which they might be missing. Other communities who could benefit from this recommended strategy include vulnerable groups of young adults such as those at an alcohol/drug rehabilitation or correctional facility programme. I consider that these communities are likely to benefit even more from these programmes since, as the projects' findings indicated, the benefits of engaging with their own narratives in a trustworthy atmosphere through art rather than through their vulnerable situations. For instance, the participants from the drug rehab and correctional facility mentioned how sharing narratives through looking at and creating art helped them "to connect with myself and others", "to show understanding of each other's story" and to "feel worthy by contributing to others".

Although I do not believe that access to an art collection would immediately help participants with their addiction or transform such participants into more law-abiding citizens, in the long run, unplanned therapeutic outcomes could still transform their attitudes towards life. The information sessions held just prior to the start of the projects made the participants aware that the projects were not intended to be a form of art therapy. The participants were aware that they were not there to deal with drug issues, stress-management and misconduct but to develop a learning process while engaging with the national art collection. Meanwhile, the frequent emphasis that I am not the only expert during the workshops, and that their input contributed to my study, helped the participants to develop a sense of trust. Moreover, they reported feeling a genuine sense of being valued.

Wilson et al. (2015) report about the unplanned therapeutic outcomes of 'Ways of Seeing', a three-year project organised by an award-winning museum: Lightbox, UK, which involved communities dealing with mental health and physical issues. Similar to the focus of the 'Ways of Seeing' project on the participants as people, my projects did not focus on defining participants as having issues of drug abuse (Project 1), study stress-management (Project 2) and misconduct (Project 3). Although the goal of my projects was not symptom-focused in terms of reducing the need for drug rehab, stress management or correctional facility services, the participants themselves still noted the therapeutic benefits they felt was gained by participating.

According to Wilson et al. (2005), when educational programmes promote values such as acceptance and belonging, they lead indirectly to an improvement in the participants' quality of

life. Apart from the artistic focus of my projects which was to engage the participants with the collection, social interaction happened constantly throughout the workshops. Researchers including Spandler et al. (2007) and Van Lith et al. (2013) recognised the social benefits of arts participation. Throughout the projects, the participants took on different roles and identities as they became involved in discussions, sharing of experiences, providing feedback and helping each other with artistic practice. Moreover, sharing different perspectives on museum art works challenges the assumptions that people embrace (Berger et al., 1972). Facilitated participation is often a stepping stone to other things (Heenan, 2006) as inspirations extend beyond art into participants' lives (Lawson et al., 2014).

6.5.3 The Educational Potential of the Collection

The MUŽA collection has an educational potential, which can be exploited if a process is set up by allowing the participants to discover and become aware of what the collection communicates. Evidence of this in my projects are the participants' own ways of selecting and connecting the art collection with their life through developing their chosen theme.

The fact that the art collection became, for the participants, a means of communication, can be clearly seen from observations like: "Christ crucified... the old woman with her cat... they are telling a story... it felt like they were talking to me" (P1, Project 3). During the project, while working through the theme they made connections as they constructed more meanings between art and life. A participant said that the theme he chose concerning the family while referring to the artwork Antonio Sciortino's 'Rythmii Vitae' (Appendix 3.4) made him realize that "I need to serve as an example... this time I will not ruin my family" (P3, Project 1). It was interesting to note that the same artwork was one among four works chosen by a participant (P3, Project 2) who, while developing her chosen theme of 'gender stereotypes', was dealing with her personal issues of experiencing injustices as a woman. Earlier on, before delving in her theme development this participant insisted that the MUŽA collection is inappropriate to link with contemporary themes. She argued that "at the time when the artworks were created, the artists did not even think of gender stereotypes". This, especially coming from a university art education student, continues to show

that the engagement of young adults with a museum collection needs to be facilitated, regardless of their art and education background.

MUŽA's contemporary collection, featuring works with relatively recent local narratives, is a good choice with which to engage participants and lead them to share their own stories and connections. For instance, Joseph Smith's 'Companions' (Appendix 3.4, Project 1) attracted most participants during their NMFA visit as it facilitated the sharing of personal memories, with its grandmother, pets, the wedding portrait at the back and the old television. It conveys memories of a serene life within a family relationship. It was chosen by two participants during Project 1, as it inspired them to develop the theme of 'family' (P3) and the theme of 'love for animals' (P7).

Some of MUŽA's contemporary collection can be used for raising debates on socio-political and environmental issues. Project 1 and Project 3's participants engaged in strong debates concerning political issues in Malta, sparked by looking at Norbert Francis Attard's 'PN loves MLP' (Appendix 3.4, Project 3). Moreover, a participant whose theme development concerned graffiti found this sculpture's inscribed technique relevant. Although not contemporary, MUŽA's wide-range of landscape and seascape paintings/drawings, most of which portray local towns and villages, can still recall images of communal life and evoke debates on contemporary issues concerning the environment. During their NMFA visit, Project 1's participants spent some time sharing their nostalgic thoughts about local seascapes and landscapes portrayed in artworks such as Giorgio Pullicino's 'View of Manoel Island' (Appendix 3.4, Project 1).

Due to its narratives being located in recent time settings, the MUŽA contemporary collection could stir painful emotions. Nevertheless these provide several young adults a learning opportunity and an appreciation of the human common identity despite their multiple identities. The portrayal of migrants at sea shown in the works of Darrin Zammit Lupi (Appendix 3.4, Project 1) reminded two participants what they have been through, stating "me as a refugee who came on a boat..." (P10, Project 1). Participant 5 (Project 3) did not choose these works despite his theme development of 'Sea and Death'. He explained that he could not look at the works for a long time as they instantly brought up the recollection of those friends of his who had drowned. Meanwhile, he interpreted another contemporary work— John Paul Azzopardi's 'Curves' (Appendix 3.4, Project3) — as one

which evokes death, due to the bones used in the sculpture's material. Listening directly to these participants' experiences, and discussing with them, shed light on the reality of refugees and was a learning opportunity for the rest of the participants and also for me.

Despite their baroque genre, certain artworks at MUŻA which display massacres, like Valentin de Boulogne's 'Judith and Holofernes', Mattia Preti's 'Christ on the Cross' and Matthias Strom's 'Death of Cato' (Appendix 3.4, Project 2) could be used for facilitating learning through themes of death or the power struggles found in today's world. These artworks were chosen by Participant 1 (Project 2) as they left quite an impression on him through the association with death. While dealing with his theme of 'war', he compared the tortured bodies depicted in these artworks with those who died in vain in wars and acts of terrorism, described as "a game used by governments to win or gain power" (P1, Project 2). Moreover, the four artworks selected by this participant could also be used to facilitate learning through religious and spiritual themes.

MUŻA has several artworks portraying religious narratives, mythology and spirituality. While dealing with his theme 'Getting healed', a participant of Project 3 was inspired by Austin Camilleri's 'Kuruna' (Appendix 3.4, Project 3) which shows a typical symbol of the Catholic faith. Symbolic designs from Catholicism as well as Islam were created as part of an installation by Participant 2 (Project 2) while dealing with the theme of 'Unity'. He argued that MUŻA's collection only deals with the Catholic religious narratives, however, as he developed his theme, he said he could still refer to works like Mattia Preti's 'Christ on the Cross' from a symbolic perspective to create his designs.

Entering MUŻA, one is welcomed by a vast range of portraits executed in different techniques and media. An art educator has the opportunity to refer to these portraits to facilitate learning through self-identity themes. Meanwhile, Participant 8 (Project 3) presented the development of his theme, titled 'Good and Bad', by referring to three portraits from the collection. These included Victor Diacono's 'Sir Temi Zammit', Antoine Favray's 'Portrait of Grandmaster Emanuel de Fonseca' and 'Islanders' by Darrin Zammit Lupi (APPENDIX 3.4, Project 3). He asked several open-ended questions, such as "are they good or bad?; what unites them?; do you have something against them?" This participant made us reflect on our tendency to judge and categorise people based on

their appearance. It was interesting to note that the questions raised by the participants as they engaged with the museum collection in turn encouraged others to reflect on daily habits that are often not thought of.

6.5.4 Encouraging the Practice of Transferable Skills

Despite a relatively short period of interaction (8-10 sessions of 2 hours each), the projects successfully facilitated the practice of participants' skills particularly in relation to the process of looking at art, interpreting social themes and art, sharing awareness and working collaboratively. The findings showed an increase in the participants' confidence to try new skills (such as using paints, documenting learning process and mind-mapping) and to use new knowledge (such as interpreting art by connecting to personal interests and experiences). For instance, a participant confessed that "the project made me aware that I can create art" (P5, Project 3) while another said that he "could reflect and notice what is wrong in order to correct it... this skill is valuable for life too" (P3, Project 3).

Based on the study's projects, I recommend that a museum's educational outreach programmes involve tasks that emphasise a creative process. For instance, a task requiring participants to re-interpret one or more artworks from the collection related to a theme they choose to develop opens the opportunity to practise transferable life-skills such as thinking, problem-solving and social skills. Another way to facilitate the participants' awareness of their creative process is by encouraging them to document and present their work-in-progress through mind-mapping and evaluations kept on art journals. This stimulates their reflection on their practice and helps them to collaborate with others by providing and welcoming feedback for the way forward. Activities such as role-play as museum tour guide or curator or visitors also leads them to a creative process by looking at art and social themes from different perspectives. These strategies enable shared knowledge and participation.

6.6 Subsidiary Goals, Findings, Recommended Strategies

6.6.1 *A Space for Forum and Interdisciplinary Art for Social Intervention*

At the time of writing (2019), during an informal conversation about school visits to MUZA with the senior curator, he showed me a seminar room (still under construction) on the museum's top floor. He proposed that it would host seminars for art teachers and school visits. This room could provide a 'safe' space for non-formal education which reaches out to young adults and where social issues that are meaningful to them can be discussed, while relating to works in the collection.

By 'safe' space I refer to that created atmosphere where young adults feel that their contributions, in the form of meaningful visual narratives of the collection shaped by their own interests, will be valued. This sense of 'safety' is similar to the feeling of trust mentioned by my projects' participants with reference to the process of documenting their learning process and sharing their experiences. As pointed out by Hooper-Greenhill (2006), the development of democratic practices in museums is essential because the analysis of knowledge negotiated by visitors is as important as the often-explored curatorial production of knowledge. Seminars or a series of workshops with democratic intentions could be organized for free, or at a reduced price, to communities of young adults, such as activists forming part of NGOs or sports associations. Observing and referring to works from the collection could inspire ideas and facilitate the depth of connections made between art and the lives of young adults.

Following discussions/ sessions/ programmes held at the forum space mentioned earlier, young people could be invited to collaborate with artists, art educators, curators and activists to create public interdisciplinary art. This is parallel to what Lacy in 1991 termed as "new genre public art" (TATE, 2019:online) with reference to the 1993 'Culture in Action' exhibition, a project aimed at engaging diverse groups over time, in addition to the visiting public (Decter and Draxler, 2014). Similar art was created by conceptual artist Mark Dion's collaborative project 'Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group' which dealt with his participants' neighbourhood ecology. In believing that art can be used as an agent of social change outside the museum's confines (Dion, 2019), he engaged a group of high school students with conservation groups in Belize to study rainforest conservation (Midwestern Art and Ecology, 2019).

Another related art project was that of Tania Bruguera's 'Immigrant Movement International' which explored increasing concerns about the political representation and situations facing immigrants. Partnered with the Queens Museum of Art, engaging both local and international communities in collaboration with social service organizations and artists, Bruguera's project targeted immigration transformation (Creative Time, 2011). Tania Bruguera sees the role of museums as an active forum which promotes the use of art to address concretely existing cultural power structures instead of merely representing them.

The recommendation that one of the museum's roles would be to encourage art activism is essential for today's young adults who often feel helpless as they witness social injustices and environmental issues such as global warming. The participants of my study's projects expressed helplessness whenever discussing social issues such as gender stereotypes, animal welfare, and consumerism. For instance, a participant commented about the unfairness she experienced, "because I am a woman, I have been expected to carry out certain house chores" (P3, Project 2). Another participant expressed her concern about animal testing in the beauty industry, stating that "basically for beauty, they test on animals" (P6, Project 2). While observing landscape paintings from the collection showing how local towns used to look in the past, some participants of Project 1 complained about the way the country is being cemented over.

In the Maltese context, this recommendation could serve as a starting-point to engage community groups of young adults to create public art, by collaborating with contemporary artists whose work is part of the MUŻA collection. Activism can often target the state, and as a researcher I strongly believe that young adults should still be provided space within a state-owned entity like MUŻA to bring their ideas to fruition. For instance, the social connections they make while collaborating with artists could lead them to become activists themselves, and to create public art stemming from their explored social issues.

6.6.2 Role of Museum Educators

In line with the above recommendations and since "objects do not speak for themselves" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006:236) I suggest that HM introduces museum educators into a range of organizations. Museum educators can create and maintain educational outreach programmes by liaising with

curators and other entities of communities they are reaching out to (e.g. directors of vulnerable communities, social workers, psychologists). This collaboration could also contribute to the formation of interdisciplinary teams.

While my full-time job is that of an art educator in a school, thus working within the formal education sector, this doctoral experience, while embedded in research projects and international experiences, offered me a deeper insight into the non-formal role of an art educator, more specifically the art museum educator. This study also served me to realise that the knowledge exchange and roles of educators and learners can become blurred in a non-formal context. Instead of aiming at predetermined learning outcomes and certificates, the learning process can be experienced holistically. Hence, the following four recommendations address museum educators based on the insights gained through my research.

6.6.3 Encourage Different Styles of Art Interpretation

My projects' findings show that some individuals would not visit art museums due to their misconception regarding the specific skills needed to look at, and understand, art. This misconception has its roots in the local context, possibly transmitted through schooling. Meanwhile, the public follows the lead of curators (McClellan, 2003) who have habitually been perceived as the only experts on aesthetics (Benton and Watson, 2010). If people trust the curators' lead, why do some people still have misconceptions regarding art museums and avoid visiting them? Watson (2014) suggests that museums need to change the approach through which they facilitate the aesthetic experience, by introducing different styles of interpretation that require little or no understanding of art. She argues that although this may succeed in being more appealing to new visitors, it may irritate the ones who insist on protecting aesthetics.

With reference to my study's findings, in case of prolonged encounters with the public such as workshops, participants should be continuously reminded that the museum curators and educators are there as partners in exchanging knowledge. As soon as participants stop considering museum curators and educators as 'the only experts' of the art museum, they build relationships of trust with both the educator and with the rest of the participants. Such trust encourages them to

confidently pass judgements about the collection, participate further in discussions, construct knowledge independently without the need for the educators' approval and interact with other participants for suggestions whenever they feel the need for help with their creative process.

6.6.4 An Inquiry-Based Approach

To ensure a learner-centred approach, I recommend the facilitation of the learning experience through the constant use of an inquiry-based approach. For instance, when participants ask for help with art techniques or express disrespectful beliefs about particular social issues, such as opinions indicating racial discrimination or hurtful comments about people with disabilities or different religious beliefs, the museum educator is to intervene with questions to guide them and challenge their deeply ingrained beliefs. Although more time-consuming than replying with a quick answer or preaching morals, inquiring their beliefs engages them in the practice of critical thinking and also scaffolds their knowledge construction. Moreover, the museum educator is to challenge them with open-ended questions while participants discuss and debate social issues related to the museum collection. This enables them to generate their own questions, and in turn develop insights which may transform their previous opinions.

6.6.5 Blur the Power-Knowledge Barrier

In recent times, while rethinking relationships with their audiences, some museums no longer consider communication as a one-way approach from the museum expert to a passive audience (Wilkinson, 2011). Such an approach echoes the emphasis on social inclusion through what Biesta (2006) refers to as the 'learning democracy' model which is a result of the recent transformations in the lifelong learning field. Rather than the often-superficial involvement of the public within an expert's definition of inclusion, Biesta (2006) insists on a social inclusion that is inclusion for which people are allowed to set their own terms. Hence in a museum context, the experts are now collaborators with members of the audience who must facilitate their own ways of engaging with the collections (Wilkinson, 2011) which is parallel to the educator's role I emphasized throughout each project.

Although as an educator I had more knowledge and teaching experience, the participants' contribution was still required to shape the projects in a way such that their ways of using the

museum would be investigated. As they exchanged knowledge of their discoveries of untapped abilities and their newly-found ways of engaging with art, their confidence in expressing their learning awareness increased. They became aware of the validity of their contribution. Indeed, their self-evaluations and observations as documented in art journals, together with their presentation of work-in progress offered me insight into new ways of engaging with MUŻA collection by young adults from culturally and socially-diverse communities.

Consequently, the projects' data analysis indicates that by giving priority to the exchange of knowledge, the recommended educational strategies in this section may serve to break down the power-knowledge barrier. For instance, facilitating a collaborative approach through discussions, role-play and peer-evaluation of work-in-progress, reduced their perception of me (the educator) as the only 'expert'. Moreover, the participants of Project 1 mentioned the sense of control they felt once they learned new ways of looking at art during their museum visit, since they could choose what to observe deeply and discuss with their peers. However, their lack of interest during the museum tour was evident from their bored facial expressions. This was not only because they did not have an art history background but as they stated, they felt obliged to follow the 'expert' museum guide and listen to his detailed narration.

Contrastingly, when they assumed the role of a museum guide during the role-play task, they engaged each other by questioning and sharing life experiences which evoked further interpretations of artworks. This underlined the importance of getting familiar with the community of participants' interests and needs when planning museum educational activities. While some will be interested in historical facts, others would be interested in getting a sense of control when looking at art and feeling able to talk about art and interacting with others through a learning experience.

During several discussions, the participants of Project 2 insisted on the importance of human interaction and not simply the one-way communication of a museum-guide. In the final interviews, four of them stated that no matter how many technological devices are made available at a museum, young adults still need to interact with museum staff for guidance and would prefer this to be in the form of engaging activities. A participant confessed: "I'm studying art... if I go to a museum...

I'm just looking and only maybe read the labels, but that's it" (P7, Project 2). This shows that young adults with a background in art, still preferred human interaction to facilitate their museum learning experience.

The feedback gained from the participants of Project 3 confirmed the importance of the approach I used, which involved constant listening and asking for their opinions without imposing my knowledge on them. This approach made them feel at ease, and consequently to be creative and contribute further. In addition, they enjoyed the collaboration with two local artists, who they described as 'very down to earth' and patient enough to listen to their life stories. Similarly, the participants of Project 1 enjoyed their interaction with the senior curator who showed interest in their ways of interpreting artworks. Moreover, their psychologist mentioned that the participants reported that they experienced a sense of belonging through the project's workshops and so they had enjoyed them. They had dropped out immediately from projects where the educators imposed 'expertise'. Hence, the museum educator would need to blur the power-knowledge barrier and apply one's expertise to facilitate relevant museum experiences by bridging the collection and the interests of a particular community.

6.6.6 Assessing the Impact of the Museum Educational Programmes

My study considers the unique educational setting of interacting with communities, where group dynamics shape practice (Taylor and Neill, 2008) and where learning depends on one's learning strategies and interests. Therefore the assessment approach of educational programmes should not include criteria of pre-determined learning outcomes. The projects' findings show that approaching the programme's perceptions of success as constructive rather than based on pre-determined criteria, allows the participants to explore their own ways of constructing knowledge and an awareness of their learning process. Ultimately, the evaluation of the educational programmes can depend on the extent to which the participants manage to find ways of connecting to art, to themselves and each other while engaging with the collection.

My recommendation for assessing the success of museum educational programmes would involve an action research methodology. This could be implemented by asking the participants to keep a

journal which documents their learning process, the impact of each session/ workshop, space for improvement, and development plans of their problem-solving. Sharing their observations through journals empowers participants to evaluate the success of the programme. The impact of the programme could be measured by their commitment to learn, their confidence to talk about art, and their sense of self-worth while demonstrating their work-in-progress.

6.7 Limitations

At the time of writing, in Malta there were no museum educational programmes addressing community outreach. This limited the opportunities for comparison or evaluations of former museum community outreach programmes.

One major limitation of my study is that the data collection concerning the impact of educational strategies were self-reported by participants, who may have experienced a conflict of interest. To show respect they might have avoided expressing any negative observations. The participants expressed gratitude for being offered such workshops as they provided them with time to pause and reflect on new ways of looking at life and art. They also claimed they gained transferable skills such as reflecting, collaboration and problem-solving which they can apply throughout life. This acquisition of skills for life-wide and life-long learning could not be observed and verified. Due to the impermanence of the residents within the communities observed, there was no possibility of follow-up site visits after the termination of the projects.

Recruiting young adults by issuing an open call for participation in the projects was also challenging. Although the projects' workshops were promoted using attractive posters and indicating them as 'free of charge', there was still a lack of applicants. According to the local youth agency through which the call for participation was issued, the word 'research' was misinterpreted as 'experiment', making potential applicants fear that they might be used as guinea-pigs. One applicant said: "I do not want to be tested as part of an experiment". Due to ethical procedures, the posters, the information sheets and consent forms included the word 'research'. There were also limitations in that interested young adults happened to be committed to other projects, studies, or waiting for a job opportunity.

Another challenge was the early unexpected closure of the NMFA which effectively placed out of reach its contemporary works from the reserved collection. Observing the contemporary works within the premises rather than images of them, would have probably provided a more relevant museum experience for the age group of the participants. In fact, the participants of Project 1 who could experience the role-play activity at the museum (since it was still open at the time), talked very positively about their museum experience.

