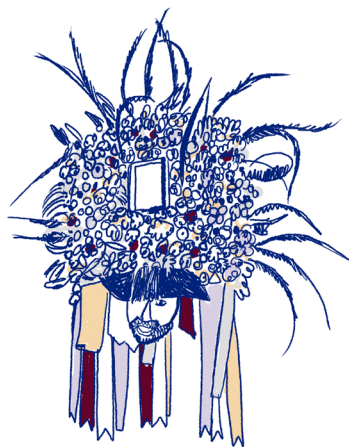


Right to the Museum?

Luise Reitstätter
Karolin Galter (eds.)

10

Insights
into Museums'
Concepts of the
Public and Public
Perceptions of
Museums



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Right to the Museum?

10 Insights into Museums' Concepts of the Public and Public Perceptions of Museums

Do we have a *Right to the Museum?*

Do we have a «Right to the Museum»? This question stood at the beginning of our research project, in which we investigated the changes in museums' concepts of the public and public perceptions of museums. For even if the opening of museums in the course of the Enlightenment 200 years ago granted the people a fundamental right to visit the formerly aristocratic collections, opening did not mean democratisation (Krasny 2016; McClellan 2003). In particular, the prerequisite of visual literacy and the requirement of «civic seeing» (Bennett 2006) systematically limited the museum's audience. At the same time, visits were also restricted by practical circumstances such as opening hours (for example, only on a few weekdays or by appointment), strict admission regulations (such as dress codes), and admission fees (in some cases far from affordable for average citizens) (Wall 2006, 31–35). Even today, the still very educated bourgeois museum audience and the small group of only up to 15% of active culture users (Renz 2016, 130) show that a fundamental right to culture does not equal broad use.

«Right to the Museum?» thus asks about approximations, fault lines, and contradictions in the relationship between the museum as an institution and the public,

and vice versa. The former was the subject of our archival research, the latter the subject of our field research. We cooperated with five Viennese museums. Ranked by the year of their founding, these were the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts (*1863), the Kunsthistoriesches Museum Vienna (*1891), the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (*1895), the Belvedere (*1903), and the House of Austrian History (*2017). Thus, on the one hand, our project built on archival research on institutional statements ranging from historical founding statutes to current mission statements. On the other hand, we investigated the perception of these museum concepts and mission statements from a contemporary citizens point of view. Our extensive field research took place from May to September 2021. Inherent to the project and reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the local relevance of museums was a particular focus of our research.

While the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's slogan «Right to the City» called for access to social wealth and a say in shaping urban processes in the 1960s, our research project brought an analogous demand to the museum. Like museums themselves, which are concerned with diversifying their audience, our project was shaped by the desire to conceptualise the museum as radically open and to actively anchor the fundamental claim for a «Right to the Museum!» in our work. Therefore, the charmingly worded invitation «Would you like to go to the museum with me?» did not only ask citizens to participate in the project. It was also an activist invitation to make use of one's own «Right to the Museum».

The total of almost 700 responses to our call «Would you like to go to the museum with me?» showed the great interest in participating in this feedback process. We received 450 pre-registrations for participation in the open group of the visitor panel, where 200 peo-

ple per museum received free admission for feedback during one specific week in each museum. Yet the registrations to participate in the project as part of the 20-member citizen board (which was assembled by us to be representative of the Viennese population according to the six diversity criteria of age, gender, educational level, migration background, disability/disabilities, and museum affinity) already showed the homogeneity of the audience with an affinity for museums. This pool of 223 interested people consisted mainly of people with a university degree (69.1%) and a high affinity for museums (66.8%). As the current debate over the involvement of citizen boards in political processes shows, it is important to examine both the selection process and the seriousness of such an undertaking in order not to promote alibi actions. Our thinking behind the citizen board and the visitor panel was to openly value the expertise of these people regarding the perception of the museums from the public's point of view.

Methodologically, we approached our field of investigation – i.e., the museums' concepts of the public and public perceptions of museums – via methods from the humanities and social sciences. While our archival research identified documents of institutional self-descriptions and subjected them to a content analysis, our field research involved independent and accompanied museum visits as well as a subsequent survey. Both groups visited representative parts of the respective permanent exhibitions, which had been selected by us, together with the contact persons of the partner museums, in advance. While the participants of the visitor panel independently explored the chosen rooms of the permanent exhibitions, each member of the citizen board visited all five museums accompanied by one researcher. In the museum diary, a survey following the museum visit, information was collected on, among other things, the perception of visitor rights (such as feeling comfortable, welcome, or being offered an easy orientation), (un)appealing objects,

or the description of the visited museum with three characteristic adjectives. Archival and field research were interwoven in the annotation of three short, historical to present-day self-descriptions of the respective museum. In the case of the visitor panel, the question of how these statements were perceived was discussed as a written commentary; in the case of the citizen board, it was posed as a vignette interview: «How much does this description match your museum experience today?» was the specific question both groups were asked in order to contrast the museum's self-description with their own visiting experience.

In this report, ten concise project findings provide information about the conclusions we drew from our work, intertwining archival and field research, regarding the question «Do we have a Right to the Museum?» Across all five museums, we ultimately documented, collected, processed, and analysed 400 archival documents, 903 independent museum visits by the visitor panel (with museum diary and protocols of follow-up conversations), and 100 accompanied museum visits by the citizen board (with video and audio documentation of the visit, museum diary, vignette interview, and transcript, as well as a brief follow-up survey six months after the museum visits). In the individual insights, we thus refer to particular methodological approaches, specific data segments, respondents, as well as theoretical and practical framings to account for the different perspectives of our project, situated at the intersection of museum theory and practice. In the appendix, the structure of the museum diaries, individual statistics, and data visualisations are provided for possible reuse, further elaboration, and your own interpretation.

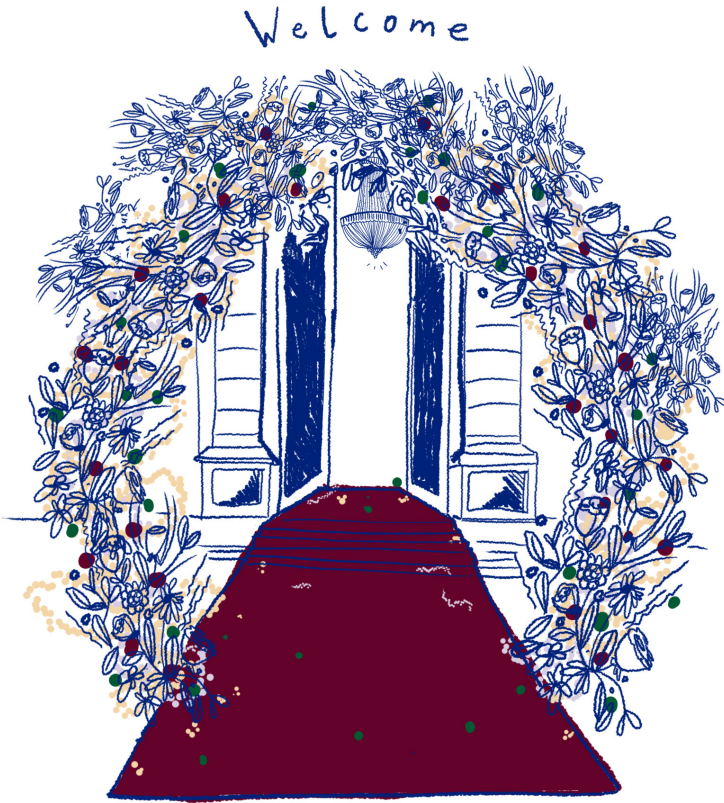
Finally, we would like to return to Henri Lefebvre, whose slogan «Right to the City» vocalising the demand for access to social wealth and the demand to

have a say, subsequently was taken up in critical urban research as a right to centrality and difference. It is precisely these demands that we also see as crucial for critical museum studies since it is necessary to continue the fight for open access to cultural wealth and to further diversify its use. In this sense, we are happy to share our project results with our readers on this journey, hoping that they will inform further discussion, future reflection, and collective action.

10 Insights into Museums' Concepts of the Public and Public Perceptions of Museums

1. Addressing visitors starts at the entrance door.
2. Visitors need extraordinary spaces for extraordinary experiences.
3. Permanent exhibitions must fulfil the basics of user-friendliness.
4. Addressing individual life worlds strengthens visitors' interpretive possibilities.
5. Stories can be told beyond the object much more frequently.
6. Objects of dissent can be understood as an opportunity and consciously used for discussion.
7. The mindset of the local audience has to be considered regarding the museum as an everyday place to visit.
8. Accompaniment and repeated visits should be understood as benefits.
9. Current social debates are on the agenda but not always comprehensible in exhibition practice.
10. It is necessary to ask for criticism, but it is not simple to listen to feedback.

→ Addressing visitors starts at the entrance door.



1

Museums' concepts of the public are communicated in strategic documents ranging from statutes on the purpose of the institution to editorials in annual reports, statements by directors, and current museum descriptions of «who we are», «what we want», and «what we do». In addition to collection-related specifications, these documents also outline the relationship to the public. More pragmatic documents, such as house and visiting rules, service instructions, dress regulations, and corporate identity statements for employees, also define how publicness is practiced in the museum. Historical sources demonstrate how internal hierarchies and power relations are also carried into the museum space. One example is the KHM's greeting regulation from 1914: «The greeting must always be silent and is performed toward superiors, higher-ups, and strangers in such a way that the staff member, if wearing a head covering, lifts it; if not wearing one, takes a bow; and if seated, also rises.»

Especially at the beginning of a museum visit, spatial situations and welcoming gestures of the museum address visitors directly and convey a sense of what kind of house and what kind of customs visitors are dealing with. An entrance with barrier tapes, strict controls, or a friendly smile are everyday institutional settings that provide – even more than mission statements will ever be able to do – a (first) framing of the museum visit. In response to our question about declarations of love for museums and in informal follow-up conversations, we received much positive feedback regarding front desk museum staff as well as field researchers on site, which contributed to a «warm welcome», «familiar atmosphere», and a «nice ambiance». 81.1% of the visitor panel completely agreed with the statement «I felt welcome in the museum», and 76.7% completely agreed with the statement «I felt comfortable in the museum». The entrance area in the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art – now titled «reception» instead of «cash desk» and featuring a free of charge presentation of the collection in the passage – also