6.8 Suggested Areas for Further Research

My study's recommendations have been developed through three projects with particular communities of young adults at a single point in time. One way to extend this research would be to conduct community projects which aim at exploring the long-term impact on their participants of museum educational strategies. The focus could be on participants' ways of applying transferable skills throughout their daily life and whether they take the initiative to participate in museum events or other cultural events. This could be carried out over a period of time, beyond the termination of the projects, by requesting feedback either directly from the participants or from the directors of their institutions.

In Malta, pedagogical training amongst HM museum staff is lacking. There is the tendency to employ people having the more traditional qualifications in art history, archaeology and conservation rather than in education. Knowing that the museum staff can already provide educational programmes which focus on art historical facts and aesthetics, my emphasis in this study was to provide a holistic education that focuses on constructing meanings of one's life through the museum collection. Due to my own experience as art educator, I am aware that a holistic pedagogy can be facilitated more effectively by those qualified in education. Once HM would start to engage museum educators, a study could be conducted to examine their visions and their challenges in providing learning opportunities through the use of MUŻA and its collection. The study could aim at exploring training needs and the potential delivery of hands-on practical training for museum educators, receptionists, guards and curators at MUŻA. It could also

investigate the roles required for a museum interdisciplinary team to propose, deliver and assess educational outreach programmes.

Another way to expand this research would be to focus on the role of the museum educators in collaborating with curators and other entities, such as Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, to offer community outreach programmes. An effective museum community outreach could be provided by understanding the role of museum educators in adapting their educational strategies according to the ways in which the learning experience is shaped by different community contexts. Eventually, such a study could be useful for museum educators, curators and social workers with young adults. It could also provide a resource for university students whose areas of studies include adult education, art education, museum education, community studies and social work.

6.9 Concluding Thoughts

My study offers evidence of interactive physical and virtual educational strategies, appropriate for museums wishing to provide young adult community outreach as a public service. When I chose to conduct this study my overall aim was to explore young adults' own ways of using a national art collection to acquire lifelong learning through which they can make meaningful connections to others, life and art. The study's recommendations could serve to design holistic museum educational outreach programmes that embrace communities' needs and interests, which can range from personal and social issues to historical and aesthetic knowledge.

My research identified a gap between the aims and the actual outcomes of MUŻA as a public organisation. The resources required to bridge the gap involve raising awareness of the art museum as a public resource and encouraging community participation. This can be done by providing free-of-charge educational outreach programmes. My projects' participants vouched for the importance of face-to-face conversations and human contact in a museum. Since culture is still centralised in Malta, freelance art educators from outside the institution could team up to mediate the connection between the visitors' contexts and the museum collection.

My position on museum education is one that facilitates the visitors' own learning agenda and interests. This may serve to bridge the relevance gap between young adults and museums. Offering museum outreach through education programmes would shift the rules of the game of the Maltese approach to museums, which remains focused on schools being their education customers, ignoring other public communities. This can be confirmed by clicking the 'Education' tab on HM's website, which offers options related only to schools (<https://heritagemalta.org/schoolbooking/>). My study focused on reaching out to public communities, specifically those beyond schooling age as these are often forgotten or ignored.

The transformative approach I am proposing disrupts the semiotic process employed in Maltese museums. Their didactic approach, which is to impose historical and aesthetic knowledge, will be replaced by embracing the visitors' own narratives and meanings, inspired by the collection. The museum collection itself will not change as a result of a transformative approach. The approaches used by visitors to engage with it will change. This starts with a mentality shift towards considering an art museum collection as an educational resource for life and one which belongs to the public, rather than serving only the few.

A holistic approach to young adults learning in a national art museum prioritises their well-being by engaging them in holistic learning experiences based on their own interests and life-long learning agendas. Such learning can eventually support their responses to life situations. Another priority should be to use the museum as a space where the collection can act as a reference for communities of young people to engage in discussions broader than their narrow concerns, or the social changes they would like to see. Consequently, a national art museum can be the public educational resource that generates much-required human connections in the 21st century. By providing a space for community interaction through art, MUŻA would have found a way to implement in practice its brand as "the Malta National Community Art Museum".

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APPENDIX 3.1: THE PROJECTS' CONTEXTS

RESEARCH PROJECT 1

(with a young adults' community at Caritas San Blas Drug Rehab, Summer 2016)

The Context

Prior to its acceptance, the project's proposal was rejected twice as the directors at Caritas San Blas Drug Rehabilitation thought that the workshops would include only artistic techniques and thus a 'waste of time' for the residents. A face to face meeting with the psychologist and the directors at San Blas helped them to recognize the holistic educational aspect of the project workshops. A month before the beginning of the project, I attended the annual graduation of San Blas residents which helped me to get acquainted with the efforts made by staff and residents. A week before the start of the workshops, I spent around two days on the premises, under the mentorship of one of the directors, to get familiar with the environment, the daily tasks and procedures. The room allocated for the workshops was a media-room where power-point presentations and discussions could be held. A nearby room was allocated for practical work.

The Research Participants

The participants were ten residents at Caritas San Blas, who were following a programme of Drug Rehabilitation. They accepted to participate after being informed about an art project by the directors. The age of the participants ranged between 21-30 years. One of the participants was a foreigner, who did not understand Maltese and barely spoke English. A few participants were illiterate and admitted that when they were younger, they never felt engaged by mainstream schooling and avoided art lessons. I was informed that all participants were on medication on a daily basis and needed a cigarette break often (every 15 minutes). Before the project started, the directors at San Blas warned me that the participants were not easy to please, had a short attention span and had already refused to attend other projects whenever they found them irrelevant. With this in mind, I trusted that informing the participants about my role as learner, emphasizing the exchange of knowledge between us, and acknowledging their own interests and needs would keep the project relevant for them.

Challenges in Relating with Participants

Before I sent my proposal to the Caritas San Blas directors, I was aware that carrying out a project with male young adults at a Drug Rehab would be challenging, especially because I am a woman. During the first two sessions, I noticed that some of the participants lacked good manners and social skills. They were eager to have their say but were not ready to listen to each other. I had to

constantly remind them about the value of listening to learn from each other, and my own aim being to listen to them to also learn from them. I often reminded the participants about my role as a learner besides that of an educator/researcher who is exploring their own ways of learning while guiding the workshops. It was evident through their behaviour that this reminder served to make them feel at ease. Meanwhile, I could notice how a few of them were always ready to provoke each other to fight. Although I wore highly decent clothes that covered me well enough despite the humid and hot Maltese summer weather, some of them still passed rude comments. The presence of one of Caritas staff members throughout the workshops put my mind at rest in this regard.

Another challenge stemmed from not being allowed to show the participants' faces when taking photos of their creative process for photo-documentation purposes. Since Malta is a small island and being in a drug rehab programme is generally perceived as a taboo subject, it was highly important to avoid the identification of the participants in photos. Moreover, the participants were not allowed to have access to internet or cameras. Hence they could not search for images related to their chosen theme. To help them get the images they needed, I regularly listed the images each of them required and printed them myself for the following session.

During the first workshop, due to their daily medication and drug withdrawal symptoms, some participants complained of headaches and difficulty to concentrate. As from the second workshop, the participants started revealing their observations that mind-mapping and art journaling were serving them to ignore headaches and ease their focus. Something that kept challenging me till the last session was time-management, especially since an amount of time was spent repeating earlier explanations to address the needs and questions of a few of them who were illiterate. Unfortunately, this used to frustrate the rest of the participants and was often triggered conflict among the participants.

Before starting the initial interviews, I had not been informed that a foreigner would be among the participants. As soon as I met this Russian participant during the initial interviews, I decided to reconstruct my power-point presentations in both English and Maltese languages. I found this challenging as it reduced text size on the slides. Meanwhile I noticed that the participants were more engaged through the hands-on activities and my explanation than following the guidelines on the projected slides. At first, while explaining I constantly switched to English, until one of the participants took the initiative to sit next to the Russian participant to translate for him. I thought that this participant's altruist initiative would serve to encourage the rest into teamwork skills. These two participants were the only ones who were willing to collaborate on their thematic development of 'addiction'. Unfortunately the Russian participant still ended up working individually as the other participant was suspended from the Caritas programme due to constant fighting incidents.

None of the participants chose to collaborate together on an artwork based on one particular theme. Meanwhile I could observe that the workshops still promoted social interaction as participants

collaborated to discuss themes, their creative process and to help each other in developing their artwork. I observed that their need to develop their chosen theme individually stemmed from their individual need for a sense of pride and ownership. Similarly, the participants developed pride in keeping an art journal, which they updated throughout the learning process through self-evaluations. I could observe their gradual identification with their art journal especially whenever they mentioned that they took it to their room after each session to protect it from being damaged or stolen.

Indirectly the workshops seemed to have helped in promoting social values like empathy, tolerance and respect. For instance, although the Russian participant could hardly communicate in English, the smile on his face and calm attitude were contagious. His attitude and enthusiasm served to encourage the rest to make the effort to develop their theme. This was especially evident when he opted to stay inside to continue his work during the break. He told the rest that continuing to work helped him to avoid smoking during the cigarette breaks. Others started following his decision and by the third session the participants could cope with having only one cigarette break.

Another instance where the project promoted social values was when one participant took the initiative to help me in storing the material in the cupboard during the second workshop. Eventually this encouraged the rest to start putting the material back in place, tidy up at the end of the workshop, and help me store materials in the cupboard. Probably this was also stimulated by the relationship which was gradually building between us and the atmosphere created through a friendly approach where collaboration rather than competition was valued. The constant reminder of my learner's role led to reduce the power-relationship barrier between them and me. From the second session onwards, I could feel accepted as the participants started opening up themselves more, realising that I was there to listen attentively and to facilitate their learning through activities which they themselves had created based on their interests. The participants no longer passed rude comments and I could feel at ease in their presence even without any staff member present.

RESEARCH PROJECT 2

(with a young adults' community at the University of Malta from October 2016-May 2017)

The Context

Before submitting the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) Proposal form, the project was discussed with the Head of Department of Art within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. The participants' main task for the project was to come up with an inquiry-based virtual exhibition (VE) which could prompt a learning process, one which is derived from the learning process developed by and through the art practice of each participant.

Designed to encourage connections between the NMFA collection and young adult communities, the second research project's procedures encouraged the participants to explore computer-generated methods of exhibition presentation and then to create a relevant and accessible virtual exhibition that can inspire other young adults. Hence, besides providing them with a personal learning experience, the participants' creative work throughout the second project also served to provide an educational resource that engages other young adults with the NMFA collection.

The room allocated for the project-workshops was the Art Studio at the University campus, where power-point presentations, discussions and documentation of the creative process on the participants' art journals could be carried out.

The Research Participants

The participants of the second project were a group of seven young adults of mixed gender, above 22 years, in their final year of a B.Ed. Art Education course at the University of Malta. Similar to the participants of the first and the third projects, the participants of the second project formed part of today's young adults community. On the other hand, unlike the other two projects' participants, the participants in this case were trained both as contemporary artists and educators. As educators, the B.Ed. Art students were trained to fulfil their role in encouraging reflection, interpretation and meaning-making, rather than providing an 'explanation', which unfortunately most traditional museum guides do through their well-intended task of transmitting knowledge. These participants' knowledge and experience was kept in mind while designing the project tasks. By drawing on their own experience, both as creative practitioners and as trained educators, the participants were encouraged to come up with ways to instigate a learning process which derives from their own learning process, and which is developed by and through their art practice. After confirming their acceptance to participate in the project by signing the consent forms, I explained that my role as educator / researcher was to observe, question and re-organise my findings. Throughout the workshops there was a constant encouragement of co-constructive learning whereby an exchange of knowledge was generated together with the participants, which in turn shaped the project to their interests.

At the time of the project (2016) the art collection at the NMFA displayed only the end-product of the collection without any indication of the research or the creative process, such as sketches, demonstrating what the artists went through. The participants were engaged in developing virtual exhibitions vis-à-vis the NMFA collection. As artists, they went through their practice engaged in an investigative approach of conceptual enquiry and constructive meaning-making based on their own selected works from the NMFA collection. Their artistic practice merged with their pedagogy training. This training then directed their strategies towards displaying a creative process which aims to engage the viewers. Ultimately this led them to investigate meaning-making rather than simply exhibiting an end product.

Challenges of the Second Research Project (both for the researcher and for the participants)

Knowing that the participants were in their final year of the B.Ed. course, I often reminded myself of the need to avoid adding more burdens to their daily pressures. Meanwhile I knew that the curatorial task of their final exhibition was still part of their course during their final year. Hence their VE creative process as the set task of the project was in line with their creative process for the tangible art exhibition. In fact, this conjoint target of tangible/virtual exhibition creative process started with a visit to the NMFA through which a development theme was chosen for the final year of their B.Ed. course. As part of the project, the students were asked to create a 5-12 minute virtual exhibition, including the whole creative process which unfolded in line with their chosen social theme. They were asked to use images of artworks selected from the NMFA collection and any relevant photos/items as sources of reference to create their VE exhibition. This included research and documentation revealing their creative process for the tangible exhibition or alternatively using related imaginary creations. At the beginning of the project, the participants were reminded of the artist Marcel Duchamp's disruption of the traditional notion where beauty is a defining characteristic of art. This shifted the viewers' engagement with a work of art from serving to please the eye to serving the mind. Considering this notion, the participants aimed at engaging the mind of other young adults by recalling their own prior knowledge and experiences, which would be evoked by watching the process of their virtual creations.

As for the choice of digital media through which they created the VE, the decision was left up to the participants, who were aware that their virtual exhibition could have ranged from a video-documentation to a power-point with video-stills or photos. Bearing in mind that their VE could serve as an interactive resource for young adults' community outreach, as art educators, their challenge was to develop inquiry-based approaches that engage contemporary young adults with selected NMFA artworks. Despite their final exams and dissertation, the participants kept committed to the project's long-term task of creating the VE which later served to inspire the participants of the third project.

RESEARCH PROJECT 3

(with a young adults' community at the Corradino Correctional Facility, Summer 2017)

The Context

The third research project was carried out with a group of inmates at Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF), during Summer 2017. In November 2016, prior to the submission of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) Proposal form, a project proposal was submitted to the CCF explaining the contents, the required material and the schedule of the project's workshops. The

project was discussed further during a face-to-face meeting with the CCF assistant director where an agreement was reached on the project's venue and date. During this meeting we also agreed on the role of the researcher as an educator who would guide the running of the workshops and on the presence of CCF staff during the workshops. The role of the collaborating artists in the projects was also mentioned.

The projects' workshops were held in an empty classroom, at the end of a corridor at the CCF Education section. The art material was stored in my luggage at the office of the Education section which was three rooms beyond the classroom allocated for the workshops. Two exhibitions, one for the inmates' relatives at CCF Visitors' Hall and another for the public, at the School of Art in Valletta, were held a month after the workshops ended. The exhibitions aimed to celebrate the participants' learning process, displaying both their work in progress and also their reflections on their art journals. During the public exhibition opening event, the participants received a certificate of participation, signed by the researcher, the Assistant Director of CCF and the Executive of KOPIN (Koperazzjoni Internazzjonali), co-organizers of the project.

The Research Participants

A month before the initial interviews, posters promoting the project had been circulated at CCF to invite participation from inmates aged between 21-30 years. Those showing interest were required to submit their application. After a few weeks, the CCF Education manager informed me that there had been an oversubscription of participants. The selection criteria for the shortlisting of twelve participants were based on the age-bracket and the submission of the application by the established deadline.

Prior to the signing of the consent forms for participating in the project and before the first workshop, an information session was held. During this session, through a power-point presentation and information sheets, the participants were informed of my dual role of researcher and educator/learner. I also emphasized to participants their role as co-constructors of the project, since there would be an exchange of knowledge between us. The participants were informed that the workshop sessions would be hands-on and flexible enough to adapt to their interests and learning needs. During the information session, I noticed that five participants were foreigners. Thus both Maltese and English languages would need to be used throughout the workshops. The participants brought with them a range of abilities. Some understood immediately and were literate, while others were illiterate and required further explanation and guidance. I could also notice a range of temperaments, where only two out of ten participants showed a calm temperament through their verbal expression. For the most part participants did not wait for their turn to speak and were quite fidgety, indicating spontaneous and anxious traits.

Challenges throughout the CCF Project

Similar to the preconceived idea I had at the start of the first Project held with a community of male young adults at a Drug Rehab, as soon as I committed to have the third Project with a community of male young adult inmates, I was aware that it would be challenging, since I am a woman. As with the first Project, despite the Maltese summer humid hot weather, I wore highly decent clothes. Due to their spontaneous traits and a need to speak about their experiences, I spent the first session constantly reminding them about the value of listening to learn from each other and that I was also there to learn from them.

Contrary to what had been agreed, there were no CCF staff members present in the classroom. Moreover the small classroom allocated was under a scorching roof top, had no air-conditioning and could provide only a cramped seating space and five tables. The two rotating standing-fans set in the corners of the room, despite circulating warm air, were quite noisy and distracting, since sheets of papers kept flying from one place to another. Meanwhile this led to a collaborative effort as the participants and I helped each other to put stationery-items serving as paper weights. At the time of the project, due to a series of heat waves which occurred during Summer 2017, the room climate got even worse. Since the rest of the three classrooms were under the same roof with the same conditions, there was no other alternative venue. In the face of such conditions, I was determined to avoid quitting and be of service as planned, unless the participants decided to quit. Despite the challenging high temperatures and the lack of space, the participants kept attending the workshop sessions.

In the absence of the NMFA premises, reference to its collection was made through the images of 76 artworks including the contemporary ones which prominently displayed social aspects, printed on foam-board. When these were delivered to CCF, four images of the selected contemporary artworks were removed as they were considered disturbing and provocative to inmates due to their depiction of violence, child-abuse, and immigration which would instantly remind the participants of their own offences. An hour before meeting the participants for the information session, the CCF Education manager informed me about the crimes of the participants. This was quite challenging. I was aware that carrying out a project with inmates would have meant facing criminals but knowing about their crimes placed an extra burden on me right before meeting the participants. Was it necessary for an educator/ researcher to be informed about the participants' crime?

Due to security reasons, another challenge during the project was that any materials required inside the CCF premises had to wait for the approval of CCF administration. Therefore all images, posters for project promotion, workshop plans, certificates of participation and art materials had to be planned, carried out, purchased and delivered to CCF premises months beforehand to be checked and approved by CCF authorities. Sharp tools were prohibited and only round-cornered scissors were allowed. All materials were to be solvent-free, requiring me to check all items in advance for

solvent content (especially the glues, pens and coloured-pens) with the supplier of the materials ordered. After every workshop session, due to security requirements, I had to ensure that the participants returned all materials. Consequently the participants could not continue individual work on their art journals or artworks.. Furthermore, the CCF Education section had no internet connection. These two factors limited the scope of the project, which is to encourage a continuous learning process. The participants could not carry out research and preparatory work before or after the workshop sessions.

Time-management was another challenging aspect within the context of the third Project. Time had to be planned before the start of each workshop session, to wait for a female CCF guard to search me and my personal belongings, to put away my personal belongings in a locker, to wear an Education-tag and then wait again to be escorted by an officer from CCF Education department at reception up to the Education Section. At the end of each workshop session, I had to wait again for a CCF Education officer to check the photos on my camera and I could upload them on my laptop only after his approval.

Naturally when compared to the previous two projects, the data collection for the third Project was constrained by the need to abide by CCF security regulations concerning the prohibition of recordings. The initial and final interviews could not be recorded and the workshop sessions could not be video-recorded. With the intention of providing a fair data collection, I took quick written notes of the participants' replies during the interviews. I then updated the workshop evaluations and observations in my research journal right after each workshop session in order to preserve the information.

APPENDIX 3.2: THE TEXTUAL CODING PROCESS

The Textual Coding Process of Research Project 1

(with a young adults' community at San Blas Drug Rehab, Caritas during Summer 2016)

The Purpose

The purpose of Research Project 1 was to find out both the expected and actual impact of the project's workshops. The evaluation of the transcribed initial interviews provides a picture of the participants' expectations from the project, their awareness of the NMFA and their expected relevance of the NMFA visit. The transcribed final interviews indicate the participants' understandings of their learning experience throughout the workshops and their approaches in engaging with the NMFA collection. The evaluation of my field-notes serves to support and at times to confirm the learning experience of participants derived from the project's workshops.

The Context of the Initial Interviews:

After a morning at the beach, the director introduced the participants to me at the prayer room at San Blas premises. I found it challenging to introduce the project and not explain in detail what it would consist of. Explaining the project in detail would have influenced their responses to the initial interviews. So I chose to describe only the initial interviews and explained that I was not describing the project in detail at this stage. The participants still agreed to participate and signed the consent forms. Each participant took turns to come to the prayer-room for the initial interviews.

Sorting the textual data

Concepts, suggestions and themes were coded by phrases to fit the purpose of the evaluation by going through all the textual data (interview transcripts and field-notes) in a systematic way. The process of creating codes was done through a hybrid of pre-set and emergent codes. Before beginning the data collection, a list of pre-set codes deriving from the list of interview questions was used for coding all the textual data. Another set of codes emerged from reading, rereading and analysing all the collected textual data. These emergent codes include concepts, actions and meanings observed both by the participants through their evaluations of each workshop and of their

interview replies as well as by myself as the researcher through written field-notes. Below is an explanation of the sorting of textual data for Project 1 as a result of applying a process of codes created through a hybrid of pre-set and emergent codes.

Pre-set Categories for the initial interviews:

- Expectations of the Project
- Expected Life Benefits of the Project
- Awareness of the NMFA
- Relevance of the NMFA

Emergent codes (in bold) for the initial interviews:

The following emergent codes demonstrate the participants' expectations of the project and their awareness of the NMFA:

- No idea
- **New learning** experiences
- **Expressing oneself**
- Artistic **techniques**
- **Trust** in the **educator's** plan
- **Art therapy**
- **Expected learning**
- **Lifelong learning**
- **Social skills**
- **Personal skills**
- **Expected learning**
- **Never visited** the NMFA
- Perhaps **visited** the NMFA with school
- **Visited** the NMFA
- **NMFA** considered as a **treasure**
- **NMFA** considered as a **collection of Art**

- **NMFA** considered as a **display of Art for the public**
- **NMFA** considered as an **Auction**
- A lot of **learning**
- **Learning** about the **history of Malta**
- **Art reflects life**
- **Relevant** for him as a **creative person**
- **Relevant now** that he grew up

Coded Beginning Interviews of Project 1		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Frequency of occurrence in participants' replies
Expectations from the Project	No idea	2
	New learning experiences	3
	Expressing oneself	2
	Artistic techniques	3
	Trust in the educator's plan	1
	Art therapy	1
MEMO: Most participants expected the project to provide new learning experiences and that it concerned artistic techniques. Two participants had no idea what to expect from the project but they still accepted to participate, while two other participants expected an art project that would promote self-expression.		
Expected Life Benefits from the Project	No idea	3
	Expected learning	3
	Lifelong learning	3

	Personal skills	2
	Social skills	2
<p>MEMO: While three participants could not think of any expected benefits from the project, there were three who expected to learn and another three who expected to learn for life. Four participants mentioned the expected benefits of personal and social skills from the project. This could mean that on the whole the participants expected more than the often mentioned expectations of art techniques from a project entitled 'Art'.</p>		
Awareness of the NMFA	No idea	3
	Never visited the NMFA	6
	Perhaps visited the NMFA with school	2
	Visited the NMFA	1
	NMFA considered as a treasure	1
	NMFA considered as a collection of Art	1
	NMFA considered as a display of Art for the public	1
	NMFA considered as an Auction	1
<p>MEMO: Most participants never visited the NMFA and the three who mentioned that they attended, were still not sure whether they were referring to it. Three of the participants had no idea that there is an Art Museum in Malta. There were participants who individually guessed what the NMFA might be about. These mentioned that it could concern a collection of Art, which is displayed for the public or at an auction.</p>		
Expected relevance of a Project that includes NMFA visit	No idea	1
	A lot of learning	2
	New learning experiences	2
	Learning about the history of Malta	2
	Art reflects life	1

	Relevant for him as a creative person	1
	Relevant now that he grew up	1
MEMO: Most participants mentioned the relevance of the project as including art rather than the NMFA visit. This was probably due to the fact that as shown in replies to the previous question, the participants hardly had an idea of the NMFA.		

The Context of the Final Interviews:

For the last session, the final interviews were held in a room next to the media-room where the participants were left to continue their development of work. They took turns for the interview. Being on my own with each of them for the final interviews, the feeling was the opposite of that during the initial interviews. Since the final interviews were carried out after all the workshops were held, it was evident that a good relationship had gradually built up and we treated each other with respect. While carrying out the interviews, the participants’ non-verbal communication, seen in their ways of sitting on the chair, relaxed facial expressions and gestures, showed their confidence and eagerness to be of help with their replies. By that time, the way they related with me made it evident that the participants understood my role as being there to exchange knowledge. Unlike the initial interviews, the participants’ tone of voice was more assertive as they knew that their opinions were appreciated as they enabled me to learn from their experience of the project.

Pre-set codes for the final interviews:

- Meeting the Project’s Expectations
- Understanding of the learning experiences
- Relevance of the social themes discussed
- Relevance of the NMFA visit
- Acquired skills and their application in life
- Relevance of the Project’s activities
- Suggested improvements of the workshops

Emergent codes (in bold) for the final interviews

The following emergent codes show the participants’ awareness of their learning experiences throughout the project’s workshops, their approaches in engaging with the NMFA collection and their suggestion for the workshops’ improvement.

<p>Learned more than expected</p> <p>Learned more about art</p> <p>Discovered new abilities</p> <p>Unexpected benefits</p> <p>Thinking skills</p> <p>Enjoyment</p> <p>Social skills</p> <p>Feeling useful and valued</p> <p>Ways to prevent loneliness</p> <p>Clarification of thoughts</p> <p>Art as a learning process</p> <p>Life-wide and life-long learning</p> <p>Reflecting on and evaluating our choices in life</p> <p>Learning through Art</p> <p>Self-discovery</p> <p>Communication skills</p> <p>Making connections</p> <p>Trying, continuing and not giving up</p> <p>Mind-map concept</p> <p>Self-awareness theme</p> <p>War</p> <p>Animal theme (in Contemporary NMFA collection)</p> <p>Spirituality</p>	<p>A meaningful new experience</p> <p>Aware of its relevance</p> <p>Works related to the Family theme</p> <p>Financial aspect: Works of value and very expensive</p> <p>Works related to ‘Environment theme’</p> <p>Art process: Helped to develop ideas</p> <p>Historical aspect: Helped to compare old times with contemporary ones</p> <p>The acquired skills can be applied both for life at present and for the future, beneficial for life and character.</p> <p>Creative and critical thinking skills</p> <p>Art technical aspect: Colour theory, drawing and painting techniques</p> <p>Communication skills: discussing</p> <p>Self-expression: to distract from problems + belief in oneself</p> <p>NMFA: A source of inspiration</p> <p>A lot of skills: everything is connected</p> <p>Collaborative skills: teamwork</p> <p>Mind-map: to clarify the mind</p> <p>Self-awareness through others’ appreciation</p> <p>Art appreciation skills</p> <p>All was relevant</p> <p>More time in general (more than 2 hours were required)</p>
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<p>History</p> <p>All themes are relevant for our life</p> <p>NMFA collection relevant to themes discussed</p>	<p>More time for discussion</p> <p>More time for practical</p> <p>More material: woodwork, metalwork</p> <p>Other themes to discuss: ‘Dreams’ and the ‘Future’</p>
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Coded Final Interviews of Project 1		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Frequency of occurrence in participants’ replies
Meeting the Project’s Expectations	Learned more than expected	All participants
	Learned more about art	4
	Discovered new abilities	4
	Unexpected benefits	3
	Thinking skills	2
	Enjoyment	1
	Social skills	1
	Feeling useful and valued	1
	Ways to prevent loneliness	1
	Clarification of thoughts	1
	Art as a learning process	1
	Lifewide and lifelong learning	1
<p>MEMO: All participants mentioned their awareness of having learned through the project more than they expected. Most of them said that they discovered new abilities, or rather, abilities which they found were hidden or they never tapped into them before. They also realised that an art project involved more aspects of learning than simply the technical aspect.</p>		

Understanding the Project's learning experiences	Reflecting on and evaluating our choices in life	3
	Learning through Art	3
	Self-discovery	2
	Communication skills	1
	Discovered new abilities	1
	Social skills	1
	Clarification of thoughts	1
	Making connections	1
	Trying, continuing and not giving up	1
	Mind-map concept	1
	Art as a learning process	1
<p>MEMO: All participants said that the project provided them with meaningful learning experiences. Although explaining themselves in different ways, the participants indicated their appreciation of the project through their awareness of thinking skills (reflection, evaluation, mind-mapping, clarification of thoughts, making connections); communication skills (self-expression, talking with others, sharing with others); self-discovery (discovering their abilities); connecting through art (recognizing links between art and life).</p>		
Relevance of themes discussed	Family theme	5
	Self-awareness theme	3
	War	2
	Animal theme (in Contemporary NMFA collection)	1
	Spirituality	1
	History	1
	All themes are relevant for our life	1
	NMFA collection relevant to themes discussed	1

<p>MEMO: Most participants found the ‘family theme’ relevant. One of them mentioned that all themes discussed were relevant for their life. Another considered the NMFA collection as relevant to the themes we discussed during the workshops. I could not ask him to elaborate due to his limited English language skills. Asking the rest to elaborate further was also difficult, as I was aware of them being on medication and wished to avoid stressing them.</p>		
<p>Relevance of the visit to the NMFA and the reference to the NMFA collection</p>	<p>A meaningful new experience</p>	<p>All participants</p>
	<p>Did not visit the NMFA due to suspension but aware of its relevance</p>	<p>3</p>
	<p>Works related to the Family theme</p>	<p>3</p>
	<p>Financial aspect: Works of value and very expensive Works related to</p>	<p>2</p>
	<p>‘Environment theme’</p>	<p>1</p>
	<p>Art process: Helped to develop ideas</p>	<p>1</p>
	<p>Historical aspect: Helped to compare old times with contemporary ones</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>MEMO: All participants found the NMFA visit relevant, whether for the emotions transmitted through its collection, or for its historical aspect, or for its financial aspect or for its national heritage.</p>		
<p>Acquired skills and their application in life</p>	<p>The acquired skills can be applied both for life at present and for the future, beneficial for life and character.</p>	<p>All participants</p>
	<p>Creative and critical thinking skills</p>	<p>5</p>
	<p>Art’s technical aspect: Colour theory, drawing and painting techniques</p>	<p>5</p>
	<p>To keep trying and never give up</p>	<p>2</p>
	<p>Communication skills: discussing</p>	<p>2</p>
	<p>Self-expression: to distract from problems + belief in oneself</p>	<p>2</p>
	<p>NMFA: A source of inspiration</p>	<p>2</p>

	A lot of skills: everything is connected	1
	Collaborative skills: teamwork	1
	Mind-map : to clarify the mind	1
	Self-awareness through others' appreciation	1
	Art appreciation skills	1
<p>MEMO: All participants indicated their awareness of life-wide and life-long skills being gained through experiencing the project's workshops. Some of them were emotional when referring to their discovery of abilities they did not know they had before. Another one admitted that due to his perfectionist attitude, he learned to appreciate his worth as others asked for his help, recognizing his abilities.</p>		
Relevance of the Project's activities	All was relevant	All participants
<p>MEMO: All participants said that they found nothing irrelevant as all was meaningful to them. Two participants (P.3 and 8) kept insisting about the relevance of the mind-map concept. Two others forwarded their complaints concerning some participants' need for more explanation as they did not understand immediately (P.6). Another admitted that at first he considered discussions and the set questions to be a waste of time, until he started realising the value of the creative process rather than rushing to the finished product (P. 7) One participant mentioned that such projects should be included at schools. He said that his art lessons at schools had nothing to do with the holistic learning benefits gained through this project (P.4)</p>		
Suggested improvements of the workshops	More time in general (more than 2 hours were required)	2
	More time for discussion	2
	More time for practical	1
	More material: woodwork, metalwork	1
	Other themes to discuss: 'Dreams' and the 'Future'	1

MEMO: Most participants suggested more time was required for the activities. One of them (P.5) accepted that the workshops' allocated duration to be limited as it had to fit within the Rehab programme timetable. Similar to what P.4 suggested in question 6, one participant (P. 3) also suggested that such projects should be included in schools. Another participant (P.4) expressed his appreciation for being allowed the freedom to choose what to create rather than this being imposed.

Refining Codes from the Interviews of Project 1

The codes that emerged from the **initial** and **final** interviews of Project 1 were refined by selecting those codes most frequently mentioned. Some of the **most frequently mentioned** codes shared similar concepts. These codes were highlighted using different colours based on categories, for example highlighting in yellow the codes related to artistic techniques and art abilities.

Most frequently mentioned codes:	Codes highlighted into categories:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New learning experiences • Artistic techniques • Expected learning • Lifelong learning • Never visited the NMFA • Learned more about art • Discovered new art abilities • Unexpected benefits • Learned more than expected(All participants) • Reflecting on and evaluating our choices in life • Learning through Art • Most relevant themes: Family theme +Self-awareness theme • A meaningful new experience (All participants) • Did not visit the NMFA due to suspension but aware of its relevance • NMFA works related to the Family theme • The acquired skills can be applied both for life at present and for the future, beneficial for life and character. (All participants) • Creative and critical thinking skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New learning experiences Artistic techniques Expected learning Lifelong learning Never visited the NMFA Learned more about art Discovered new art abilities Unexpected benefits Learned more than expected(All participants) Reflecting on and evaluating our choices in life Learning through Art

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art’s technical aspect: Colour theory, drawing and painting techniques • All was relevant (All participants) • More time required in general (more than 2 hours were required) • More time required for discussion 	<p>Most relevant themes: Family theme +Self-awareness theme</p> <p>A meaningful new experience (All participants)</p> <p>Did not visit the NMFA due to suspension but aware of its relevance</p> <p>NMFA works related to the Family theme</p> <p>The acquired skills can be applied both for life at present and for the future, beneficial for life and character. (All participants)</p> <p>Creative and critical thinking skills</p> <p>Art’s technical aspect: Colour theory, drawing and painting techniques</p> <p>All was relevant (All participants)</p> <p>More time required in general (more than 2 hours were required)</p> <p>More time required for discussion</p>
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The highlighted codes were extracted from the list and grouped under a general heading forming six key categories. These served as pre-set codes for the coding process of the **Field Notes of Project 1**.

<p>6 Main Categories extracted from the Interviews of Project 1:</p> <p>Artistic techniques</p> <p>Transferable skills: Collaborative skills, Creative and critical thinking skills</p>
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Understanding of their Learning Process: Learning for life through Art (Holistic Art Project)

Most relevant themes: Family theme +Self-awareness theme

Expectations and Relevance of the Project

More time required in general (more than 2 hours were required)

Coding the Field Notes of Project 1

While reading the field notes, I highlighted text according to the six main categories extracted from the interviews. After I typed the field notes in each section, other specific codes started emerging, which I typed in bold before each field note to continue labelling and identifying what the field note is about.

Field-notes grouped according to Categories extracted from the Interviews:

Category: Artistic techniques

Perspective technique: Some participants brought up their need to learn how to draw in linear perspective for lettering styles in the Art Journals. (28.07.2016)

Exploring materials: I could observe how relaxed they felt on realizing that they could draw, stick pictures and mess up with colours, especially when I mentioned a quote from Picasso. Drawing freely and messing up reminded them of what they used to do when they were kids. (28.07.2016)

Art Therapeutic effect: They often mentioned how relaxed they felt while drawing, which made them forget they had a headache. (28.07.2016)

Need for practical work: They wished they could have more time for their practical work throughout the workshops. (8.09.2016)

Anatomy techniques: One participant needed guidance with drawing the human figure. (8.09.2016)

MEMO: As the sessions went on, several artistic techniques were demonstrated to cater for the participants' needs while developing their work. Whenever I demonstrated a technique to one participant, I invited others to join if they wished to, but never expected them all to join. I was aware that not all of them were interested in learning artistic techniques so it would have been unfair to impose the learning of artistic techniques on all the participants. After all, this was not the aim of the project.

Category: Transferable skills: Collaborative skills, Creative and critical thinking skills

Mind-mapping: During the Evaluation session, I noticed that they found the ‘Mind-map’ tool very helpful. Most of them mentioned how such a tool can become handy during any personal situation that needs problem-solving. (28.07.2016)

MEMO: The images and posters with social themes encouraged them to question rather than accept everything that was shown. The fact that I did not explain the images but used an inquiry-based approach helped to stimulate their interpretation, as well as their doubts about how life messages are constantly projected through images.

The Social Themes: The generic list of Social Themes was quite successful as the participants were intrigued by them and started questioning the themes. They also discussed the possibility of combining two themes and how they envision developing the themes which may serve them to deal better with what they were currently struggling in real life. (4.08.2016)

Self-Identity: Most of them admitted that a lot of time is needed to think, write and draw as they were perfectionists. Some of them said that they need to be on their own in order to concentrate. (4.08.2016)

MEMO: They recognised and became aware of the thinking skills constantly required for decision-making, for creating and for the discussions during the sessions.

Critical and Creative thinking: Through showing images of the NMFA collection the MUZA curator stimulated their thinking skills by using questions such as “Imagine you can enter this painting, how would you feel in it?” and “Imagine you are at primary school and the teachers asked you to write sentences about the picture, what would they be?” (11.08.2016)

The NMFA Contemporary Art collection: While showing images of contemporary NMFA artworks without titles and information, I noticed that most of them raised more interesting discussions about the reserved collection of contemporary art than about the images previously in the NMFA displayed collection.

Collaborative skills: At the museum visit, even though none of the participants chose to take part in the role play of museum guide in pairs or in groups, I could still observe them collaborating with one another by sharing views about the displayed artworks. In particular they remembered how the seascapes and landscapes shown in the artworks used to look like in the past. The contemporary photography displayed for the purpose of their visit also promoted collaboration among the participants as they gathered around the photos of the village feasts and the grandma holding the cat, which they felt resonated with them. (18.08. 2016)

Benefit of Drawing process: The participants mentioned that the more they drew, the more they could reflect on their life and problems. (1.9.2016)

Questioning: At the beginning of the seventh session, the participants started to discuss their recognition of the process of reflection on both the artwork development and on life. At one point they felt uncomfortable discussing religious issues after some of them pointed out that CARITAS is a church entity for which they should be thankful. Out of respect for CARITAS, they said that they should avoid debating what they considered to be the hypocrisy and dominance of the church. (8.09. 2016)

MEMO: Somehow the participants could see parallel links between the process of work and real life through reflection and making meaning out of the experiences. I felt awkward when they started debating whether they should question religious issues at a place which is owned by the church. Meanwhile I pointed out that it is vital to question things and try to make meanings out of life.

Presentations: The initial presentations were more effective on this occasion as they could discuss their work's process and explain what they are going through and how it links to their theme and eventually to their life. (8.09. 2016)

MEMO: While they were working on the development of their work, I often found myself discussing life and death, one's path/destiny/ purpose in life and the religious/spiritual choices one makes in life. It was quite challenging to keep neutral at times but keeping in mind to promote further thinking through an inquiry-based approach helped me avoid getting involved in the debates myself which automatically encouraged them to challenge each other's' opinions.

Category :Understanding of their Learning Process: Learning for life through Art

Mind-map tool: During the evaluation session, I noticed that they found the 'mind-map' tool very helpful and most of them mentioned how this tool can be handy in any personal situation that needs problem-solving. (28.07.2016)

MEMO: All the participants used to mention their fear of drawing and creating art because they know they are perfectionists and they need to carry out their work in the best way possible and finish on time. This led to unnecessary anxiety. Thus, on many occasions especially during the first two sessions, I had to emphasise that the project's value lies in the learning process rather than the resulting product. Gradually I observed how they started reminding each other whenever they felt stuck.

The Art Journal for Life: Promoting the idea of keeping an Art Journal, similar to keeping a diary was quite effective. The participants said that they felt like they owned their learning and will continue the practice of Art Journaling even after the project is over. (28.07.2016)

MEMO: Their appreciation that keeping a journal right from the first session has a value for life, confirmed the effectiveness of the introduction of the art journaling concept in the project.

An exchange of knowledge: During the second session, when the projector could not function properly, I immediately accepted the initiative of one participant who asked me to help out. When somehow he managed to make the projector function, I used this situation as a reminder of how we were all there to learn from each other, where each of us could contribute knowledge to the rest...the project was to be seen as a learning opportunity through an exchange of knowledge.(4.08.2016)

MEMO: Often I noticed how the participants' low self-esteem was indirectly being projected on each other through teasing and mocking. At times this was taken so personally that they ended up arguing seriously.

Confidence gained: Once they realised how their comments and first impressions were being accepted, I noticed that the participants gained courage in discussing the projected images of the artworks. (11.08. 2016)

MEMO: This courage and feeling of being accepted, served the participants to gain confidence while carrying out the role-play task at the NMFA visit.

The creative Process: They mentioned how presenting their ideas before they continued developing their work, helped them to concentrate and not give up. They also pointed out how it was comforting to have learnt the difference between Art and Crafts and that in Art, one has a starting point but does not need to know where one is going. (1.09.2016)

MEMO: The participants recognised the value of the creative process. Previously, their concept of Art was more similar to Craft, where they expected to know exactly step by step what needs to be done. They felt relieved on realizing that Art allows one the freedom of making mistakes while going through an unknown journey.

Learning for Life: During the final evaluation activity of the workshop, the participants realised that what they learnt during the project, could be used in their present circumstances as well as later on in life. (15.09.2016)

Category: Most relevant themes: (Family theme + Self-awareness theme)

The Indirect Therapeutic aspect: The participants were intrigued by the generic list of social issues and started questioning about the possibility of combining two themes and about how they envision developing the themes which may serve them to deal better with their current struggles, eg. one participant admitted that the theme of 'Family' within the generic theme of 'Human Relationships', would be appropriate as he feels that he destroyed his family. The same participant mentioned that he might choose the 'self-identity' theme as he has trouble with how others see him and also with how he sees himself. (4.08. 2016)

While presenting the mind-maps of 'I need...' in relation to their chosen theme, a few of the participants mentioned that all themes reflect the 'Self' at the end of the day. **MEMO:** This shows their understanding of how their choices in life reflect themselves in one's self-awareness. (11.08.2016)

MEMO: I observed how the participants recognised the theme development process as a sort of therapy with which to deal with their current issues and the feelings of guilt that haunt them. Thus, even if the project was not a form of Art therapy, indirectly it seemed like the participants chose to go through it in order to make meaning of their confused thoughts and guilt feelings.