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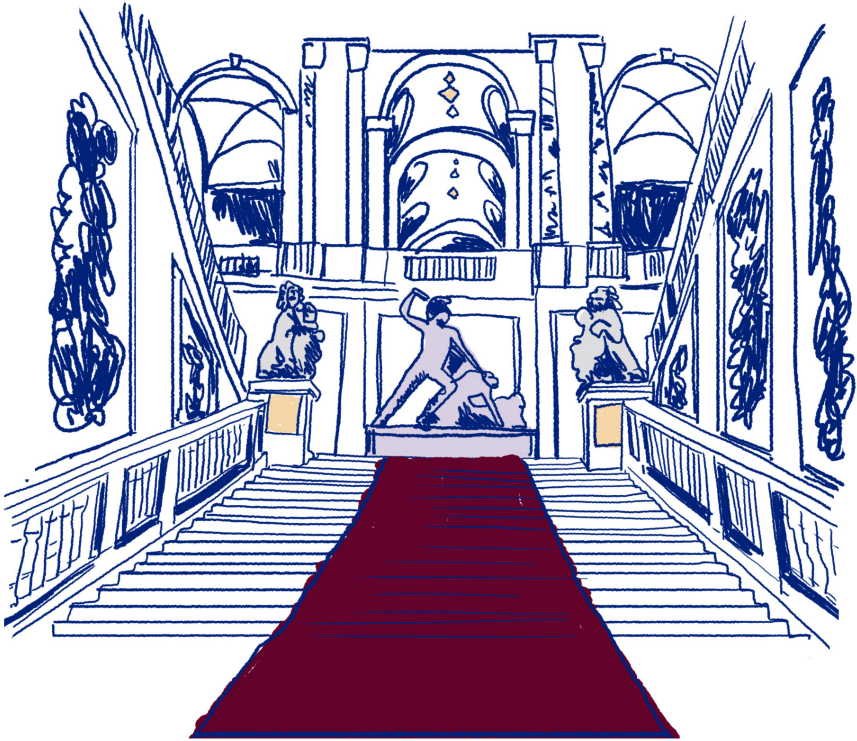
Spatial **situations and welcoming gestures** of the museum address visitors directly and convey a **sense of what kind of house and what kind of customs** visitors are dealing with.

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indicates possible semantic shifts if the museum positions itself more as a public space and less as an offer that can be purchased.

However, the digital entrance situation also determines the perception of museums. Often, the visit begins right there or continues in the digital realm after the spatial visit (Kohle 2018, 141). Especially since the 2000s, the webpages of our partner museums have developed dynamically, as the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive shows. Our question about the use of online services again illustrated that museum webpages were important points of contact for 30.8% and social media pages for 10.7% of our project participants, although many engaging digital services – e.g. the audio series «REFLECTIONS» of the MAK, the podcast of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (KHM), or the participatory web exhibitions of the House of Austrian History (hdgö) – each with mentions of less than 2.0%, demonstrate that there is still much untapped potential in the context of the transmedial museum visit.

→ Visitors need extraordinary spaces for extraordinary experiences.



2

While some may think of open architecture as the ideal situation for breaking the much-cited threshold anxiety, our research shows that stately buildings are by no means an obstacle to a positive museum experience. The «grandeur of the building» (according to one response at the KHM) provides an appropriate framing for the richness of the cultural heritage and acted as a stimulus for extraordinary museum experiences. «It's such a magnificent place, worthy of the paintings hanging on the walls alone», was another reply at the Belvedere. In general, our participants viewed museums as «real treasures», partly rediscovering or newly discovering their own cultural heritage during the pandemic. The luxury of being able to claim space for oneself in the museum, especially in the otherwise highly frequented Viennese art museums, also led quite a few to become more aware of their right to exist in these spaces – recognising, one might say, their own «Right to the Museum».

In the reflections of our citizen board half a year after their museum visits, it was also noticeable that the KHM scored particularly well as the most positively remembered museum experience. For example, one member of the citizen board said, «During the visit, a splendour is developed that the average citizen does not experience in this way; the museum is extraordinary for the museum visitor. This is where the development of splendour was the highest.» The Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, which other citizen board members described in retrospect as «a bit outdated», «poor», or «not memorable in a striking way», scored far lower in terms of impressiveness. But even if splendour can trigger this shift of attention toward the aesthetic museum experience, it is not enough on its own. One visitor, for example, pointed to possible mechanisms of exclusion when he remarked, in reference to the Belvedere's current mission statement: «Art in baroque state rooms rarely conveys the feeling that art is for everyone.» In general, visitors wished for more contextualised as well as more varied and

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While the **silent observation of objects** is still implicitly conveyed in exhibitions, the **needs** of contemporary visitors **for a holistic and sensual approach** are becoming more and more important.

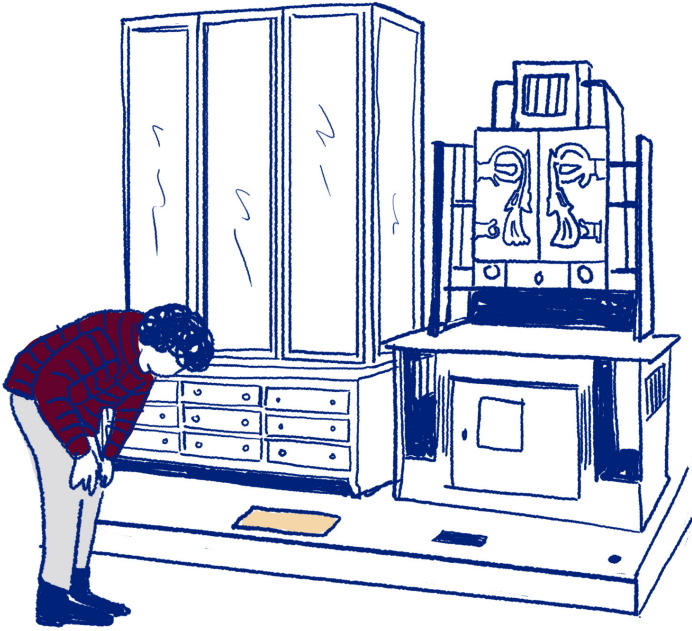
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interactive presentations or emphasised it as extremely positive when their needs for versatile (medial) address and emotional touch were met.