Category: Expectations and Relevance of the Project

Relevance of Themes: The participants also discussed the possibility of combining two themes and how they envision developing the themes in a way which might enable them to deal better with their current struggles. (4.08.2016)

MEMO: They appreciated the relevance of the project in terms of how it enabled them to deal with current issues

Relevance of the Mind-mapping concept: During the evaluation session, I noticed that the participants found the mind-map tool very helpful and most of them appreciated how it can be used for any 'problem-solving' of their personal issues. (27.08.2016)

Relevance of the Art Journal: The participants said that they felt like they owned their learning and will keep using the Art Journal even after the workshops. (27.08.2016)

Relevance of the Contemporary Artworks from the NMFA Collection: The Somali participant opened up about how the artwork-photography of Darren Zammit Lupi, showing refugees on a boat, resonated with what he has been through himself and the suffering he experienced. (8.09.2016)

Relevance of some of the images of artworks from the NMFA Collection: After an activity of looking at images of some artworks from the NMFA collection, and discussing their views about them, the participants found new ways of looking at artworks. (11.08.2016)

Relevance of the role-play activity at the NMFA: During the evaluation session, the participants mentioned how they enjoyed imagining themselves as a museum-guide and explaining their interpretations of chosen artworks vis-à-vis their chosen theme. In relation to interpreting the artwork 'the Antwerp Allegory', one participant described his emotions of confusion, while many others spoke of the simplicity of being with the family as their interpretation of the artwork of John Smith's photograph showing an old woman holding a cat. (18.08.2016)

MEMO: The participants were no longer afraid of speaking their minds when they look at artworks. Through observing artworks and checking out what resonated with their life, or life in general, and because whatever they said while viewing the artworks was welcomed and tolerated by the rest, they understood that they did not have to be art historians or experts to talk about art. The relevance of interpreting images of artworks also served to boost their confidence while visiting the NMFA and going through role-playing as a museum guide.

Relevance of the inquiry-based approach, presentation of work and self-evaluation: During the final session's evaluation, the participants mentioned how the act of reflecting about the work before going through questions that challenged their ideas and after the practical session through presentations, served them as an effective way to proceed with work. (15.09.2016)

Category: **More time required in general (more than 2 hours were required)**

More time required for Practical activity: During the first session, despite having been warned that the participants have a short attention span and would be easily bored, I observed that none of them gave up or got annoyed. Instead, they wished to have more time to continue creating the mind-map and designs. They were given permission to continue their practical work during their free time as they felt that 2 hours were not enough. (28.07.2016)

More time required for discussion: There was some limited time available for writing down the evaluation on their Journals but no time left for them to express themselves verbally. We all agreed that time was a real constraint and 2 hours were not enough (4.08.2016)

Unexpected time required: During the last session's evaluation, the participants admitted that they had not imagined that an art project could include so much. They wished there was more time for discussions and practical work. However they were aware that the slot given was of two hours, which on many occasions had been extended to two and a half hours. In particular the NMFA visit took around three hours. (15.09. 2016)

MEMO: It was very challenging to balance time-management for discussions, art-practice, self-evaluations, journaling, and mind-mapping in eight sessions. Moreover one had to respect the participants' need to talk, to express themselves and to create, which were always given priorities over the planned activities. What if three hours were allowed instead of two hours...would it have been tiring for these particular participants, especially at the early stages when they still did not know how engaging such a project could be?

Category: Transferable skills: Collaborative skills, Creative and critical thinking skills

Creative and Thinking skills: The psychologist said that the participants were very positive about the project, especially because I encouraged them to think and introduced them to the use of the Art Journal and Mind-mapping. (19.09.2016)

Category: Understanding of their Learning Process: Learning for life through Art

Benefits for life: The participants mentioned ways of how they intend to keep on using the skills they learned from the project. (19.09.2016)

The Emerging Codes in Field-notes marked by an *asterix

I started to observe repetitive situations in the text and since they did not concern the six main categories, new codes emerged. On rereading the field notes, I started marking the emergent codes with colour coded Alphabet letters with an asterix symbol. The categorizations are fluid as most of the field notes fit into several categories and emergent codes at once.

Emergent Codes:

*A	Actions (that I had to take immediately or during the following session in response to the participants' needs)
*B	Benefits of the Project (observed by staff members/participants)
*C	Challenges (what I found challenging)
*N	Needs (that started arising)
*Q	Qualities/potentials of the participants (observed traits of altruism, initiatives, collaboration)

The Textual Coding Process of Research Project 2

(with a young adults' community at the University of Malta from October 2016-May 2017)

The Purpose

The purpose of Research Project 2 was to find out both the expected and actual impact of the project's various workshops on a community of young adult participants who are trained as artists and art educators, through their own creative process. While my role as researcher/educator was to facilitate the project's process, the participants of this Project who already had an art education background, were considered experts in relation to the topic of my study. By drawing on their own experience, both as young adult creative practitioners and as trained educators, they could come up with ways to instigate a learning process deriving from their training and background in art practice. Moreover, the participants' approach in constructing knowledge through active learning, was in line with the pedagogy theoretical framework of my research study based on Constructive Learning Theories.

The Context of the Initial Interviews:

Before the start of the project, since all seven B.Ed. Art final year students signed the consent forms confirming their participation, they were called for an induction session. In this session, the purposes for having interviews were explained without giving much detail of the project to avoid influencing their replies. Mainly I clarified that the purpose of the initial interviews was to explore their views about the use of the NMFA as an educational resource and also their ideas about engaging today's young adults communities with the NMFA collection, both inside and outside of the museum building. Afterwards, the participants were called individually for face to face interviews of approximately 5-7 minutes. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured and informal way at the new Art Studio at the University of Malta. The transcriptions of these initial interviews provides a picture of the participants' views regarding the use of the NMFA as an educational resource and also their ideas about engaging today's young adults communities with the NMFA collection, both inside and outside of the museum building.

Sorting the textual data

Concepts, suggestions and themes were coded using phrases which are appropriate for the purpose of the evaluation by going through all the textual data (interview transcripts and field-notes) in a systematic way. The process of creating codes was done through a hybrid of pre-set and emergent codes. Before beginning the data collection, a list of pre-set categories deriving from the list of interview questions enabled the coding all the textual data, thus a set of codes emerged from reading, rereading and analysing all the collected textual data. These emergent codes include concepts, actions and meanings observed both by the participants through their evaluations of each workshop and interview replies and by myself as the researcher through written field-notes. Below is an explanation of the sorting of textual data for Project 2, achieved after applying a process of codes created through a hybrid of pre-set categories and emergent codes.

Pre-Set Categories for the initial interviews:

- The NMFA as a public educational resource
- The NMFA as an engaging educational experience for young adults
- The NMFA's capacity to engage young adults through its facilities
- The NMFA community outreach for young adults
- MUZA's purpose for today's young adults

Emergent codes (in bold) for the initial interviews:

The following emergent codes demonstrate the participants' expectations from the project and their awareness of the NMFA:

Limited Themes at NMFA: **Themes**

Public is uninterested in Art: **Interest**

NMFA not serving the public: **Public Service**

NMFA is unattractive for young adults: **Attractive**

NMFA's boring atmosphere: **Atmosphere**

NMFA is to include technology: **Technology**

NMFA is to provide engaging activities: **Engaging**

NMFA is to enhance the museum experience: **Experience**

NMFA is to address the needs of the young adults: **Young adults Needs**

NMFA is to provide young adults community outreach: **Young adults community outreach**

NMFA is to exhibit Art collection outside the museum: **Public Exhibitions**

NMFA is to promote through University Young adults Organizations: **Marketing**

NMFA is to provide guidance to help out young adults with questions: **Guidance**

Coded Beginning Interviews of Project 2		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Frequency of occurrence in participants' replies
The NMFA as a public educational resource	Limited Themes	1
	Uninterested public	1
	Unattractive for young adults	2
	Not engaging	2
	Public Unawareness of the NMFA	3
	Boring atmosphere	3
MEMO: All the participants mentioned that currently the NMFA is not serving as a public educational resource, and have given several reasons for this. Although the interviews were carried out separately, there were replies which were similar and grouped as emergent codes.		
The NMFA as an effective educational experience for the young adults	Meaningful	1
	Relevant	1
	Technology + Interactivity	2
	Hands-on	2
	Links to life	2
MEMO: The participants suggested that the NMFA would become more engaging for a young adult audience by offering hands-on activities using its collection interactively, including technological devices and providing links to themes, life and interests of young adults.		
The NMFA's capacity to engage young adults through its facilities	Social media and apps	1
	Address diversity	1
	Free of charge	1
	Re-enactment	2
	Connection with basic senses	3

MEMO: The participants recommended the use of today’s social media and apps at the NMFA to reach a diversity of young adults. Other ways recommended for the NMFA to engage young adults were through activities involving drama, re-enactment, creative writing and story-telling with reference to the collection. Three of the participants suggested that the NMFA would seek to connect to the basic senses, such as applying sound-effects related to particular artworks.		
The NMFA Community Outreach for young adults	Local Councils	1
	Projected Artwork on bastions	1
	Exhibited in their environment	1
	Promotion	1
	Public Events	2
	Local media	3
MEMO: All the participants somehow mentioned that the NMFA collection should be exhibited outside the museum building, in more public accessible places to reach out to young adults, as this eventually will encourage them to visit the museum.		
MUZA’s effective service for today’s young adults	Mobile phones	1
	Contemporary Young adults Culture	1
	Sense of Belonging	1
	Guides	2
	Holistic	2
	Museum Staff	2
	Treasure-Hunts	3
	Competitions	3
	Colourful atmosphere	3
MEMO: Most participants recommend that the art museum is to attract today’s young adults by organizing interactive learning experiences, such as treasure-hunts and competitions.		

The Context of the Final Interviews:

During the second part of the last day of the project, while the participants were engaged in continuing, or finishing off, their virtual exhibition creations, they were called individually for face-to-face interviews of approximately 10-15 minutes. They were informed that the purpose of the final interviews was mainly to explore their meaning-making of the project as a whole and their expectations regarding the purpose of their VE’s (Virtual Exhibitions) vis-à-vis young adults. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured and informal way at the New Art Studio, while the rest of them continued with their work at the Old Art Studio at the University of Malta. The

transcribed final interviews indicate the participants’ understanding of their learning experiences and their engagement with the NMFA Collection.

Pre-set Categories for the final interviews:

- The decision-making behind the chosen theme
- The initial intention of their VE.
- Linking the NMFA collection to the chosen theme
- Dealing with misinterpretations of their VE.
- Planning the learning outcomes of their VE.
- Evaluating the success of their VE.
- Encouraging links between the VE and the NMFA collection
- Providing an educational experience through their VE.

Emergent codes (in bold) for the final interviews:

The following emergent codes show the participants’ awareness of their learning experiences throughout the project’s workshops, the ways in which they practised the transferable skills, their approaches in engaging with the NMFA collection and their suggestion for the workshops’ improvement.

<p>NMFA as inspiring NMFA as uninspiring Contemporary Social Themes Theme of War Theme of Religious harmony Theme of Gender stereotypes Theme of the Social Illusions Theme of Accepting oneself Theme of Childhood nostalgia Theme of Human relationships with animals</p> <p>Virtual Exhibition Encouraging empathy Virtual Experience as an alternative to the tangible Tangible Experience Clarifying ideas Creative Process</p>	<p>Background knowledge required for understanding the artist’s message Misinterpretation as natural Inquiry-based Critical thinking Encouraging relevance at a personal level Explanatory Social message Succeeding in sending the message through Art</p> <p>To raise awareness To promote critical thinking To inspire creativity</p> <p>Visitors’ feedback to evaluate the exhibition’s success</p>
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<p>Engaging the young adults Through downloading an App Providing links between the NMFA and life Arouse curiosity Stimulate emotions</p> <p>Straightforward links to the theme happened on visiting the NMFA, before choosing the theme, Unforeseen links happened after selecting the theme and after visiting the NMFA (on viewing the collection virtually)</p> <p>Subject to various interpretations Learning experience Symbolism Subject matter</p>	<p>Rubric to evaluate the exhibition's success Checklist to evaluate the exhibition's success Self-evaluation of the exhibition Focus groups to evaluate the exhibition's success Virtual forum to evaluate the Virtual exhibition</p> <p>To enhance observation skills To encourage virtual visitors to visit the NMFA To improve ways of interpreting the NMFA collection To serve as a critical eye To incite alternative ways of seeing life through Art</p> <p>Encourages further research Easier Public outreach through the virtual Independent learning Appreciation of the Creative Process Connecting the virtual with the real</p>
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Coded Final Interviews of Project 2

Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Frequency of occurrence in participants' replies
The decision-making behind the chosen themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War • Religious harmony • Gender stereotypes • Social Illusions • Accepting oneself • Childhood nostalgia • Animal awareness 	Contemporary Social issues	7
	NMFA as uninspiring	5
	NMFA as inspiring	2
	Personal feelings	3
	Raising awareness	2
MEMO: Most participants explained that their decision-making of the chosen theme did not emerge from the NMFA visit. All participants chose themes that have to do with contemporary issues.		
The initial intention of creating their VE.	Creative Process	5
	Relevance	5
	Alternative to the tangible	5
	Links between the NMFA and life	3
	Interest	3

	Emotions	2
	Outreach	2
	Tangible Experience	2
	Clarification	1
	Making meaning	1
	Downloading an App	1
	Virtual Reality	1
MEMO: Individual participants mentioned that the initial intention behind the VE either remained the same but continued to develop, or that the VE helped to clarify their ideas.		
Linking the NMFA collection to the chosen theme	Straightforward links	1
	Unforeseen links	5
	Digital reviewing of the collection	1
	Development of theme	1
	Collection not relevant	2
MEMO: Most participants did not see immediately any links between their chosen theme and the NMFA collection, but mentioned how it developed later on. Only one participant talked about the works that served to inspire the chosen theme right from the start of the museum visit.		
Dealing with the misinterpretations of their VE	Various interpretations	3
	Succeeding in sending the message	4
	Encouraging relevance on a personal level	1
	Misinterpretation as natural	1
	Background knowledge required for understanding the artist's message	1
	Inquiry-based	1
	Critical thinking	1
	Explanatory	1
Social message	1	
MEMO: One participant explained that he would not feel good about misinterpretations of his work but sees its learning opportunity and is aware that a work of art is open to different interpretations. In contrast, another participant admitted that he would actually feel good when his work is misunderstood because that shows that his work is not that direct but has more than meets the eye.		
Planning the learning outcomes of their VE	To raise awareness	6
	To promote critical thinking	3
	To inspire creativity	1

MEMO: With the exception of one participant, the rest consider the learning outcomes as a means to raise public awareness on several social themes through their created Virtual Exhibitions (VE).		
Evaluating the success of their VE	Visitors' feedback	All participants
	Rubric	1
	Self-evaluation	1
	Focus groups	1
	Online forum	1
MEMO: All participants mentioned that feedback gained from the audience is a valid approach for evaluating the success of the VE		
Encouraging links between the VE and the NMFA collection.	To enhance observation skills	2
	To encourage virtual visitors to visit the NMFA	1
	To improve ways of interpreting the NMFA collection	1
	To serve as a critical eye	2
	To incite alternative ways of seeing life through Art	2
MEMO: A participant mentioned the inclusion of images from the NMFA collection in the VE as a way to encourage the audience to visit the real collection at the museum. Two participants felt that the fact that the NMFA lacks works showing clear connotations with their chosen themes, indicates that the audience would hardly find links between their VE and the NMFA collection..		
Providing an educational experience through their VE	Encourages further research	2
	Easier Public outreach through the virtual	3
	Independent learning	2
	Appreciation of the Creative Process	3
	Connecting the virtual with the real	2
MEMO: One of the participants thinks that the VE would not have the same strong impact like an installation would have in providing an educational experience. Two participants consider the online accessibility of their VE as an innovation that leads the young adults to connect the real with the virtual, especially if they do not have the opportunity to visit the real.		

Refining Codes from the Interviews

Throughout the first workshop and a follow-up session after the project workshops were complete, the replies from both the initial and the final interviews were handed to the participants as feedback to their anonymous replies. They were asked to check them and add/ eliminate or change the replies as recorded and also to point out any possible misinterpretations in the collected data. The evaluation of my field-notes serves to compare, contrast and add information to that gained through the interviews.

The codes that emerged from the **initial** and **final** interviews of Project 2 were refined by selecting those codes most frequently mentioned, some of which shared similar concepts. These codes were highlighted in different colours based on the similar concepts that emerged, eg. the current state of the NMFA is highlighted in blue.

Most frequently mentioned codes:	Codes highlighted into categories:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMFA unattractive for young adults • NMFA not engaging • Public unawareness of the NMFA • NMFA boring atmosphere • Suggestions: Technology • Suggestions: Interactivity • Suggestions: Hands-on • Suggestions: Links to life • Suggestions: Connection with basic human senses • Suggestions: Public events • Suggestions: Promotion through Local media • Suggestions: Museum guides • Suggestions: Museum staff • Suggestions: Re-enactment of artworks • Suggestions: Treasure-hunts • Suggestions: Competitions • Suggestions: Colourful atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NMFA unattractive for young adults NMFA not engaging Public unawareness of the NMFA NMFA boring atmosphere Suggestions: Technology Suggestions: Interactivity Suggestions: Hands-on Suggestions: Links to life Suggestions: Connection with basic human senses Suggestions: Public events Suggestions: Promotion through Local media Suggestions: Museum guides Suggestions: Museum staff Suggestions: Re-enactment of artworks Suggestions: Treasure-hunts Suggestions: Competitions Suggestions: Colourful atmosphere VE-Contemporary Social Issues NMFA as uninspiring VE-Creative process

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VE-Contemporary Social Issues • NMFA as uninspiring • VE-Creative process • VE-Relevance • VE-an alternative to the tangible • NMFA links to life • VE-Interest • VE-Emotions • VE-Outreach • Unforeseen links with NMFA collection • NMFA Collection not relevant at first • Various interpretations of the VE • Succeeding in sending the message through VE • VE-Raising awareness • VE-Promoting critical thinking • Visitors' feedback to measure success of VE • V.E-Promoting observation skills • VE- to serve as a critical eye • VE-to incite alternative ways of seeing life 	VE-Relevance
	VE-an alternative to the tangible
	NMFA links to life
	VE-Interest
	VE-Emotions
	VE-Outreach
	Unforeseen links with NMFA collection
	NMFA Collection not relevant at first
	Various interpretations of the VE
	Succeeding in sending the message through VE
	VE-Raising awareness
	VE-Promoting critical thinking
	Visitors' feedback to measure success of VE
	V.E-Promoting observation skills
	VE- to serve as a critical eye
	VE-to incite alternative ways of seeing life

The highlighted codes were extracted from the list and grouped under a general heading, thus forming six key categories, which served as pre-set codes for the coding process of **the Field Notes of Project 2**.

<p>5 Main Categories extracted from the Interviews of Project 2:</p> <p>Current state of NMFA</p> <p>Suggestions for NMFA to be more engaging and attractive for young adults</p> <p>The Virtual Exhibition benefits</p> <p>The aim of the Virtual Exhibition as a means for the practice of transferable skills</p> <p>The predicted Virtual Exhibition's impact on the audience</p>
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Coding the Field Notes

The five main categories extracted from the interviews served as pre-set codes in the process of coding the field notes. In this process the same highlighted colour manually marked on the field-notes was maintained. After I typed the relevant field notes in each section, more specific codes started emerging. I typed these in bold before each field note to continue labelling and identifying the meaning of the field note.

Field-notes grouped according to Categories extracted from the Interviews:

Category: **Current state of NMFA**

Non-appealing: While discussing their connection with the NMFA collection, a few participants remarked that it did not appeal much to them (3.02.2017).

For reference: While presenting their work in progress, one participant said that she was not impressed by the NMFA collection but still continued to make reference to it for developing her theme (3.02.2017).

Not a starting point: One participant argued that the NMFA collection did not affect her work at the beginning and still did not affect her development of work, but though not a starting point, now on viewing the images digitally, she could relate her theme more to a few of the collection (24.02.2017).

Limited but inspiring: One participant argued that even though she sees the NMFA as limited, looking at the paintings is enjoyable and that one of the modern paintings in the collection inspired her art (24.02.2017).

One participant found the contemporary art in the collection as more relevant to her work (24.02.2017).

Category: **Suggestions for NMFA** to be more engaging and attractive for young adults

Dynamic artworks: A discussion was raised about their wish to see their dynamic works used in an effort to engage the young adult audience, by having them displayed next to the still version of the works hanging at the NMFA (3.02.2017).

Accessible images: A debate was raised about having images of the NMFA collection accessible online for the public (24.02.2017).

Category: **The Virtual Exhibition**

The participants argued and challenged each other about the benefits and limitations of the Virtual Exhibition (9.2.2017), as follows:

Virtual Exhibition	Physical Exhibition
Brushstrokes could be zoomed	One can sense the brushstrokes as paintings can be experienced directly
Helps to see details that would be overlooked while visiting a physical exhibition	A virtual exhibition can be an aid to the real thing but can never replace the physical exhibition, eg. The Mona Lisa has an impact on the viewers in the museum but does not achieve the same effect when watched as an image online.
Could be used to promote the physical exhibition	A virtual exhibition could be limiting to the real experience which is available with the physical exhibition. The size makes a big difference to the experience of visiting an exhibition. For instance, the NMFA through displaying the massive painting ‘Allegory of Malta’, certainly provides an experience.
Could serve as a documentation for those who cannot visit the physical exhibition	

Category: **The aim of the Virtual Exhibition** as a means for the practice of transferable skills

VE to encourage thinking: While discussing the intentions of their VE, some participants argued that their Virtual exhibition will be based on their physical exhibition and hence encouraging similar thinking skills, while others remarked how the virtual exhibition will facilitate the promotion of their physical exhibition ...as a teaser to increase curiosity and thinking (3.03.2017).

Category: **The predicted Virtual Exhibition’s impact on the audience**

Encouraging freedom of thought: here was an interesting debate about the quantity of images and text to be included in the VE, and whether more means better, or whether it would end up limiting the audience’s freedom of thought The participants agreed that much depends on one’s intentions with the V.E...at times one’s purpose is to create chaos so including plenty of images is a must, while at other times, simply including a single image can raise a lot of thinking and questioning concerning a particular issue (3.03.2017).

Holistic experience: One participant mentioned the VE’s importance to provide a holistic experience to the viewers by showing the creative process and the everyday materials used in the physical exhibition (3.03.2017).

Limited impact on the senses: One participant argued that the VE would never provide the audience with the same impact as the physical exhibition because other senses, such as touch and smell can never be imagined through the VE (3.03.2017).

Relevant if engaging: One participant expressed his concern about his VE’s limited potential impact on a contemporary young adult audience as they have never experienced war. The rest

debated with him that movies and stories concerning war still resonate with today's young adults and that if presented in an engaging way, his VE could also resonate with them (17.03.2017).

The Emerging Codes in Field-Notes marked by an *asterix

While rereading the field-notes, those emergent codes related to the categories other than the five main ones, were manually marked by colour-coded asterix symbol and alphabet letters. The categorizations are fluid as most field-notes fall into several categories and emergent codes at once.

Emergent Codes:

*A	Actions (that I had to take immediately or during the following session in response to the participants' needs)
*B	Benefits of the Project (observed by the participants)
*C	Challenges (what I found challenging)
*N	Needs (that started arising)
*Q	Qualities/potentials of the participants (observed traits of altruism, initiatives, collaboration as indirect outcomes of the project)
*S	Strategies (that were observed as effective by the participants and as experienced by me)
*T	Topics (unplanned topics/issue that emerged while participants discussed and debated their theme development)

The Textual Coding Process of the Interviews with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and the Senior Curator of NMFA/MUZA

The Context of the Interview held with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh:

The face-to-face semi-structured interview with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh was held at her office at the premises of the Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in Sta.Venera during November 2016. The interview took around thirty minutes and mainly concerned the use of the NMFA/MUZA as an

educational resource within the agency's young adults programmes. During the fourth workshop of Project 2, the transcription of this interview was handed to the participants to elicit their response since they also form part of today's generation of young adults. The same procedure could not be carried out with the interview replies of the Senior Curator of the NMFA/ MUZA, as due to unforeseen circumstances, the interview was held later than planned.

Coding the Interview Transcript

Concepts and suggestions deriving from the interviews held with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh were coded by phrases to fit the purpose of the evaluation by going through the interview transcripts in a systematic way. Initially the process of creating codes was done through a hybrid of pre-set categories deriving from the interview questions. Later a set of emergent codes was derived from reading, rereading and analysing the interview transcript. Below is a structured explanation of the coding of the interview held with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, showing the pre-set categories on the left and the emergent codes in the middle, which emanate from the related quotes on the right hand-side. This structure will eventually support the Analysis with relevant quotes and data required.

Pre-Set Categories:

- The NMFA's Young adults Community Outreach
- Linking NMFA with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh Programmes
- Engaging Young adults
- Duration of Young adults programmes
- Virtual and Physical Museum

Emergent codes (in bold):

- Challenges
- Suggestions

Coded Interview held with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Quotes from the Interview Transcript (Interview was held on the 17.11.2016)
The NMFA's Young adults Community Outreach	Challenges:	
	Difficulty in reaching out to Young adults.	“Reaching out to young adults is increasingly becoming difficult as young adults are everywhere nowadays. They are behind the computer, at entertaining environments, sports-programmes...they have several opportunities where to hang out!”
	Several attractive places for young adults to hang out at. Can the museum compete with places of entertainment?	
	The Museum needs to be relevant for young adults	“Unless the Art Museum builds a relationship with young adult communities, the young adults would not be attracted to participate or visit it.”
	Suggestions:	
	A Museum's Interdisciplinary Team	“The art museum on its own cannot organise museum outreach...it requires a form of interdisciplinary team. ”
	Online outreach	
Reaching out the working young adults	“The fact that most young adults are ‘online’ , reaching out to them online could be another means of museum-outreach.”	
Offering an alternative place for social activities	The working young adults communities need to be reached out too, eg. Teambuilding activities. “The art museum could offer packages of ‘Corporate Team Building’ activities that provide the young adults employees with an alternative place for informal/social activities rather than the usual pubs or restaurants.”	
Building a relationship with young adults		

	<p>Explore the latest young adults trends</p> <p>Attract the young adults through publicity on social media</p>	<p>“The art Museum needs to build a relationship with young adults. First and foremost the museum needs to explore the trends of young adults and keep updated with their latest trends. Then it needs to check how to attract them, eg. publicity through the social media.”</p>
<p>Linking NMFA with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh Programmes</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Interdisciplinary team</p> <p>Collaborative initiatives</p>	<p>“...it has to be an interdisciplinary team, at times with other entities as well, to come up with strategies to reach out the young adults. It’s more like getting the Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and the NMFA to come up with collaborative initiatives.”</p>
<p>Engaging Young adults</p>	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Addressing several young adults needs, context and time</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Tailor-made programmes updated each year</p>	<p>“...the most vulnerable would be challenging to attract and have them understand the benefits of the programme, while the gifted would be challenging because they are already busy, being already committed to a lot of other activities and programmes.”</p> <p>“The problem is that you can’t offer something for all. There have to be tailor-made programmes then...and continue to try and then change the programmes because this year it can work while next year it will not work.”</p>
<p>Duration of Young adults programmes</p>	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Adapting programmes for today’s young adults trends</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Finding out what attracts young adults</p>	<p>“When we think of museum programmes, we need to think in terms of adapting to today’s young adults trends... otherwise I am not going to reach out...I am not going to get them...they would not want a commitment of an hour a week or a commitment of 6 month project.”</p>

	<p>Funds</p> <p>A team of well-trained staff</p> <p>A short intense period of-Art programme</p>	<p>“Ideally we find out ways to attract more young adults. This needs a lot of funding and a good team of human resources who are well trained, not only in attracting the young adults, but also in their approach.”</p> <p>“...one of today’s trends of young adults is that they go from one extreme to another, eg. binge-drinking on a Saturday night and then during the week make an effort to detoxify by drinking only ginger infusion, to be healthy...this is a trend of young adults that self-motivate by intense periods, so in reality it is not ‘time per week’ that is needed but intense periods of programmes...eg. a weekend dedicated to an Art Project.”</p>
<p>Relevant Activities for Young adults</p>	<p>Challenges: Researching contemporary young adults trends is expensive</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Researching the contemporary young adultss’ trends.</p> <p>Getting sponsors to commission research</p> <p>Costume Party</p> <p>Using social media</p> <p>Using mobile apps</p>	<p>“it’s not a one box fits all...because in reality one needs to understand different categories of young adults and see how to address each category... and this is very expensive because one has to constantly research the young people and their trends, while at the same time you need to come up with activities.”</p> <p>“this is the practice abroad...researching the contemporary young adults’ trends.”</p> <p>“In Malta we have no ‘young adults trend report’ and internationally most ‘young adults trend reports’ are private, not government funded as such work is highly expensive. Often they are commissioned by big brands like Vodafone or the Coca-Cola company.”</p> <p>“...where young adults are invited to create costumes for a Halloween party...the museum could attract young adults by providing such activity”</p>

	<p>Applying digital games</p> <p>Digital Detox trend</p> <p>Mystery activities</p>	<p>“The current trend of ‘LOLOLOGY’...young adults use social media and mobile apps such as Facebook and Snap Chat all the time to come up with ways to have a good laugh...or posting selfies to acquire most ‘LIKES’...”</p> <p>“There is a trend of games which young adults often play online...what can the NMFA do about this particular young adults who are into digital games?”</p> <p>“...today there’s a lot of social media but there is the increasing trend to detox from the internet and from Facebook addiction...can the NMFA provide alternative activities to serve for digital detox”</p> <p>“I would suggest the NMFA organises the ‘Mystery activity’ which is quite a trend internationally...It involves the young adults (18+) applying for a surprise and having to accept the concept / venue of the activity (eg.in a garage or in a kitchen)...could be activity in the museum...due to the activity being a mystery...young people get instantly intrigued and motivated to attend.”</p>
<p>Virtual and Physical Museum</p>	<p>Challenges: Some young adults are inclined to the virtual while others to the physical</p> <p>Technology is fast and changing</p> <p>Young adults do not want to commit long-term</p>	<p>“depends on the product...and again some young adults would be inclined to the virtual while others to the physical”</p> <p>“Technology is becoming very fast and is changing young people’s lives.”</p> <p>“With young adults it is better to do a short-term project and then move on. It is useless to try to foster the commitment in young people, because reality shows that nowadays that’s how they are...they move on from one thing to the next.”</p>

	<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>A combination of virtual and physical museum activities</p> <p>A short-term programme</p>	<p>“I think both virtual and physical would be interesting but depends on the product”</p> <p>“Since there are so many other forces engaging young people’s commitment, then either we go with the contemporary trend or else, young adults would not be attracted.”</p>
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The Context of the Feedback gained from the Young adults Participants of Project 2 on the interview with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh:

During the workshops held as part of Project 2 in March 2017, a focus group was held with the young adult participants who were given handouts including four responses to questions from the transcript of the interview with CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh . As mentioned earlier, this feedback exercise served to evaluate the young adults’ response since they were trained in Art Education and also form part of today’s generation of young adults. The same exercise, (although it was planned as well for the workshops) could not be carried out with the interview replies of the Senior Curator of the NMFA/ MUZA as, due to unforeseen circumstances, the interview was held later than planned.

Coding the Participants’ Feedback

Suggestions derived from the feedback discussion and written notes on the handouts were coded using phrases to fit the purpose of the evaluation by going through the written notes in a systematic way. The process of creating codes used a hybrid of pre-set categories derived from relevant quotes extracted from the interview transcript of the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh. Later a set of emergent codes were derived from reading, rereading and analysing the young adults’s written notes left on the handouts as a response to the quotes. Below is a structured explanation of the coding of the feedback, showing the pre-set categories on the left and the emergent codes in the middle, which emanate from the written notes on the right hand-side. This structure will eventually support the Analysis with relevant quotes and data required.

Coded Feedback from young adults participants of Project 2 about the interview held with the CEO of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Quotes from the Young adults' Feedback (Focus Group was held on the 24.03.2017)
The NMFA's Young adults Community Outreach	<p>Current situation:</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Virtual Museum</p> <p>Online Accessibility</p> <p>Financial Aspect-Free of Charge</p> <p>Interactive Reflective</p> <p>Attractive promotion</p> <p>Unconventional methods</p> <p>Apps Games</p> <p>Workshops for Young adults</p> <p>Interactive activities</p>	<p>"I don't think the museum was reaching young adults at all, plus it was not very attractive for young adults either"</p> <p>"Virtual Exhibitions can be online, hence it could be reached by everyone who is computer literate. Having a generation of young people who are all the time online... if the Museum staff organizes online programmes and virtual tours, it would probably be more interesting for young adults. It would also reach more as they do not have to pay an entrance fee."</p> <p>"being more interactive and reflective"</p> <p>"...Facebook can make the museum more interactive...promote it in an attractive way for young adults".</p> <p>"Online, unconventional methods, interactive..."</p> <p>"...an APP or game related to the Museum collection would be interesting to young adults"</p> <p>"Involve young adults in artistic workshops at the Museum..."</p> <p>"By organising interactive activities within the Museum related to the collection, eg. Drama, selfie-competition, props designing"</p>
The Trends of Contemporary Young adults	<p>Current Young adults-Trends:</p> <p>Fun activities Games</p> <p>The fun aspect</p> <p>The need to fit in</p>	<p>"Fun activities for all...to promote the Art Museum in a fun way, eg. quizzes, games"</p> <p>"Social Media"</p>

	<p>Tablet Mobile</p> <p>Technology Fast life</p> <p>Need for pleasure</p> <p>Need to pursue humanitarian acts Need for approval</p> <p>Social Media</p> <p>Music Parties</p> <p>Selfie-culture Fashion Make-up Sports</p> <p>Consumerism Materialism Competition Peer influence Healthy eating</p>	<p>“young adults want to feel like they fit in”</p> <p>“tablet, mobile...”</p> <p>“Technology, living life on the fast lane...need to enjoy oneself...with a contrast there are those who pursue humanitarian acts”</p> <p>“A need to please others”</p> <p>“Social media, eg. Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat”</p> <p>“Music and parties”</p> <p>“Selfie-culture; make-up; fashion; sports”</p> <p>“Consumerism; materialism; competition; peer influence; healthy eating; social media; sports; technology”</p>
<p>Encouraging Young adults’ collaboration at the Art Museum</p>	<p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Group activities</p> <p>Learning through games</p> <p>Re-enactments of the collection</p> <p>Posting virtual creations on the Museum website</p> <p>Free-of charge activities</p>	<p>“The Museum can encourage young adults to work in teamwork, eg. group activities which they will enjoy while learning...like a game...the young adults nowadays enjoy playing”</p> <p>“Games involving a group-collaboration”</p> <p>“Creating re-enactments of paintings, competitions, even creating videos or a virtual tour inspired by their visits and those could be posted on the Museum website”</p> <p>“Organise activities for free!”</p>

	<p>Team-building activities</p> <p>Treasure Hunts</p> <p>Involve young adults</p> <p>Collective exhibitions</p>	<p>“Free of charge team-building workshops”</p> <p>“Game activities, eg. Treasure hunts in the Museum”</p> <p>“Involve young adults in marketing sources”</p> <p>“Activities that encourage the setting up of group exhibitions at the museum”</p>
<p>Social Media and Virtual Exhibitions</p>	<p>Needs: Young adults’ need for validity and approval</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Encouraging activities involving ‘Selfies’ with the exhibition and Facebook</p> <p>Digital detox</p> <p>Facebook competitions requiring LIKES</p> <p>Professional Virtual Exhibitions</p> <p>Encourage young adults’ involvement through Virtual Exhibitions</p>	<p>“Many young adults are obsessed with getting ‘likes’...at times girls even wear the least clothing possible to attract men and get ‘likes’...It would be beneficial if they earn likes through virtual exhibition activities, eg. online competitions or a being a character in a virtual exhibition game.”</p> <p>“I believe that young adults are interested to create. A possible way to encourage young adults’ creativity is eg. young adults taking a selfie with the exhibition and upload it on Facebook page where they find discussions and information on the artworks”</p> <p>“I think we miss the simple joys in life when we worry about staying connecting through social media all the time...the joy of life is not only found on the internet.”</p> <p>“Games through Facebook...competitions, eg. photo-work to get most LIKES”</p> <p>“Virtual Exhibitions created by professional designers just like those created for foreign museums...”</p> <p>Virtual Exhibitions can encourage young adults’ involvement by requiring their input, eg. modifying the design of the exhibition according to their own interest.</p>

The Context of the Interviews held with the Senior Curator of NMFA/MUZA:

The face-to-face semi-structured interview with the NMFA senior curator was held at a coffee shop as at the time, in August 2017, the construction of MUZA, including his office were still in progress. The interview which lasted around 1 ½ hours, mainly concerned MUZA's philosophy and plans for community outreach programmes, especially those targeting the young adult audience.

Coding the Interview Transcript

Concepts and suggestions deriving from the interviews held with the Senior Curator of MUZA were coded by phrases to fit the purpose of the evaluation by going through the interview transcripts in a systematic way. The process of creating codes used a hybrid of pre-set categories derived from the interview questions and later a set of emergent codes derived from reading, rereading and analysing the interview transcript. Below is a structured explanation of the coding of the interview held with the Senior Curator of MUZA, showing the pre-set categories on the left and the emergent codes in the middle, which emanate from the related quotes on the right hand-side. This structure will eventually support the Analysis Chapter with providing relevant quotes and data required by the research questions.

Pre-Set Categories for the interview held with the Senior Curator of MUZA:

- The NMFA's Public Education Service
- MUZA's Education Programmes
- MUZA's Assessment of its Education Programmes
- MUZA's Young adults Community Outreach
- MUZA's Staff Roles
- MUZA's Virtual Aspects

Emergent codes (in bold) for the interview held with the Senior Curator of MUZA:

- Current Situation
- Challenges
- Suggestions
- Plans

Coded Interview held with the Senior Curator of MUŻA		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Quotes from the Interview Transcript (Interview was held on the 25.08.2017)
<p>The current NMFA's Public Education Service</p>	<p>Current Situation:</p> <p>The museum collection is a public resource.</p> <p>The collection as an inspiration for educational projects.</p> <p>School Projects</p> <p>The museum serves as an active educational resource.</p> <p>The museum serves to educate for the practise of a variety of skills.</p> <p>(MEMO: The current situation of the Art Museum as an educational resources was serving only schools...formal education.)</p> <p>Entertaining events for young adults</p> <p>Plans: More Projects</p>	<p>“...from a curatorial point of view, the collection is recognized as a resource in its own rights. So there were a number of projects that were inspired by this...”</p> <p>“For example, we had one particular project which concerned schools...a particular college and we prepared a selection of paintings for them at the museum...”</p> <p>“...if I can go back to your question... if the museum is serving for public education- if it is serving that purpose...yes it is a resource but it's not fixed...it's not static.”</p> <p>...it is a resource, yes, and it can be used very effectively for a variety of skills, in fact some schools came up with a creative writing project etc.</p> <p>At the NMFA, I didn't shy away from having a disco-party, but we had the treasure-hunt first... so first they discover the museum, then they took their costumes, they took their group photo, their selfies...then we had a disco-party, fine.</p>

		“There’s scope for more projects as I think there is huge potential which remains untapped.”
MUŻA’s Education Programmes	<p>Plans:</p> <p>Formal and Non-formal Education Programmes</p> <p>A Community Space</p> <p>Engaging the young adults</p> <p>Referring to the Collection to discuss community issues</p> <p>Environmental issues</p> <p>Debates, discussions</p> <p>Several issues may be triggered through the museum collection</p> <p>Addressing the young adults audience</p>	<p>“This is for the future in a way about what MUŻA can offer...there will be programmes which concern the curricular...even beyond schooling, which is not an easy group to cater for...”</p> <p>“I think that there will be a specific base within the building which is a community space...it will be a space available to different groups and people coming from different social classes.”</p> <p>“it’s more about empowering creativity and getting this younger audience to acknowledge the collection as a resource, to engage with the collection and to understand what the issues are...in a way...the collection can be used to discuss community issues for example, one section will be dealing with landscape-views”.</p> <p>“...we have the views, the visuals, the images, the paintings that show those views like... this is the evidence of what was the landscape in Malta 50 years ago, 60 years ago, 80 years ago and even more, so in a way these paintings can trigger debates, discussions about what the issues are, why we ended up in this situation, how we can come up with a remedy...if we can...so it’s not just about aesthetics.”</p> <p>“I mean...when I say that the collection is a resource, there are many access levels...the potential is beyond the traditional museum model...it’s beyond the aesthetics...it’s about the object and its inherent qualities, be they aesthetic, political, historical, social...anything so there is potential there to address these audiences.”</p>
MUŻA’s Assessment of its Education Programmes	Current Situation:	“we cannot just continue to say, listen we’ve done our educational programme, we