To put it bluntly, one might say that the invitation to look alone is no longer sufficient and that the aesthetic exhibition has become obsolete for many visitors. While the silent observation of objects as a historical ideal is still implicitly conveyed in exhibitions, the needs of contemporary visitors for a holistic and sensual approach are becoming more and more important. Accordingly, the visitor can no longer be described as «the unknown being». Against the backdrop of diversifying societies and the digital transformation, as Graham Black elaborates in his book «Museums and the Challenge of Change: Old Institutions in a New World» (2021), today's visitors must be understood as demanding beings, who need to be met by appropriate and attractive offers in a participatory understanding of museum work.

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→ Permanent exhibitions must fulfil the basics of user-friendliness.



THEORY

The «Right to the Museum» can be traced back to the birth of the modern museum as a public institution. In the course of the Enlightenment, it was demanded that collections should be owned by the «public sector» for their long-term preservation and that they should offer broader accessibility beyond the circles of scholars (Flügel, 2014, p. 46). In this respect, our project focused on permanent exhibitions, which are primarily made up of the museums' own collections. However, it became apparent that the permanent exhibitions often – and especially in comparison to temporary exhibitions, which were given more attention and resources – did not always do justice to this ideal of public sharing and the concomitant demand for education. In particular, basic visitor needs, as postulated by Judy Rand (1996) in her «Visitors' Bill of Rights», were often not satisfactorily met in the permanent exhibitions. The feedback of the visitor panel showed that there is room for improvement in terms of full agreement with the clarity of the information provided (51.4%), easy orientation in the museum (48.5%), and becoming active and trying things out for oneself (31.0%).

At the hdgö, finding the museum and its permanent exhibition was already a challenge for several visitors. Instead of «a lack of signs indicating where the museum is located», according to one entry from the complaint book, more prominent signage and a simpler guidance system would be important to facilitate a good start into the museum experience. With regard to museum labels, it became apparent that good visiting conditions must prevail, especially for concentrated reading, in order to be able to regard the intake of information not as an impediment, but as an enrichment. A response on the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art criticised the «poor lighting, explanations in small letters, badly legible and hidden», while a visitor to the exhibition «Vienna 1900» at the MAK was annoyed: «I don't want to loiter on the floor so that I can read something.» There were also complaints

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Research shows that the **clearest and shortest possible paths, good lighting conditions, and texts that are clearly presented** in terms of appearance and content allow visitors to create **more value.**

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about the temperature in several museums: some visitors found it «very warm and stuffy», while others were «constantly cold in the exhibition rooms». On the other hand, there was praise for the many seats in the Kunstammer and Picture Gallery at the KHM, but also outside the exhibition rooms. Or, as one visitor to the MAK put it in general terms, «One can sit, which is always good in a museum, where one is, after all, stimulated with endless new impressions.»

Increasing user-friendliness is therefore not to be understood as purely pragmatic museum work. Rather, research shows that the clearest and shortest possible paths, good lighting conditions, and texts that are clearly presented in terms of appearance and content allow visitors to create more value. As Stephen Bitgood's attention-value-model (2013) puts it, museum visitors unconsciously weigh the costs and potential benefits of their activities. Reducing the «effort» needed to experience exhibits has been shown to result in higher «value» for visitors. In other words, good visiting conditions can open up the very space for further thought and discussion that visitors will not enter if their basic needs are not met.

→ Addressing individual life worlds strengthens visitors' interpretive possibilities.



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To this day, the museum is perceived by the general population as an aesthetic educational institution. When asked to characterise the museum they had just visited with three adjectives, the participants of the visitor panel across all five museums most frequently used the words «interesting» (n=221), «informative» (n=133), and «beautiful» (n=92). This result is positive in the sense that it shows that the museum's educational mission is, in principle, acknowledged and that museums are met with interest and favour. At the same time, this triad also paints a rather conventional and not very agile cross-sectional picture of the investigated museums. The far lower frequency of adjectives such as «stimulating» (n=39), «critical» (n=13) or «accessible» (n=4) thus also runs contrary to current mission statements, which emphasise proximity to life, innovation or openness in their intended relationship to the public.

During the accompanied tours with the citizen board, it was also noticeable that the visitors often viewed themselves as learners or even found themselves addressed by a museum that regarded them as needing to be educated. In understanding the museum visit as a setting of informal learning, however, their individual backgrounds and previous knowledge were addressed much less. An actualisation of objects through life-world references, corresponding to a constructivist learning model (Hein 2002), was observed less frequently. Often, the objects that required specific cultural-historical knowledge in order to become meaningful remained «silent» for the visitors, for example when the descriptive texts for religious paintings assumed profound Christian knowledge. One member of the citizen board described this curtly: «Sacred art, not enough prior knowledge.» In contrast, particularly «talking» objects were found in presentations that allowed for individual and contemporary references to, for example, family (migration) histories, interior design and style preferences, or life plans and gender issues. A member of the citizen

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It is important to strengthen the visitors' **ability to interpret things for themselves** instead of searching for the «right» interpretation.

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EQI 12

board with deaf parents, who himself had experienced the non-recognition of sign language in school, was pleased that at the hdgö «sign language is also [...] a topic» in the museum.

On the museum side, the conception of exhibitions can be adapted to convey not only knowledge, but also to increasingly address individual backgrounds and appropriation strategies of visitors. In this way, visitors could be better addressed with their biographically shaped wealth of knowledge instead of being understood as knowing less about the subject matter. Certainly, this already happens frequently in critical art and culture education with deconstructive and transformative approaches (Mörsch 2009), but still rarely in the context of individual museum visits and permanent exhibitions. At the same time, it is important to strengthen the visitors' ability to interpret things for themselves instead of searching for the «right» interpretation.

→ Stories can be told beyond the object much more frequently.



«What is this rural collection supposed to tell me?» was one of the comments after the visit to the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art. It vividly shows how permanent exhibitions do not always convey themselves conclusively. Visitors sometimes leave the museum with questions, especially regarding the «red thread» or the «big picture». This lack of contextualisation begins with individual objects, where, in addition to the desire for more information – «little description without an audio guide» (KHM) – people also ask for other clues. If, for example, a visitor to the Rubens room noted «too much what and not enough why», this means that, beyond a scholarly identification, background story(s) about the entrance to the collection and the exhibition value (Benjamin 1974, 443) are also of interest. Further feedback shows that displays «beyond the big names» are also desired by the local audience. At the Belvedere, for example, one visitor commented: «Even if Klimt and Schiele are important painters and probably the bestsellers, there are many other interesting artists who also deserve a place.» Or at the MAK: «The Seven Princesses» by Margaret MacDonald Mackintosh deserve a staging just as weighty as Klimt's work drawings. They are «princesses», not «stepsisters».

The exhibits of the curatorial interventions at the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art and the MAK entered our evaluations as examples of objects of dissent, but at the same time opened up new perspectives on the permanent exhibitions. The MAK's intervention «BOLD AND FREE!», with more than 100 objects previously hidden in the depot that were snuck into the permanent exhibition, was described by one visitor as «interesting and partly very humorous» in its «cross-linking». The objects were marked in acid green and some were commented on in more detail by those responsible for the collection. This gave rise to new connections between already existing and new exhibits. The fact that narrative strands across the permanent exhibition can be achieved not

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‹**Too much what and not enough why**› means that, beyond a scholarly identification of objects, **background story(s)** about the **entrance to the collection** and the **exhibition value** are also of interest.

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only by adding objects, but also by no longer showing objects, was in turn demonstrated by the restitution research of the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art shown via labels. As one visitor noted, «This time I was struck by how many objects were marked as restitution objects and restituted. Making this transparent and learning about the stories behind it, I find that incredibly important.»

In the Belvedere, where our tour focused on «Vienna around 1900» after starting in the Carlone Contemporary room, curatorial narratives of varying strength became particularly clear. The first room, designed as a special exhibition, with its curatorial focus on Klimt's unfinished works, including preparatory sketches and historical photographs, made a strong impression on the visitors. Yet the following rooms, especially in comparison, showed less of an overall narrative and promoted more individual viewings of images. Thus, to draw on Carol Duncan's (1995, 12) book «Civilizing Rituals. Inside Public Art Museums», which conceives of the museum as both «stage» and «script», the permanent exhibitions we studied for the most part function better as a stage than as a script. Thus, while individual objects are well presented, collaborative narratives are, yet, less frequently and clearly placed.

→ Objects of dissent can be understood as an opportunity and consciously used for discussion.



«Conchita doesn't belong in a museum», commented one visitor after her tour of the hdgö's permanent exhibition, while others countered that this kind of presentation stands for an «open Austria» and that there is a need for visibility of LGBTQIA+ people in the museum. Such partly contradictory feedback, which we also received on other presentations, shows that the museum can function not only as a space of authorised historiography, but also as a «forum of discussion», a view the is also at the centre of the hdgö's self-description. Objects of dissent illustrate that visitors can question the meanings of exhibits for themselves and also come to contrary conclusions. The strength of the museum and its social relevance thus manifest not in broad consensus but in the possible dissent among visitors as to what should be said, exhibited, and discussed in the museum. The fact that the hdgö characterises itself in another self-description as a «sparring partner» was idiosyncratic for many visitors. However, this metaphor can be very effective in the sense of a productive polarisation when it opens up a space of friction allowing to see things differently.

Presentations that sparked strongly diverging opinions were found in large numbers in the MAK, as they met the taste of some but not of others. While «Vienna 1900», for example, was described by some as «too dark», «dusty», or «very unclear», other visitors praised the «sensitive and imaginative presentation». The collection «Asia», with its rather provisional-looking wooden construction and handwritten labels, was perceived as «distracting» and «ill-conceived», but also as «very aesthetic» and a «refreshing» contrast to the older exhibits. For some, the MAK DESIGN LAB opened up an inspiring and «easy playful [acquisition of] knowledge», while others described it as «too confusing» or even «too cluttered». It was precisely through this dissent that the museum realised itself as a tastemaker, a constitutive element of the MAK's self-conception as testified by the Festschrift for its opening in 1871.