	<p>Reviewing the amount of events and the amount of visitors/ participants</p> <p>Audience development and participation</p> <p>Plans:</p> <p>Understanding the impact of the museum visit/experience</p> <p>Assessment methods</p> <p>Measuring the community's well-being or happiness</p> <p>Reviewing the impact of the museum experience</p>	<p>had 60 visitors, 60 participants, 80-100 participants and we're doing so much and we delivered so much...I think that is very superficial..."</p> <p>"I think the latest statistics would be those of 2012. There is more research happening, currently on the way - probably it will be published in 2017 with regards to audience development and audience participation"</p> <p>"we need to understand what the impact is... otherwise we will never really understand if the work that we're doing is going in the right direction."</p> <p>"How it will be assessed... I think there are many ways, I don't think that just going through surveys...I think we need to develop the deep overarching reviews in 2012 and the ones to be published in 2017."</p> <p>"I think can be a good measure and there is also such thing as measuring well-being or happiness. Is the community happy? How do you measure 'well-being' and that is something which will come out within the 2017 survey."</p> <p>"...this is equal to the museum visit...you're visiting, you're acknowledging the experience, you try to take it in as much as you can and then what is the impact."</p>
<p>MUŽA's Educational Approaches</p>	<p>Plans: To train the museum staff to encourage creativity.</p> <p>Space and contents</p>	<p>"...getting people to train our staff to empower creativity so in a way structuring these educational initiatives"</p> <p>"the MUŽA model is...I can simplify it...I can use an equation to explain it - MUŽA = Art + Discussion, so in a way it is not about creating collections, but it is about creating</p>

		space and contents...contents meaning the objects, the collection and the people who are within that space”
	Non-formal education	“Sometimes we just think of the non-formal education as a tour ...but it’s much more than that...it’s about people understanding, about people’s way to react to the paintings to get inspired...”
	The Curatorial as educational	“In a way the curatorial pool should be considered educational...”
	Education Officer	“It is not just having someone coordinating an education programme, it’s having the culture...with the culture and the awareness to understand - to promote the experience as educational...rather than formal...”
	Culture	“... it is beyond having someone...there could be someone as a focus but it’s more about the culture...there has to be a culture of access which I don’t see in other museums... a culture of empowerment to spend time with people, explaining to them, being more one to one, more informal...”
	Knowledge-ladder approach	“The museum is a resource so as long as people engage with culture, as long as you make them comfortable...it’s a way how to promote a knowledge-ladder approach...”
	Falk Model	“With MUŽA we’re going for the ‘Falk’ model, John Falk...what does Falk say about the audiences? He doesn’t go for mere citizens, children, young adults, adults, families, but he goes for identities...”
	Identities	“...your mind-set and your identity is different...at one point you were facilitating the access, suddenly you’re with your backpack and at one point in time, you suddenly see a historic piece of furniture and you remember that your father was a carpenter... it’s beyond being ‘young

	<p>Gallery's learning outcomes</p> <p>Gallery as educational experience Focusing on the visitor's learning experience of the collection.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>Structuring educational initiatives.</p> <p>Referring to the collection simply for aesthetics is limiting.</p> <p>Museum Education programmes are very general, not tailored for particular museums.</p>	<p>adults'...it's your knowledge level, it's much more than a category"</p> <p>"What will help is that all the gallery spaces within MUŻA have their gallery learning outcomes, so the way each gallery is being designed is very much similar in the way a lecture or an educational initiative is structured..."</p> <p>"even the gallery itself can be an educational experience..."</p> <p>"...the focus is much more on resource, on what the visitor, on what the public can understand, how we can empower the audience to understand the collections, how they can use that collection"</p> <p>"...probably we need to understand how to empower creativity and be inspired in a way to use resources, to be creative, to try to solve social issues or to propose ideas or to propose a solution."</p> <p>"...aesthetics is just one layer, when we approach a museum from just an aesthetic point of view, I think it is limiting. We should still approach it that way but there is much more than that."</p> <p>"Well, obviously there is an element of training, so it's still early days but yes I mean so far Heritage Malta has its unit which very broadly deals with all types of educational programmes so it's very difficult to be more focused on a particular museum"</p>
<p>MUŻA's Educational Resources for Young adults Communities</p>	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Addressing the young adults needs</p>	<p>"Well as far as MUŻA is concerned we've always acknowledged special needs as not something related to a disability...everybody has a special need,</p>

	<p>Communities are changing fast.</p> <p>Keeping up to date is challenging since things are changing at a fast pace.</p> <p>Young adults's Multiple Identities</p> <p>Young adults cultures</p> <p>Current trends</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Understanding young adults needs</p> <p>To come up with alternative educational resources for digital natives.</p> <p>To research young adults needs.</p> <p>To keep track of the signs of time-upcoming trends (MEMO: Similar to what CEO of Aгенzija Zghazagh suggested)</p>	<p>so needs are not special...they are very broad.”</p> <p>“For all I know worksheets might still be necessary for particular audiences, I don't know, but again the communities are changing so fast...things are changing so fast...it's already difficult to say what we would need in 2019.”</p> <p>“...it's not just young adults from different social classes...it's even young adults who have varied identities, I mean...a Maltese can be Lithuanian by birth, can be Scandinavian, can be many things...can be Libyan...how are we going to reconcile (merge) that...I don't know the answer but I know where there are challenges...”</p> <p>“...this is quite a challenging category because they have their backgrounds, they have their cultures...”</p> <p>“...most of them would be into what is trendy so we really need to understand how to attract these people to something that is trendy...I don't know what is trendy now for example...”</p> <p>“What I think is crucial for this category is to understand exactly what the issues are, what the needs are”</p> <p>“I think worksheets might not be the solution, I think we have to change according to the times...I mean if these public audiences spent most of their time on their computers...”</p> <p>“I think there is the need for research ... I think we need to understand what the needs are”</p>
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	<p>Getting familiar with young adults culture and needs</p> <p>A process of continuous change and keeping in sync</p> <p>The future museum is audience-centred</p> <p>The audience as participants</p> <p>A museum reflecting identities</p> <p>Inclusive collections</p> <p>Plans:</p> <p>Connected events</p> <p>No complete plans</p>	<p>“I mean they are exciting challenges by the way but we really need to ...keep track of what the situation is and try to react to it...this is something which I have been suggesting to happen within Heritage Malta for quite some time...similar to what the church authorities have-discern...discern is a unit which is reading the signs of the time all the time...”</p> <p>“...what I would like to address through MUŻA as well...is taste changing? What are the tastes? What words...what language do we need to speak for these people to engage, to understand?”</p> <p>“...you have to adjust, you have to rethink, otherwise we’re dead meat, I mean we’re fossils, there’s no option, it has to be a process of continuous change...we have to really keep in sync and by 2025, by 2030...”</p> <p>“there are studies published by UCA and others showing that the museums of the future will not be about the discovery of the masterpieces...this is the big mistake that the governments in the States are doing...they want to recreate the Louvre or the Chinese... The future is not the Louvre, the future is ...eg. Museum of Innocence...the future is the museum which places the visitor at the centre of the experience...the public...the participant...”</p> <p>“I call them the participants...you can participate in the museum experience...it has to be a museum, a collection which has to reflect the demographic of the several identities of the community...should we include works by refugees in our public collections? I would say ‘yes’....eg. we can have big artists from Syria in Malta that we don’t know about...so they are part of this community...”</p>
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		<p>“it could be anything...I mean the plusses that MUŻA will have concern its one lead approach, so you can have an event on site which could be connected to a special exhibition, which could be connected to a community space, which could also be in a way connected to the cafeteria”</p> <p>“...I mean at this stage, there are no complete plans, but we need to have a plan, based on all that we have been discussing basically.”</p>
<p>MUŻA’s Virtual Aspects</p>	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Young adults...the digital natives.</p> <p>Heritage Malta lacks adjustment to the trends</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Social Media</p> <p>Plans:</p> <p>Facebook Page</p> <p>Hand-held devices</p> <p>Galleries with digital devices</p>	<p>“...with an IT savvy generation, which we call ‘Digital Natives’, I think we have to rethink our strategies...I don’t have the answer...I think we have to come up with some other solutions.”</p> <p>“you have to adjust according to the times, otherwise you end up out of sync and you have to speak trends and fashion...again this is where Heritage Malta lacks for example”</p> <p>“...obviously social media is a must... with Facebook, it’s easy to do that...with Instagram...snapchats...I mean...you have to be there because that’s how most of these people access...”</p> <p>“...when you have a young adults population which is on Facebook, almost 50% of our population is on Facebook, I mean you cannot ignore these”</p> <p>“...there’s a Facebook page...”</p>

	<p>(MEMO: I remarked to the curator that there are young adults communities who do not have much access to digital devices and hence not that digital savvy. He confessed that he is not as updated as to what certain young adult communities have access to.)</p>	<p>“...I think we were the first museum...the NMFA was the first museum to engage with Facebook way back and obviously now the museum’s Facebook page is already there and it is fantastic...”</p> <p>“MUZA will have its hand held devices...”</p> <p>“...with digital devices, the galleries themselves will have a hand-held device with recordings, videos and so on and so forth...”</p>
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The Textual Coding Process of Research Project 3

(with a young adults’ community at the Corradino Correctional Facility, Summer 2017)

The Purpose

The purpose of Research Project 3 was to find out both the expected and actual impact of the project’s various workshops. The evaluation of the transcribed initial interviews provides a picture of the participants’ expectations of the project, their awareness of the NMFA and their expected relevance of a project with reference to the NMFA collection. The transcribed final interviews indicate the participants’ understandings of their learning experiences throughout the workshops and their approaches in engaging with the NMFA collection. The evaluation of my field-notes serves to add, or at times confirm, these learning experiences.

The Context of the Initial Interviews:

Five days before the start of the project workshops, a two hour session was held at the assigned classrooms within the Education Section of the CCF (Corradino Correctional Facility). During the session, a ten minute introduction through a power-point presentation gave a general explanation of the initial interviews and how their contribution is vital to my study. I also explained the reason for not going into much detail about the project at that stage in order to avoid influencing them regarding their expectations of the project. The participants agreed to participate, signed the consent forms and waited their turns for the individual interviews. This put their mind at rest as

regards interviews and the information session being held for all. To respect CCF policies, the interviews could not be recorded, but the participants' replies were documented by taking down their own wording in their own language.

Sorting the textual data

Concepts, suggestions and themes were coded using phrases which can best fit the purpose of the evaluation. This involved going through all the textual data (interview transcripts and field-notes) in a systematic way. The process of creating codes involved a hybrid of pre-set and emergent codes. Before starting the data collection, a list of pre-set codes deriving from the list of interview questions was used to code all the textual data. Another set of codes emerged from reading, rereading and analysing all the collected textual data. These emergent codes include concepts, actions and meanings observed both by the participants through their evaluations of each workshop and interview replies and by myself as the researcher through written field-notes. Below is an explanation of the sorting of textual data for Project 3 by applying a process which created a hybrid of pre-set and emergent codes.

Pre-set Categories for the initial interviews:

- Expectations of the Project
- Expected Life Benefits of the Project
- Awareness of the NMFA
- Expected Relevance

Emergent codes (in bold) for the initial interviews:

The following emergent codes demonstrate the participants' expectations from the project and their awareness of the NMFA.

- Art **Technical** Aspect
- New **Knowledge**
- **Creative** Aspect
- **Meaning-making**
- Sharing **knowledge**

- **Connection** to Art Museum
- **Social** Aspect
- Learning **experience**
- **Self-improvement**
- **Transferrable skills**
- **Self-expression**
- **Art museums appreciation**
- **Never visited** NMFA
- **Visited** NMFA once
- **Cultural**
- **Educational**
- Contains **paintings**
- **Intimidating**
- Full of **surprises**
- **Educational** Aspect
- **Art Appreciation**
- **Connection to Life**
- **Practical** Aspect

Coded Initial Interviews of Project 3		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Frequency of occurrence in participants' replies
Expectations of the Project	New Knowledge	6
	Art Technical Aspect	5
	Creative Aspect	1
	Meaning making	1
	Sharing knowledge	1
	Connection to Art Museum	1

<p>MEMO: Six participants mentioned their expectation of learning something new through the project. The expectation of five participants was to learn the technical aspect of art, probably because the CCF staff promoted the call for application for the project informing inmates that the content would involve photography and drawing.</p>		
Expected Life Benefits	Social Aspect	3
	Learning experience	3
	Self-improvement	3
	Transferrable skills	1
	Self-expression	1
	Art museums appreciation	1
<p>MEMO: Three participants mentioned their expectation of the project's benefits from a social aspect, in that it would provide the opportunity to mingle with others, check out others' opinions and learning from each other.</p>		
Awareness of the NMFA	Never visited	10
	Visited	2
	Cultural	2
	Educational	1
	Contains paintings	1
	Intimidating	1
	Full of surprises	1
<p>MEMO: The participants stated that they had never visited the NMFA, with the exception of two who visited it once and had a positive impression of it.</p>		
Expected relevance of a Project with reference to an Art Museum	Educational Aspect	4
	Art Appreciation	4
	Connection to Life	3
	Practical Aspect	2

MEMO: Most participants mentioned their expectation of the project’s relevance as enhancing their education and art appreciation. Some of them explained their love for art and their interest in learning to appreciate art while observing artworks.

The Context of the Final Interviews:

The final interviews were carried out in an empty classroom at the CCF Education section on the day following the conclusion of the project’s workshops. In order to respect the CCF policies, the interviews could not be recorded, but the participants’ replies were documented by taking down their own wording in the language used by the participants. Throughout the project, ten out of twelve participants continued to attend. Due to reasons of sickness, hospitalisation and injuries, only five out of ten participants could attend the final interviews. Some interviews took longer than planned, as the participants opened up more than what was required by the questions.

Pre-set codes for the final interviews:

- Meeting the Project’s Expectations
- Understanding of the learning experiences
- Relevance of the social themes discussed
- Relevance of the images of the NMFA collection
- Acquired skills and their application in life
- Relevance of the Project’s activities
- Suggested improvements of the workshops

Emergent codes (in bold) for the final interviews:

The following emergent codes show the participants’ awareness of their learning experiences through the project’s workshops, the ways in which they practised the transferable skills, their approaches in engaging with the NMFA collection and the suggestions they made for improving the workshops.

Learned more than expected Experienced deep communication A sense of well-being and freedom	Meaning-making Connection to life stories Ideas for creative work
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<p>Meaning-making of my life</p> <p>Connecting through art</p> <p>Awareness of life</p> <p>Self-expression through drawing</p> <p>Inspiration for developing new ideas</p> <p>Awareness of the creative process</p> <p>Discovered Art’s purpose further</p> <p>Visual Literacy</p> <p>Tolerance of diversity of ideas</p> <p>Social skills</p> <p>Art mirroring life</p> <p>Creative Process</p> <p>All themes were relevant</p> <p>All was relevant in the project</p> <p>Every theme is connected</p> <p>Communicating through Art</p> <p>Learning from other’s experiences</p> <p>Learning from mistakes</p> <p>Museum Artworks as inspiring</p> <p>Mind-mapping for life</p> <p>Chosen theme-Healing from drugs</p>	<p>Visual Literacy practice</p> <p>Reference to natural environment</p> <p>Aroused emotions</p> <p>The acquired skills can be applied throughout life</p> <p>Thinking skills</p> <p>Creative process</p> <p>Art’s technical aspect: drawing; photography; comic art techniques</p> <p>Communicating through art</p> <p>Art Journal</p> <p>Awareness of mistakes and problem-solving</p> <p>Social skills</p> <p>Awareness of new abilities</p> <p>All was relevant</p> <p>Photography was limited by the prison context</p> <p>More time (duration of project was short)</p> <p>Unsuitable learning environment conditions: (distractions due to heat and the noise of fans which caused papers to fly all over).</p> <p>More encouragement for young adults participation in such project: not only for those who can draw.</p>
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Coded Final Interviews of Project 3		
Pre-Set Categories	Emergent Codes	Frequency of occurrence in participants’ replies (out of 5)

Meeting the Project's Expectations	Learned more than expected	All participants
	Experienced deep communication	2
	A sense of well-being and freedom	1
	Meaning-making of my life	1
	Connecting through art	1
	Awareness of life	1
	Self-expression through drawing	1
	Inspiration for developing new ideas	1
	Awareness of the creative process	1
<p>MEMO: All participants insisted that they have been learning much more than they expected throughout the project. Individually they all came up with different benefits having been experienced and which they did not expect to attain from an art project.</p>		
Understanding the Project's learning experiences	Discovered Art's purpose further	3
	Visual Literacy	3
	Tolerance of diversity of ideas	2
	Social skills	2
	Art mirroring life	1
	Creative Process	1
<p>MEMO: Most participants mentioned their awareness of the social aspect, more than the aesthetic and technical aspects of art, as being the learning experiences gained from the project.</p>		
Relevance of the themes discussed	All themes were relevant	All
	All was relevant in the project	All
	Every theme is connected	2
	Communicating through Art	2
	Learning from other's experiences	1
	Learning from mistakes	1
	Museum Artworks as inspiring	1

	Mind-mapping for life	1
	Chosen theme- Healing from drugs	1
<p>MEMO: When asked about the themes, the participants were of the opinion that every theme and activity done during the project was relevant for life, including mind-mapping, the museum artworks, comic art, etc. When I probed further about the general themes we discussed, they said that they considered all themes to be were relevant.</p>		
Relevance of the reference to the NMFA collection	Meaning-making	All
	Connection to life stories	4
	Ideas for creative work	3
	Visual Literacy practice	3
	Reference to natural environment	1
	Aroused emotions	1
<p>MEMO: All participants found the NMFA collection relevant. Somehow they all explained how they could make meaning out of the artworks, through interpretations and discussions about their own experiences and those of others.</p>		
Acquired skills and their application in life	The acquired skills can be applied throughout life	All
	Thinking skills	All
	Creative process	4
	Art's technical aspect: drawing; photography; comic art techniques	3
	Communicating through art	3
	Art Journal	3
	Awareness of mistakes and problem-solving	2
	Social skills	2
	Awareness of new abilities	2

MEMO: All participants indicated their awareness of the skills gained through the project which they were already applying in life.		
Relevance of the Project's activities	All was relevant	4 participants
	Photography was limited by the prison context	1 participant
MEMO: With the exception of one, all participants said that they found nothing irrelevant as all was meaningful to them. According to one participant (P2) the irrelevant workshops were those including photography sessions as he felt that photography was limited due to their context of prison confinement and thus not very inspiring.		
Suggested improvements of the workshops	More time (duration of project was short)	2
	Authorities need to provide environmental conditions suitable for learning: heat, noisy fans and papers flying all over, were very distracting.	2
	More encouragement for young adults to participate in the project: not only for those who can draw.	1
MEMO: Two participants suggested more time was required. Participant 4 said that he learned so much and found the project so enjoyable that it should have taken longer. Participant 1 insisted that at least the project should have been going on for 3 months as he considers art as essential for all young adults to express moments in life. Participant 3 showed a similar response as he suggested that the authorities should encourage all to take part in such projects not only those who could draw. Two participants (P.2 and P.5) complained about the poor learning environment conditions, which has been a common complaint of all participants throughout the project.		

Refining Codes from the Interviews

The codes that emerged from the **initial** and **final** interviews of Project 3 were refined by selecting the codes most frequently mentioned. Some of the **most frequently mentioned** codes shared similar concepts, and these were highlighted in different colours. For example artistic techniques and art abilities were highlighted in yellow.

Most frequently mentioned codes:	Codes highlighted into categories:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Knowledge • Art Technical Aspect • Social Aspect • Learning experience • Self-improvement • Never visited the NMFA • Educational Aspect • Art Appreciation • Learned more than expected • Tolerance of diversity of ideas • Social skills • Experienced deep communication • Discovered Art's purpose further • Visual Literacy • All themes were relevant • All was relevant in the project • Every theme is connected • Communicating through Art • Meaning-making • Connection to life stories • Ideas for creative work • Visual Literacy practice • The acquired skills can be applied throughout life • Thinking skills • Creative process • Art's technical aspect: drawing; photography; comic art techniques • Communicating through art • Art Journal for life • Awareness of mistakes and problem-solving • Social skills • Awareness of new abilities • All was relevant • More time required for the project • Improvement of learning environment conditions 	<p>New Knowledge (Recognition of the Project's holistic benefits)</p> <p>Art Technical Aspect (Artistic Techniques)</p> <p>Social Aspect (transferable skills)</p> <p>Learning experience(Connection to life)</p> <p>Self-improvement</p> <p>Never visited the NMFA (Current Situation)</p> <p>Educational Aspect</p> <p>Art Appreciation</p> <p>Learned more than expected</p> <p>Tolerance of diversity of ideas</p> <p>Social skills</p> <p>Experienced deep communication</p> <p>Discovered Art's purpose further</p> <p>Visual Literacy</p> <p>All themes were relevant (Relevance of the Project)</p> <p>All was relevant in the project</p> <p>Every theme is connected</p> <p>Communicating through Art</p> <p>Meaning-making</p> <p>Connection to life stories</p> <p>Ideas for creative work</p> <p>Visual Literacy practice</p> <p>The acquired skills can be applied throughout life</p> <p>Thinking skills</p> <p>Creative process</p> <p>Art's technical aspect: drawing; photography; comic art techniques</p> <p>Communicating through art</p> <p>Art Journal for life</p> <p>Awareness of mistakes and problem-solving</p> <p>Social skills</p> <p>Awareness of new abilities</p> <p>All was relevant</p> <p>More time required for the project</p> <p>(Suggestions for improvement of the project)</p>

	Improvement of learning environment conditions
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The highlighted codes extracted from the list were grouped under a general heading forming six key categories. These were used as pre-set codes for the coding process of the **Field Notes of Project 3**.

MEMO: The codes which were the most frequently highlighted in green indicate that the participants recognized their practice of transferable skills much more than the practice of artistic techniques which is the common expectation of participants in an art project.

Six Main Categories extracted from the Interviews of Project 3: The Project's holistic benefits Artistic Techniques Transferable skills Connection to life Relevance of the Project Suggestions for improvement of the project

Coding the Field Notes of Project 3

While reading the field notes, I highlighted the text according to the six main categories extracted from the interviews. After I typed the field notes in each section, other specific codes started emerging. I typed the codes in bold before each field note to continue labelling and clarifying each field note.

Field-notes grouped according to Categories extracted from the Interviews:

Category: The Project's holistic benefits A sense of accomplishment: I could observe their sense of pride and accomplishment in designing their Journal's front cover. This could also be confirmed on listening to them mentioning comments about their satisfaction, while presenting what they have created and the reasons behind the design. (25.07.2017)

Gained awareness of their intentions: During the introductory discussion, the participants mentioned how the project made them aware of their intentions and the motivations behind their actions, which they hardly ever thought of. Most of them agreed that if they had thought about their intentions, they would probably not be in prison right now! (1.08.2017)

During the evaluation session, the participants mentioned that through developing their chosen theme, they had the opportunity to think about issues they would otherwise not have considered. (17.08.2017)

A sense of commitment: Two participants arrived to class 15 minutes early, in order to continue unfinished work as (with the exception of two participants) they were not allowed art material in their cell. (3.08.2017)

Altruism: They found the role-play activity really interesting and after each tour they praised each other and offered suggestions to one another for the development of the theme. (3.08.2017)

Deep thoughts: They came up with a lot of insights. One of them presented his work by asking us questions to reflect on, which in turn created quite an interesting discussion about humanity, racism and status in society. These are themes with which most people can identify. (3.08.2017)

Tolerance and gratitude: I noticed how today's session has enabled them to get to know each other on a deeper level. I observed them showing tolerance and appreciating their diversity, through recognizing that they are all humans, and belong to the same race. This was further confirmed during the self-evaluation session, where they expressed their gratitude for each other's openness and honesty. (3.08.2017)

Feeling accepted: During self-evaluation session, they mentioned how the activity of role-play helped them to feel that their meaning-making of their selected image of the NMFA artworks was validated. They realized that no one ridiculed them or made them feel that their interpretation is invalid. (3.08.2017)

Appreciating the surroundings: The participants mentioned that they learned new things and enjoyed the new experience of photography. They admitted that they started noticing objects and symbols which they often took for granted and ignored. (8.08.2017)

Self-awareness: They felt it was very valuable as they learned a lot about themselves and others and hence not only about the comic art technique. (10.08.2017)

During the self-evaluation session, the participants mentioned how through developing their chosen theme, they got to know themselves more. (17.08.2017)

Empathy and social connection: While presenting their comic art creation, some of them got quite emotional. The honesty with which they shared deep feelings made them relate to each

other more. I observed how after the presentations, most of them invited each other outside for a cigarette break to continue to share their experiences. (10.08.2017)

Initiative to help: All participants enthusiastically offered to help me out with their exhibition set-up. (17.08.2017)

Exposing hidden emotions: While presenting his work development, one participant talked a lot about how the development of his theme regarding family relationships inspired by the NMFA artwork of Samuel Bugeja's Mother and Child, enabled him to express his emotional pain and share it with the rest. (17.08.2017)

MEMO: Both from my observations of the participants' reactions and behaviour and also from their feedback during the introduction discussions and evaluation sessions, I could notice how the project resulted in holistic benefits. This included well-being and social skills, eg. a sense of self-accomplishment, self-awareness and empathy.

Category: Artistic techniques

Participants' motivation for joining the project: At one point I noticed that a few participants decided to apply for the project with the intention of learning art techniques (During the Information session, 20.07.2017)

Exploring Painting Techniques: Some participants decided to use paints during an activity. Since they had no idea how to use paints, I decided to address their need and demonstrate basic techniques to whoever was interested. (27.07.2017)

Art Techniques as an escape mechanism: One of the participants felt that the project was a sort of psychology course as they were discussing and his idea about Art was techniques-based, by copying what the teacher draws...he explained how this for him would have helped him escape from himself and life. (27.07.2017)

Art terminology: Soon they were using terminology like 'focus', 'angle' and 'light' while taking photos and suggesting photography techniques to each other. (8.08.2017)

Beyond Art techniques: The 6 participants who attended today's session felt it was very valuable as they learned a lot about themselves and others and hence realized that the workshop was not only about the comic art technique. (10.08.2017)

Sharing past experiences through sharing techniques: When it came to editing the printed photos manually, the participants engaged in cutting, overlapping images and writing on them. These manual photo-editing techniques were shared by one of the participants while narrating

about techniques he learned through a former job in his family business, which involved creating adverts for public buses. (16.08.2017)

Drawing-media were preferred: While referring to the chosen NMFA artworks, all participants chose drawing-media and no one wanted to use paints. They admitted it was less time-consuming. (17.08.2017)

MEMO: It was evident that most participants applied for the project thinking that it would involve the technical aspect of art, as is often expected and also because the project's application has been promoted that way by the CCF staff. Yet, the majority of the participants recognized that the project went beyond mere artistic techniques and appreciated this, also recognizing the wide variety of learning benefits and skills they were experiencing for life.

Category: Transferable skills

Creative Thinking: The participants got immersed into creating the artwork that somehow reflected themselves. This involved making reference to their mind-maps. (27.07.2017)

Meaning-making: While discussing, they mentioned the benefits of the Art Journal as a way of recording what they are thinking and making meaning of. (1.08.2017)

Another interesting discussion arose while the participants thought about their 'wants' and 'needs', where they shared various meanings of these concepts. (1.08.2017)

Unlike the participants of the former projects, the participants of Project 3 immediately chose images of the NMFA artworks that resonated with their own work. (3.08.2017)

While presenting their 'comic art' creation, the participants explained in detail how they connected the drawing to their life, their selected theme and their meaning making of the drawing. (10.08.2017)

Critical Thinking: They also mentioned the value of mind-mapping that helped them to visualize their thoughts. (1.08.2017)

During the role-play activity, it was evident that the participants could use higher order thinking skills as they mentioned reasons for choosing the images of the NMFA works and their relevance to their selected theme. (3.08.2017)

When presenting their work progress, the participants showed that they have been thinking critically and creatively, as they mentioned the Art Journaling which had helped them to figure out how to deal with their selected theme. (17.08.2017)

During the evaluation session, the participants showed gratitude for having been given the opportunity to think about important life issues that they would not otherwise have thought about. (17.08.2017)

Planning: At the end of today's workshop, two participants shared their ideas of how they intend to develop their chosen theme. (1.08.2017)

Innovation: It was interesting to observe the participants excited to develop their ideas and planning the materials required...showing that the theme they selected to develop, really resonated with them and in return it set them thinking in innovative ways. (1.08.2017)

Social skills: During the photography practical session, I noticed the participants inspiring each other, by sharing ideas and approaches of taking intriguing photos. (8.08.2017)

While explaining their learning during the evaluation session, the participants showed gratitude towards each other for helping to see things in more depth while taking photos. (8.08.2017)

On presenting their work progress, the participants mentioned how they shared ideas and helped each other, which led them to appreciate the value of collaboration during the workshops. (17.08.2017)

MEMO: The participants have been going through a creative process of thinking, encouraged by open-ended questions and tasks to develop their selected theme with reference to the NMFA artworks. The tasks involved selecting both the theme and the NMFA artworks and finding connections to their own life and the message they wish to send. This process led them to practice higher order thinking skills.

Category: Connection to life

Unplanned discussions: From this, we could discuss life events beyond our control...things that happen which are useless to try to control (27.07.2017)

This served as an introduction which also involved valuable reflections on the reasons for our actions and intentions, not only for the project but also in life. (1.08.2017)

Personal experiences: During the role-play activity, some participants got very emotional while presenting their tour, because they related certain artworks to personal experiences and expressed their pain. (3.08.2017)

Life story: The participants' commitment to creating their artwork was probably because comic art gave them the opportunity to tell their story. In fact I noticed that although the objective was

to create a story about their selected theme, somehow most participants ended up including their own experience in the thematic development of the comic story. (10.08.2017)

Meaning-making of life: ...while presenting their comic artwork to the rest, the participants all went into a lot of details and this showed their ways of connecting the comic art to their life. It also showed their selected theme and the meaning-making based on the theme. (10.08.2018)

Reflection on life in prison: One participant continued to develop the artwork based on the notion that he is already seeing light but now he has to see life, while in prison he cannot see life. (17.08.2017)

MEMO: Plenty of interesting discussions arose unexpectedly through the activities and while observing artworks. Such discussions confirmed the participants' ways of connecting to life while making meaning of their personal experiences, emotions and needs through the project's activities and the NMFA collection.

Category: Relevance of the Project

The mind-map concept: The participants praised the mind-map concept and those who already knew about it could share its benefits with the rest. (25.07.2017)

The task of theme selection: One of the participants felt so enthusiastic about his selected theme that he asked me whether he could continue to develop the theme in his cell and finish it off in the days which followed. This was one of the two participants who was allowed drawing materials in his cell and also had a personal sketch-book. (27.07.2017)

The two virtual exhibitions: Once again some participants complained of heat, however I noticed that once I showed them the two virtual exhibitions created by the participants of the previous project, they appeared to calm down and were quite focused. Their comments showed they appreciated the concepts developed by the previous participants with reference to the NMFA images. (3.08.2017)

The task of linking the NMFA images to selected themes: The significance of selecting the NMFA images in relation to the selected themes for the CCF participants was very flowing; unlike for the participants of the other two projects. (3.08. 2017)

New ways of looking at Art: During the self-evaluation session, most participants felt sure that looking at an artwork, one does not need to guess the artist's intention. They expressed their appreciation that from now on, they can start looking at artworks and can relate to them by letting the artwork communicate with them. (3.08.2018)

The role-play activity: They explained that the activity of role-playing in being a museum-guide, helped them to feel that their own meaning-making of their selected NMFA works in relation to their selected theme was valid. (3.08.2018)

MEMO: The expressed need of the participants to continue working on their Art Journal to develop their selected theme showed that they found the project relevant. Unfortunately only two of them were allowed to continue working in their cell with their drawing tools. During self-evaluation sessions, there were several times when the participants expressed their gratitude for having participated in the project's activities and tasks as they helped them in acquiring new learning and approaches to appreciate art and life. They explained how they found the tasks meaningful and how they learned new ways of developing their artwork, especially after having watched the creative process through the videos produced by the participants of the previous project.

Category: **Suggestions for improvement of the project**

Allowance of materials in cells: The participants expressed their need to continue working on the Art Journals, but I reminded them that due to the CCF policies, no art material can leave the classroom. **MEMO:** A change in this policy could improve the project's learning benefits through continuation. (25.07.2017)

More time required for a workshop: During the self-evaluation session, most participants complained regarding the two hour limit for workshops, which did not provide enough time to finish off their tasks. (27.07.2017)

Allowance of enough time to prepare the classroom: Teachers need to be escorted by CCF staff to the classroom at least 30minutes before the workshops start. This would give enough time for the teachers to prepare the classroom, including the necessary preparations such as the transfer of materials from the office , laying out the materials, opening windows, switching on fans and setting up of laptop and projector. (22.08.2017)

The Emerging Codes in Field-notes marked by an *asterix

I started to observe repetitive situations in the text and since they did not concern the six main categories, new codes emerged. On rereading the field notes, I started to mark the emergent codes with colour-coded Alphabet letters and an asterix symbol. The categorizations are fluid as most of the field notes fall simultaneously into several categories as well as emergent codes..

Emergent Codes:

*A	Actions (that I had to take immediately or during the following session in response to the participants' needs)
*B	Benefits of the Project (observed by staff members/participants)
*C	Challenges (what I found challenging)
*N	Needs (that started arising)
*NMFA	NMFA links
*Q	Qualities/potentials of the participants (observed traits of altruism, initiatives, collaboration)
*S	Effective Strategies (approaches that worked)
*T	Unplanned Topics (that arose for debate and discussions)

APPENDIX 3.3: THE VISUAL CODING PROCESS

THE STRUCTURE OF FOLDERS FOR THE VISUAL METHODS OF PROJECT 1			
Main Folder's Title: Images of Journals and Workshops Documentation			
Three Sub-Folders containing photos: 1.Documentation of Participants' final Presentations demonstrating links between their work and the selected works from the NMFA			
	2. Photos from the contents of the Participants' Art Journals	3. Photos of the Workshops	
Categorized Folders	ART JOURNALS' Personalized Cover Design	1 st Workshop on 28.07.2016 ART JOURNALING AND SELF-IDENTITY	
		Personalizing the Cover Design of the ART JOURNALS	Mind-mapping SELF-IDENTITY
	Mind-maps of 'SELF-IDENTITY'		
		2 nd Workshop on 4.08.2016 MIND-MAPPING THE SELECTED THEME	
	Mind-maps of 'I NEED'	Mind-mapping the SELECTED THEME	Presenting the SELECTED THEME
	Mind-maps of 'SELECTED THEME'	3 rd Workshop on 11.08.2016 MIND-MAPPING NEEDS + NMFA/MUZA SENIOR CURATOR TALK	
	EXPERIMENTING with Art Media and Techniques	Mind-mapping the 'NEEDS'	NMFA/ MUZA Curator Talk
	Participants' SELF-EVALUATIONS (dated according to Workshops)	4 th Workshop on 18.08.2016 NMFA Visit and Role-Play Tasks	
		Introduction of the NMFA PREMISES	GUIDED TOUR at NMFA visit
	PLANS for the Development of the Artwork	Observing and SELECTING WORKS	ROLE-PLAY as a Museum Guide
REASONS for the selected NMFA Artworks	5 th Workshop on 25.08.2016 TIME-MANAGEMENT PLAN and PRESENTATION for DEVELOPING ARTWORK		
	CODES:	6 th Workshop on 1.09.2016	

ART JOURNALS MIND-MAPPING SELF-IDENTITY NEEDS SELECTED THEME SELECTED NMFA WORKS EXPERIMENTING WITH MEDIA DEVELOPMENT OF WORK MEANING-MAKING NMFA VISIT ROLE-PLAY TIME-MANAGEMENT PLAN PRESENTATION OF WORK CURATOR TALK	DEVELOPING THE ARTWORKS	
	7 th Workshop on 8.09.2016 MEANING-MAKING OF WORK	
	Presentation of Meaning-Making and artwork plans	The process of Developing the Artwork
	8th Workshop on 15.09.2016 PRESENTING WORKS' DEVELOPMENT	
	Presentation of Artwork links and development	Presentation of Final Works
	All Artworks and development through Art Journals	

THE STRUCTURE OF FOLDERS FOR THE VISUAL METHODS OF PROJECT 2	
Main Folder's Title: VISUAL DOCUMENTATION	
Six Sub-Folders: two containing students' power-point presentations, one containing images documenting the developed project's exhibition, another contains the virtual exhibitions created by the students, another contains the video-recordings of the workshops, while another containing photos of the learning process during the workshops and beyond	
1. Students' Power-point presentations of investigating the selected theme vis-à-vis the selected NMFA work/s 7.10.2016	
2. Students' Power-point presentations of investigating the selected theme in progress 4.11.2016	
3. IMAGES OF the Developed Project's Exhibition SPEKTRUM	
4. VIRTUAL EXHIBITIONS created by the seven Participants	
5. Video-recordings of the Workshops	6. Photos taken during the Workshops (Further sub-folders' names in bullet-points)

Categorized Folders	SESSION 1: 3.02.2017 Reminder of the Project Purpose + our Collaborating Roles of Researcher-Educator-Participants + Feedback on the Initial Interviews	PRE-WORKSHOPS PRESENTATIONS: 21.10.2016 and 4.11.2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations about their initial sketches and exploring suitable materials to use.
		SESSION 1: 3.02.2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation of the Selected Theme • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 1
	SESSION 2: 9.02.2017 Mind-mapping Self-Identity + the Creative Process, including a tentative Development Plan of the Virtual Exhibition.	SESSION 2: 9.02.2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Tentative Development of the Virtual Exhibition • Process of 'My Identity' Mind-map • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 2
	SESSION 3: 17.02.2017 Concepts of Mind-mapping and Brainstorming + Mind-mapping the Creative Process on the Art Journal and Virtually	SESSION 3: 17.02.2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Identity' Mind-maps • Process of creating Virtual Mind-maps of Final Year Project • Tangible Mind-maps of Final Year Project • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 3
	SESSION 4: 24.02.2017 Reviewing images from the NMFA Collection (a selection dealing with social aspects). Updating the mind-maps with selections of the NMFA collection.	SESSION 4: 24.02.2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Reviewing NMFA Collection • Tangible Mind-Map of Project Exhibition • Virtual Mind-Map of Project Exhibition • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 4
	SESSION 5: 3.03.2017 The Curatorial Role + Starting the Development of the Virtual Exhibition	SESSION 5: 3.03.2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing the Virtual Exhibition (V.E.) • Exploring the Curatorial-Role • Helping each other to discover • Sketches of Virtual Exhibition (V.E.)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 5
SESSION 6: 17.03.2017 Presentation of the development of the Virtual Exhibition + Exploring the Personal Youth Needs-Universal Youth Needs	SESSION 6: 17.03.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming 'Youth Needs' • Mind-mapping 'Youth Needs' • V.E. Creative Process Presentation • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 6
SESSION 7: 24.03.2017 Youth Community Outreach through the Virtual Exhibition 21 st Century skills	SESSION 7: 24.03.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 7
SESSION 8: 7.04.2017 Assessing and Evaluating the Virtual Exhibition	SESSION 8: 7.04.2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' Self-Evaluations Session 8
SESSION 9: 9.06.2017 Students' Presentations of their Virtual Exhibitions and Focus Groups re Feedback of Final Interviews		
EMERGING CODES: ART JOURNALS MIND-MAPPING SELF-IDENTITY UNIVERSAL AND PERSONAL YOUTH NEEDS SELECTED THEME SELECTED NMFA WORKS DEVELOPMENT OF WORK MEANING-MAKING PRESENTATION OF WORK SELF-EVALUATION VIRTUAL EXHIBITION TANGIBLE EXHIBITION YOUTH COMMUNITY OUTREACH CURATORIAL ROLE		
THE STRUCTURE OF FOLDERS FOR THE VISUAL METHODS OF PROJECT 3		
Main Folder's Title: Images of Journals, Workshops and 2 Exhibitions' Documentation		

Four Sub-Folders containing photos:			
1. Photography taken by Participants, some of them including an arrangement of images of the NMFA collection			
2. Photos of the two exhibitions			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Exhibition at CCF • Images of the Exhibition at the School of Art 			
	3. Photos from the contents of the Participants' Art Journals	4. Photos of the Workshops	
Categorized Folders	ART JOURNALS' Personalized Cover Design 25.07.2017	1 st Workshop on 25.07.2017 ART JOURNALING AND SELF-IDENTITY	
	Mind-maps of 'SELF-IDENTITY' 25.07.2017	Personalizing the Cover Design of the ART JOURNALS	Mind-mapping SELF-IDENTITY
	Process of 'THIS IS ME' Artwork 27.07.2017	2 nd Workshop on 27.07.2017 DEVELOPING THE SELECTED THEME	
	Reasons for Artwork 'THIS IS ME' 1.08.2017	3 rd Workshop on 1.08.2017 PROCESS AND PRESENTATION OF WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' Presentation of their drawings in relation to their selected theme • The process and presentation of Mind-mapping 'MY NEEDS' • The Process of connecting to the selected theme • Whiteboard showing a Mind-map of Collective Needs constructed by participants 	
	Mind-maps of 'MY NEEDS' 1.08.2017		
	Mind-maps of 'SELECTED THEME' 1.08.2017		
	Reasons for Selecting NMFA images in view of their selected theme 3.08.2017	4 th Workshop on 3.08.2017 MAKING CONNECTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of connecting the selected themes to their selected images of the NMFA Collection. 	
	Participants' list of objects to take photos of with reference to their selected theme 8.08.2017	5 th Workshop on 8.08.2017 COLLABORATING WITH ARTIST-PHOTOGRAPHER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating Artist-Stephen Vella's Presentation 	
	Comic Art Development 10.08.2017	6 th Workshop on 10.08.2017 COLLABORATING WITH ARTIST-COMIC ARTIST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating Artist- Peter Magro's Presentation • Creating the Comic Art • Presenting the Comic Art 	
Participants' SELF-EVALUATIONS (dated according to Workshops)			

	PLANS for the Development of the Artwork with reference to theme and NMFA Collection 16.08.2017	7 th Workshop on 16.08.2017 COLLABORATING WITH ARTIST-PHOTOGRAPHER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' photo editing, manually • Stephen Vella Demonstration
	Artwork development from the selected theme with reference to the selected NMFA artworks 17.08.2017	8th Workshop on 17.08.2017 MEANING-MAKING OF WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants presenting artworks' development
<p>CODES: ART JOURNALS; MIND-MAPPING; SELF-IDENTITY; NEEDS; SELECTED THEME; SELF-EVALUATION; PHOTOGRAPHY; COMIC ART; PRESENTATION OF WORK; MEANING-MAKING; NMFA COLLECTION; SELECTED NMFA WORKS; DEVELOPMENT OF WORK; TIME-MANAGEMENT PLAN</p>		

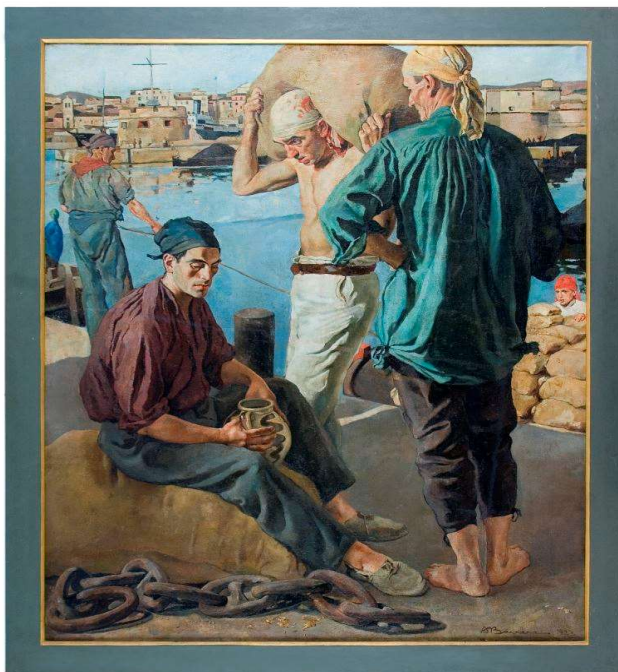
APPENDIX 3.4: THE PARTICIPANTS' CHOSEN ARTWORKS FROM THE NATIONAL ART MUSEUM COLLECTION

PROJECT 1

The following were the chosen artworks from the National Art Museum collection by the Participants residing at the Drug Rehabilitation in San Blas. They are not listed according to participants' choices and the same artworks inspired multiple participants.