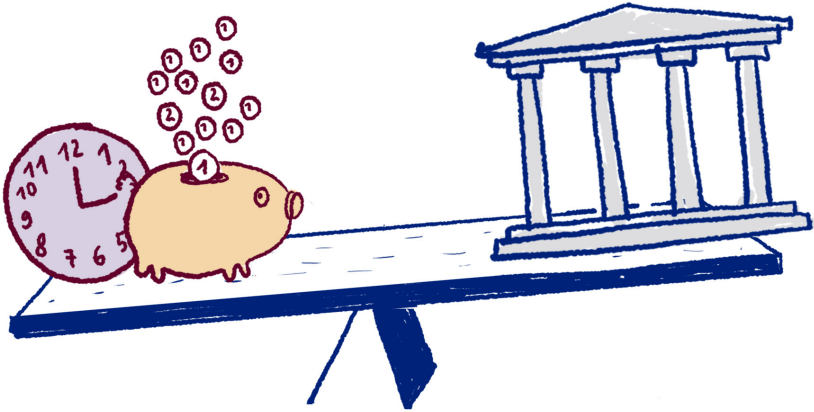
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The **strength of the museum** and its **social relevance** manifest not in broad consensus but in the **possible dissent among visitors** as to what should be said, exhibited, and discussed in the museum.

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The interpretations of several members of the citizen board in the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art regarding the room dedicated to wood as a material made clear that this room can be read via references to one's own background (with knowledge of wood-working techniques), to current fashion design (when looking at a backpack made of woven wood), or, quite differently, via a popular cultural embedding in horror films (with surprising tool associations). Regardless of imagined narratives of the museum, one might reflect on the unweighted value of interpretations or even on the possible potential for misunderstanding. Even if an «anything goes» interpretation of objects can be viewed critically (Meszaros 2006), it becomes clear that associative perception can create amusement and distance from formal learning and that the museum becomes tangible and alive through a wide variety of interpretive approaches.

→ The mindset of the local audience has to be considered regarding the museum as an everyday place to visit.



Already in its conception, our study aimed at examining the perception of museums by the population living in Vienna. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting absence of an international audience intensified this approach, as did the media debate about the insufficient addressing of the local audience. Beyond polemical statements about the neglect of local audiences and the museum's own collections, it was our concern to provide empirical insights into this debate and to discover relevant issues for the relationship work with local visitors. At the outset, we note that local visitors «function» differently from international tourists, as it can be assumed that they have a different cultural knowledge and a different visiting setting in the context of everyday life and not of a holiday.

As described above, local visitors were increasingly drawn back to their local cultural environment because of the pandemic. When asked what they had taken away from the five accompanied museum tours, the answer of the citizen board was unanimous: «What great museums there are in our city.» At the same time, both the citizen board and the visitor panel partly asserted higher standards in the contemporary contextualisation of their own cultural heritage. However, our evaluations show even more clearly that the greatest differences between tourist and local audiences lie in time and money. For example, while visitor panel participants gave us feedback that the less-crowded museums gave them «time and quiet to look and read», they were far more likely to state that there was «too little time for the overwhelming abundance». Given the desire of many participants to look at as much as possible, it is also not surprising that only 35.8% clearly agreed with the statement «I was able to relax in the museum». The 15-minute tours offered by the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art and the Hildebrandt Café named «Museum Speed Dating» or the free «Quick Course in Art» tours at the Belvedere may already be very well tailored to this smaller time window for culture in an everyday context.

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In contrast to international tourists, **local visitors** are expected to have a **different cultural knowledge** and a different **visiting setting in the context of everyday life** and not of a holiday.

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Regarding the price, a comment by a visitor sums up the influence of the visiting situation: «If you want to visit often and briefly as a Viennese, it is very expensive. If you come here once (e.g. as a tourist) [...], it's ok.» Entrance fees also historically show local symbolic politics. While initially no entrance fee was charged to visit the Imperial Picture Gallery in the Belvedere, in 1813 the director at the time aimed to prevent «the arbitrary admission of the very lowest classes of people from the street» (quoted in Henrichs 2021, 163) through entrance fees. In 2021, the entrance fees of our partner museums ranged from 8 to 16 euros. These were assessed as reasonable by 47.8% of our participants, and as too expensive by 38.4%. The fact that price should also be seen in relation to the offer, the current income situation, or the possibility of multiple visits becomes clear in many comments. The suggestion of a member of the citizen board to extend the annual ticket for public transport with a surcharge for admission to all Viennese museums can be seen as a suggestion that may be difficult to implement due to the complexity of the funding bodies, but is nevertheless worth considering.

→ Accompaniment and repeated visits should be understood as benefits.



On average, about 80% of all visitors do not go to the museum alone but in company (Lindner 2016, 327). In the case of our visitor panel (mostly without families or larger group contexts), 71.7% stated that they had been accompanied during their museum visit. Notwithstanding this, and in the tradition of focusing on the sense of sight, museums primarily address individual visitors, just as evaluation research primarily collects the perspective of individual visitors (Davies and Heath 2014, 62). In our citizen board, in contrast, the joint visit to the museums was our research focus and thus constitutive of the visiting experience. Research shows that especially non-habitual visitors benefit from being accompanied, as their visit is often socially motivated and possible uncertainties in an unfamiliar environment can be compensated for with (Tröndle 2019, 116). It is therefore not surprising that members of the citizen board who were less familiar with museums said that they would not have taken part without the joint visiting situation and that they considered «the moderated conversation» as beneficial – even if we only took part in the tour as listening companions.

The accompaniment may also explain the difference in the full agreement of the citizen board to the statement «I recovered in the museum» compared to the visitor panel (54% vs. 35.8%). Focussing on a part of the permanent exhibition, and indicating to the respective citizen board member that he or she could proceed selectively at his or her own pace proved to be a positive framing. In the retrospective reflection, one member described that his particular take-away from the project was «coming to terms with the fact that you only see a part of the museum and the exhibits». In the course of the five visits, it became apparent to us as that the members of the citizen board varied greatly in their focus (from paintings to tableware) and that especially those members of the citizen board who had previously had less of an affinity for museums developed individual visit strategies (for example, in deliberately not looking at certain objects

«

We consider efforts by museums to establish themselves as **open meeting places** also for those people who have **not yet included** museums and exhibitions **in their leisure time portfolio** to be particularly relevant.

»

or in the use of exhibition texts). The repeated visit was also relevant for the visitor panel. One participant handed us a handwritten document after his five visits, opening with the words «Right to the Museum! is an excellent idea». Especially «the direct comparison of several houses opens up new perspectives» – even for him as a frequent visitor of all houses (except the hdgö). Furthermore, he stated that «it is new and quite pleasant to talk to each other after museum visits».

During our accompanied museum tours, the different exhibits in the five museums turned out to be consistently interesting input for discussion. Or, as one citizen board member put it: «The exchange about what you see has been an absolute added value.» For joint museum visits beyond the project, another citizen board member wished: «I hope that the tickets will not become more expensive [...] so that I can [...] motivate other friends and acquaintances to visit museums in the future.» Accompaniment and repeated visits can thus be understood as a fundamental benefit in the growing understanding of the museum as a social space and, as it were, as an expansion strategy of the possible pool of visitors. In this respect, we consider efforts by museums to establish themselves as open meeting places also for those people who have not yet included museums and exhibitions in their leisure time portfolio to be particularly relevant.

→ Current social debates are on the agenda but not always comprehensible in exhibition practice.



A poster on «Planet Love» at the entrance to the MAK, rainbow windows at the KHM, «Black History Month» at the hdgö, the project «Queering Prinz Eugen» at the Belvedere, or the research series «Pre-enacting climate change knowledge» at the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art – these examples clearly demonstrate that current socio-political debates are, to a certain extent, on the agenda of our partner museums. At the same time, the annotation of the current mission statements showed that socio-political issues ranging from social justice to ecological sustainability are only visible to a limited extent after a visit to the permanent exhibitions. In the Belvedere, for example, the inclusive phrase «art is for everyone» inspired some visitors to think about economic and knowledge-based exclusion mechanisms of art. At the MAK, the museum's claim to be a «driving force for positive change in society» was emulated as a desirable goal, but was only seen selectively in the collection presentations. According to our analysis, this is because socio-political topics are, on the one hand, not embedded at all or not visibly enough in permanent exhibitions and, on the other hand, are primarily negotiated in education programmes or on social media.

We see the need to act more holistically at all levels of the museum, and according to the specific museum's goals, in order to set themes even more decisively. For, as Elke Krasny (2015, 46) has stated with regard to the relationship between invisibility and gender in the museum, «subtle differentiations, other points of view, other approaches» do not lead to a change in the museum gaze. If, in contrast, other topics and positions are dealt with in a focussed way in the exhibition, this does indeed lead to a shift in attention. This is the case, for example, in the hdgö, where feminist movements and queer identity debates in the field of human rights are chosen as an agenda and presented in a comprehensible way via objects such as the emancipatory board game «Services for Love: Forwards or Backwards», «pussyhats» or memorabilia of Conchita

«

Socio-political topics are **not embedded visibly enough** in permanent exhibitions and are primarily negotiated in education programmes or on social media. We see the need to act **at all levels of the museum,** and **according to the specific museum's goals.**

»

Wurst's Eurovision Song Contest win. When visiting the Belvedere, in turn, the magnificent palace and the classical art presentation are more strongly echoed in an overall aesthetic experience, which runs counter to a critical-reflexive attitude, such as that pursued in the in-house community outreach programme, among other things.

The interwoven analysis of the archive- and field-based project results makes clear that the discrepancy between theoretical debates, institutional ambitions, and actual museum perception is largely rooted in the historically evolved legal form, type, and objective of the institution. In their historical conception, art museums focus more on the aesthetic experience of cultural objects, while museums of cultural history are per se more committed to (critical) knowledge production. Across all museums, it is true that particularly committed socio-political goals, such as those that can be documented again and again in bursts since the 1960s, are naturally more at odds with the status quo.

→ It is necessary to ask for criticism, but it is not simple to listen to feedback.



Our study, thanks to much positive feedback, showed that museums are generally recognised for what they do and that visitors are not critical per se. However, if one wants to question one's own doing or, more generally speaking, also listen to critical voices, it is necessary to specifically ask about this in surveys (Davies and Heath 2014, 60). In our museum diary, it was especially the entries in the «book of complaints», the question about «silent» (less appealing) objects or the discrepancies between museums' self-descriptions and visiting experiences that were worth analysing in-depth. In summary, the participants of the visitor panel and the citizen board expressed their criticism above all with regard to the communication of content and aspects of user-friendliness. At the same time, statements about certain presentations show that they can be viewed as objects of dissent in one way or another. There are also occasional comments, such as the attestation of a «pure waste of taxpayers' money» regarding the political positioning of museums, which are considered in the data analysis, even if we do not personally agree with them.

We feel that it is important to emphasise that visitor research should not be misunderstood as a mandate to implement suggestions 1:1. For us, the question is rather how to deal productively with this multitude and range of feedback. In the data analysis, our approach followed a circular data interpretation in which we relied on the heterogeneity in the team, the feedback of results to the contributors as well as the discussion with the museums themselves. However, the internal presentation of results also revealed the often-discussed crux that knowledge about museum and exhibition problems as well as awareness for necessary changes does not necessarily lead to changes. Practical difficulties in applying results may be due to a lack of interest, overwork, other urgent issues, rigid structures, or even inexperience in how to concretely interpret this knowledge and translate it into instructions for action (Reitstätter 2022). As Davies and

«

We see an **open knowledge and error culture** in the sense of **human and courageous museums** as desirable – **in contrast to competitive houses** with emphasis on their respective brilliant achievements.