Title: Interior with Women Knitting
Artist: Adriano Cecioni
Date: 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 80.5 x 59.5 cm (without frame)



Title: Il Grano di Oltremare
Artist: Antonio Barrera
Date: 20th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 140 x 166 cm (with frame)



Title: Arab Horses
Artist: Antonio Sciortino
Date: 1930
Medium: Plaster sculpture
Size: 66 cm (height)



Title: Rhythmii Vitae
Artist: Antonio Sciortino
Date: 1923
Medium: Bronze sculpture
Size: 112cm x 38cm x 28cm



Title: Mother and Child
Artist: Samuel Bugeja
Date: 20th - early 21st century
Medium: Wood sculpture
Size: 82 cm (height)



Title: Floating Iceberg and a Small Boat
Artist: Albert Bierstadt
Date: 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 53 x 83 cm (without frame)



Title: Nauplion in the Peloponese
Artist: Joseph Schranz
Date: 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 25 x 33 cm (without frame)



Title: View of Entrance to Grand Harbour (Storm Scene)
Artist: Thomas Lyde Hornbrook
Date: Early 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 119 x 85 cm (without frame)



Title: View of Manoel Island
Artist: Giorgio Pullicino
Date: 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting



Title: View of Grand Harbour
Artist: Anton Schranz
Date: Late 18th - early 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 68 x 103 cm (without frame)



Title: Allegory of the City of Antwerp
Artist: Theodor van Thulden
Date: c.1640
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 274 x 351 cm (without frame)



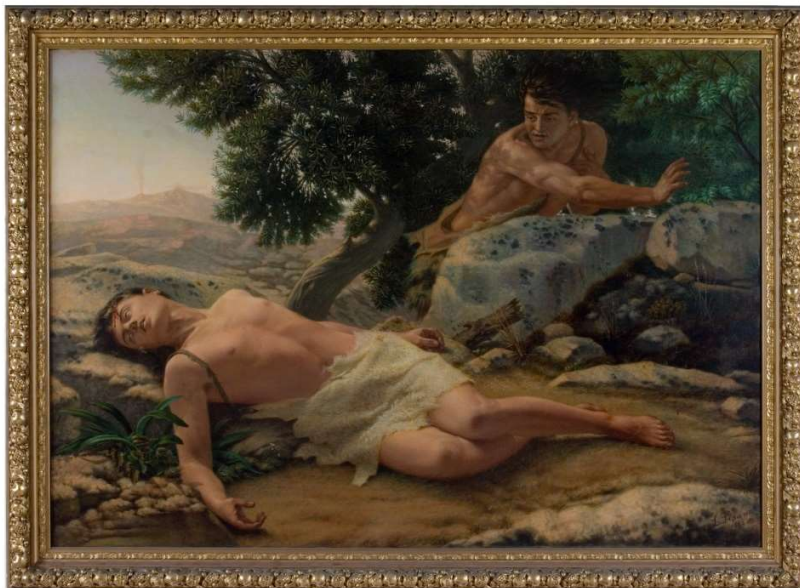
Title: Martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria
Artist: Mattia Preti
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting



Title: Christ on the Cross
Artist: Mattia Preti
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 158 x 104 cm (without frame)



Title: Portrait of Grandmaster Emmanuel Pinto de Fonseca
Artist: Antoine de Favray
Date: c.1747
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 136 x 100 cm (without frame)



Title: Death of Abel
Artist: Lazzaro Pisani
Date: 1885
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 138 x 197 cm (without frame)



Title: Alpine Landscape
Artist: Robert Caruana Dingli
Date: Late 19th - early 20th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 33 x 26.8 cm (without frame)

The participants of Project 1 chose the following artworks from the Contemporary Collection (a selection was displayed in the courtyard for the purpose of the project's museum visit):



Title: Islanders
Artist: Darrin Zammit Lupi
Date: 2014
Medium: Photography

Charmaine Zammit
Young Adults Learning in a National Art Museum: a Holistic Approach



Title: Companions
Artist: Joseph Smith
Date: 2014
Medium: Photography
Size: 114 x 83cm



Title: The Village Butcher
Artist: Joseph Smith
Date: 2014
Medium: Photography
Size: 84 x 59cm



Title: Sun Wheel, Qrendi Village Festa
Artist: Patrick J.Fenech
Date: 1980
Medium: Photography
Size: 42 x 29cm



Title: Village Gossip - Hal-Ghaxaq
Artist: Patrick J.Fenech
Date: 1979
Medium: Photography
Size: 29 x 42cm

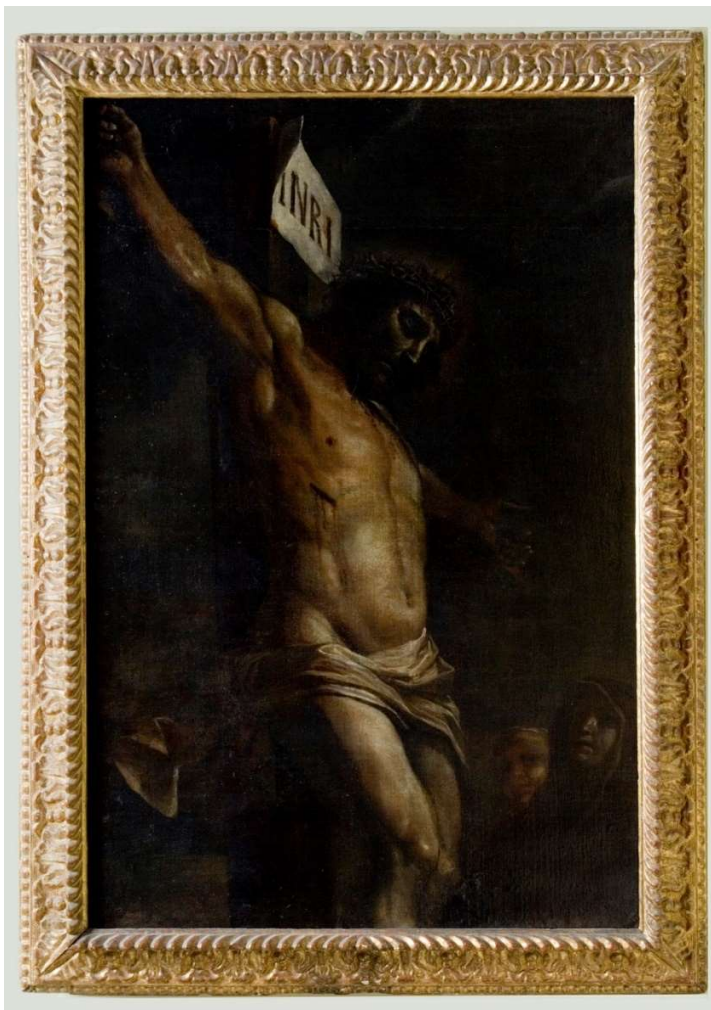


Title: 'Te Deum, St Elena' - B'Kara
Artist: Patrick J.Fenech
Date: 1982
Medium: Photography
Size: 42 x 29cm

PROJECT 2

The following were the artworks from the National Art Museum collection chosen by the participants, who were following a Bachelors' Degree in Art Education at the University of Malta. They are listed sequentially, according to each participant's choices of artworks showing their digital images as used for their respective theme development.

PARTICIPANT 1's CHOICES:



Title: Christ on the Cross
Artist: Mattia Preti
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 158 x 104 cm (without frame)

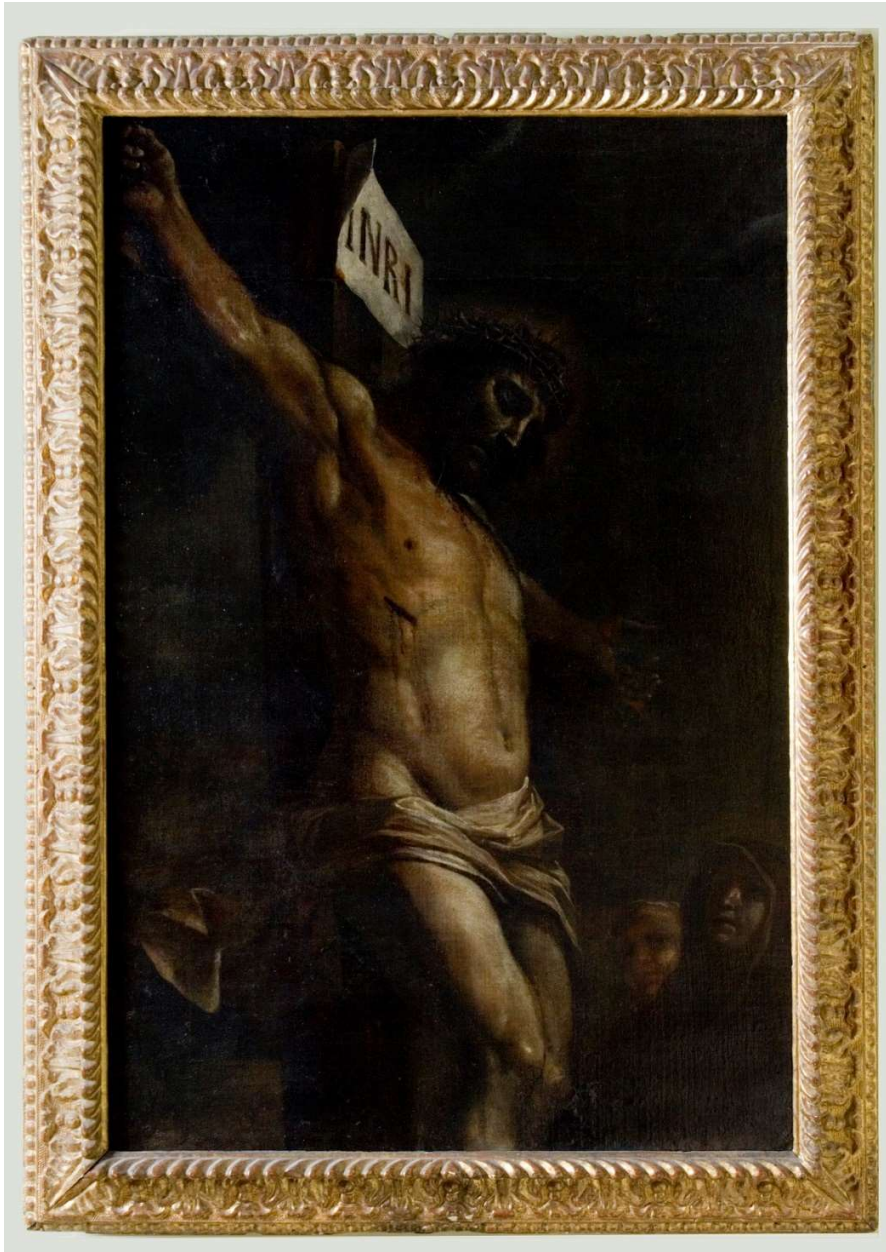


Title: Judith and Holofernes
Artist: Valentin de Boulogne
Date: c.1624
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 137 x 178 cm (without frame)



Title: Death of Cato
Artist: Matthias Stom
Date: c.1640
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 143.5 x 192.5 cm (without frame)

PARTICIPANT 2's CHOICES:



Title: Christ on the Cross
Artist: Mattia Preti
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 158 x 104 cm (without frame)

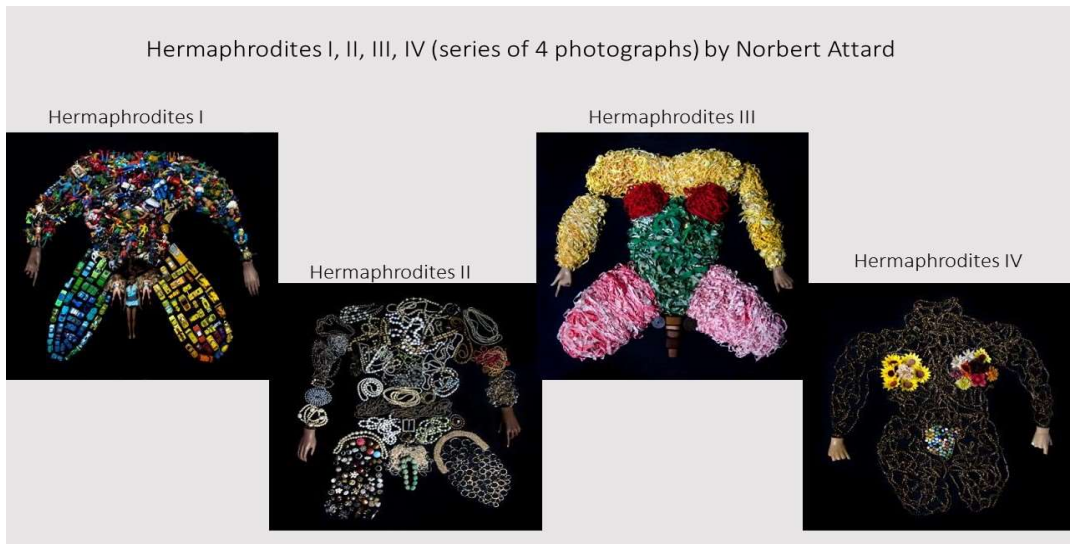


Title: Madonna and Child
Artist: Italian School 17th Century
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 143 x 115 cm (without frame)



Title: Triumph of Faith
Artist: Giovanni Odazzi
Date: Late 17th - early 18th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 111 x 63 cm (without frame)

PARTICIPANT 3's CHOICES:



Title: Hermaphrodites I, II, II, IV
Artist: Norbert Attard
Date: 2011
Medium: Photography of relief sculptures using objects: toys; jewellery; coloured ribbons; flowers
Size: 1.2m x 1.2m (each)



Title: Mari tal-Bajd
Artist: Esprit Barthelet
Date: 1964
Medium: Oil on canvas painting



Title: Rhythmii Vitae
Artist: Antonio Sciortino
Date: 1923
Medium: Bronze sculpture
Size: 112cm x 38cm x 28cm

THE CHOICES OF PARTICIPANTS 4 and 5:



Title: Judith and Holofernes
Artist: Valentin de Boulogne
Date: c.1624
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 137 x 178 cm (without frame)



Title: Death of Cato
Artist: Matthias Stom
Date: c.1640
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 143.5 x 192.5 cm (without frame)



Title: Allegory of the City of Antwerp
Artist: Theodor van Thulden
Date: c.1640
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 274 x 351 cm (without frame)



Title: The Virgin Annunciate
Artist: Italian School 17th Century
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 91 x 189 cm (without frame)

PARTICIPANT 6's CHOICES:



Title: Portrait of a Lady
Artist: Bernardo Strozzi
Date: Late 16th - early 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 72.5 x 57.5 cm (without frame)



Title: Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist
Artist: Sebastiano Conca
Date: Late 17th - early 18th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 123 x 172 cm (without frame)



Title: Boschetto Fair
Artist: Edward Caruana Dingli
Date: 1920
Medium: Oil on cardboard painting
Size: 46 x 60 cm (without frame)



Title: Distributing Alms to the Poor
Artist: Giuseppe Cali
Medium: Oil on canvas painting



Title: Speed
Artist: Antonio Sciortino
Date: Early 20th century
Medium: Plaster sculpture
Size: 55cm (height)

PARTICIPANT 7's CHOICE:



Title: Alpine Landscape
Artist: Robert Caruana Dingli
Date: Late 19th - early 20th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 33 x 26.8 cm (without frame)

PROJECT 3

The following are the artworks from the National Art Museum collection chosen by the participants residing at the Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF). Not all artworks were included directly into the participants' works but they made reference to them throughout the development of their theme. They are listed sequentially, according to the choices made by each participant from the artworks' printed images.

PARTICIPANT 1's CHOICE:



Title: Kuruna
Artist: Antoine Camilleri
Date: 2001
Medium: wood, resin, silver leaf
Size: 120 x100 x 20cm



Title: Floating Iceberg and a Small Boat
Artist: Albert Bierstadt
Date: 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 53 x 83 cm (without frame)



Title: View of Manoel Island
Artist: Giorgio Pullicino
Date: 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting



Title: View of Grand Harbour
Artist: Anton Schranz
Date: Late 18th - early 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 68 x 103 cm (without frame)



Title: Strada Levante, Valletta at the Grand Harbour
Artist: Louis Du Cros
Date: Late 18th - early 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 166 x 102 cm (without frame)



Title: View of Entrance to Grand Harbour (Storm Scene)
Artist: Thomas Lyde Hornbrook
Date: Early 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 119 x 85 cm (without frame)



Title: Fire on the Tiber
Artist: Claude Joseph Vernet
Date: 18th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 136 x 97 cm (without frame)

PARTICIPANT 3's CHOICES:



Title: Mother and Child
Artist: Samuel Bugeja
Date: 20th - early 21st century
Medium: Wood sculpture
Size: 82 cm (height)



Title: Christ on the Cross
Artist: Mattia Preti
Date: 17th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 158 x 104 cm (without frame)



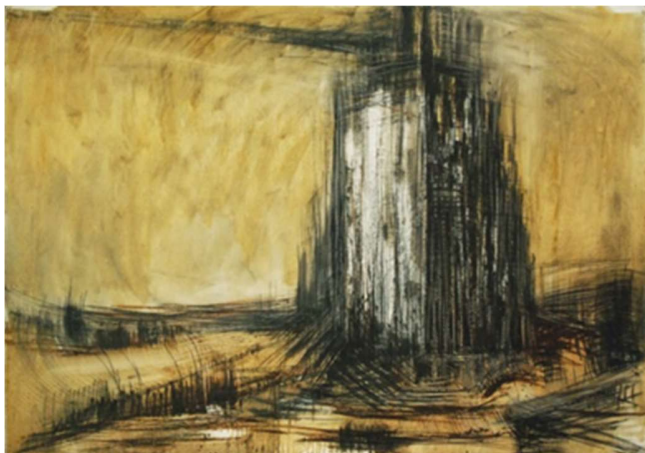
Title: Companions
Artist: Joseph Smith
Date: 2014
Medium: Photography
Size: 114 x 83cm



Title: Speed
Artist: Antonio Sciortino
Date: Early 20th century
Medium: Sculpture
Size: 55cm (height)



Title: The Village Butcher
Artist: Joseph Smith
Date: 2014
Medium: Photography
Size: 84 x 59cm



Title: Mkejjen
Artist: Robert Zahra
Date: 2005
Medium: Graphite and oil bars
Size: 150cm x 210cm

PARTICIPANT 5's CHOICES:



Title: Curved Silence
Artist: John Paul Azzopardi
Date: 2009
Medium: Bone sculpture
Size: H54 x L18 x W9.5 cm



Title: View of Grand Harbour
Artist: Anton Schranz
Date: Late 18th - early 19th century
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 68 x 103 cm (without frame)

PARTICIPANT 6's CHOICES:



Title: Sun Wheel, Qrendi Village Festa
Artist: Patrick J.Fenech
Date: 1980
Medium: Photography
Size: 42 x 29cm



Title: PN loves MLP and MLP loves PN
Artist: Norbert Attard
Date: 2001
Medium: Limestone sculpture

PARTICIPANT 7's CHOICES:

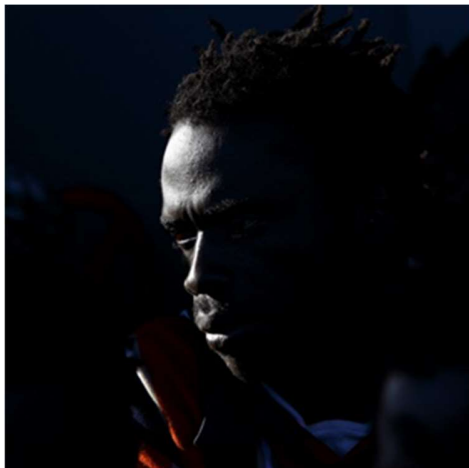


Title: Village Gossip - Hal-Ghaxaq
Artist: Patrick J.Fenech
Date: 1979
Medium: Photography
Size: 29 x 42cm

PARTICIPANT 8's CHOICES:



Title: Sir Temi Zammit
Artist: Victor Diacono
Date: Late 20th - early 21st century
Medium: Patinated sculpture
Size: 39 cm (height)



Title: Islanders
Artist: Darrin Zammit Lupi
Date: 2007
Medium: Photography
Size: 40 x 40cm



Title: Portrait of Grandmaster Emmanuel Pinto de Fonseca
Artist: Antoine de Favray
Date: c.1747
Medium: Oil on canvas painting
Size: 136 x 100 cm (without frame)