»

Heath (2014) noted with regard to ineffective evaluation research, it is primarily unclear expectations and lack of accountability (especially in implementation), fragmentation of knowledge (with changing teams), and forms of accountability (with a focus on success reporting) that stand in the way of greater impact.

But how can research have consequences or, more precisely, how can the results of museum studies also lead to changes in museum practice? Based on our project, we consider it relevant to accept feedback, to classify it for oneself, and to consider exactly which specific conclusions can be drawn from it for one's own thinking and actions. Furthermore, we see as desirable an open knowledge and error culture in the sense of human and courageous museums – in contrast to competitive houses with emphasis on their respective brilliant achievements. If this report is conducive to such an attitude and also leads to action, we will already be one step closer to our goal of understanding the museum as a place of social negotiation in the sense of a «Right to the Museum».

Project overview

Question

How has the right to the museum changed in its conception of the public sphere since the Enlightenment and how is it perceived by citizens today?

Mission

Our mission is to think of the museum as radically public, addressing politics of welcome, participation and change. The aim is to raise awareness for the relevance of museums for citizens, and not only visitors.

Approach

By interweaving approaches from the humanities and social sciences, we investigated museums' concepts of the public and public perceptions of museums. Archival research was used to analyse documents of museums' self-descriptions from historical founding statutes to today's mission statements, tracing museum caesurae and institutional-historical changes. Field research documented the perception of museums' concepts of the public via accompanied/independent museum tours and surveys with the two groups of the citizen board and the visitor panel.

Overview of the archival research

A total of around 400 sources were collected for the project, which can be attributed to different text genres. These include founding documents, statutes, visiting orders, instructions for service, annual and business reports, editorials in in-house publications as well as mission statements. Due to the different founding periods, individual institutional histories, and topical priorities, the nature of the sources varies from house to house. In addition to sources that consciously define the institution's mission and/or its relationship to the public (mission statements, self-descriptions) or question it (complaint books, visitor surveys), sources that implicitly define the relationship to the public (instructions for service, visiting or greeting regulations) also play a central role in the respective institutions' concepts of public.

An interweaving of archival and field research took place via three vignettes each, i.e. three short excerpts of self-descriptions of the museums (one from the founding period, one from a middle period, and one from a current period). Based on the thesis that historical to present-day concepts of the public can shape the current perception of the museums, these vignettes were presented to the project participants for annotation after their exhibition visit. The question about the perception of these museum self-descriptions was discussed as a written commentary in the case of the visitor panel, and a vignette interview was conducted in the case of the citizen board: «How much does this description match your museum experience today?» was the specific question to both groups.

Vignette selection* Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art

Vignette 1

«The high educational value of this museum is obvious: the local national culture as well as the connecting and mediating relationships between the European peoples are presented here in the most impressive way. As a means of instruction for the studying youth and the entire population, as a nursery for industrial and artistic creativity in a national spirit [...].»

→ Haberlandt, Michael. 1919. «25 Jahre Verein und Museum für österreichische Volkskunde.» *Wiener Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*: 2.

Vignette 2

«In contrast to the art collections of the imperial house, which have a long history, but for the longest time served no professional-scientific purposes, this museum [...] was created from the beginning for the subject of ethnology [...]. In turn, the public [...] has only learned at this museum, what ethnology is actually about.»

→ Schmidt, Leopold. 1960. *Das österreichische Museum für Volkskunde. Vom Werden und Wesen eines Wiener Museums*. Vienna: Bergland Verlag, 5.

Vignette 3

«We are an open space for research and outreach. We like to experiment and try out new things. In our work, we rely on lively and challenging approaches. We provide space for social interaction and discursive exchange. [...] #useyourmuseum»

→ Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art. n.d. «Mission Statement.» Accessed 5.4.2022. <https://volkskundemuseum.at/mission-statement>.

*Originally in German but translated into English for non-German speaking participants.

Vignette selection Belvedere

→ *Bericht des k.k. Ministeriums für Kultus und Unterricht*. 1912.

Vignette 1

«[The] main task [of the State Gallery] will be that of presenting the general development of art from the end of the 18th century to the present in its essential [...] phases through great typical examples of the creative [...] forces.»

→ Husslein-Arco, Agnes. 2016/17. «Editorial». *Belvedere Magazin*: 3.

Vignette 2

«Today [...] we thus dedicate ourselves to the mission of researching the great [works] of Austrian artists and honouring them accordingly. We do this [among other things] through multifaceted exhibitions, in which we always strive to present [Austrian] art in an international context.»

→ Belvedere. n.d. «The Museum». Accessed 5.4.2022. <https://www.belvedere.at/en/museum>.

Vignette 3

«Art is for everyone. [...] We communicate in a credible, understandable, and interactive way, addressing real-life topics and current issues. For our visitors, this opens new perspectives and broadens the scope of action. They leave the museum richer for having entered.»

Vignette selection hdgö

Vignette 1

Legal task: «In addition to the tasks according to paragraphs 1 to 3, the Austrian National Library runs the House of Austrian History as a professionally independent museum. It should convey the contemporary history of Austria from the second half of the 19th century [...] to the present in its European and international context.»

→ *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, 20/2016, 13. April 2016, 1. Accessed 5.4.2022. https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2016_I_20/BGBLA_2016_I_20.pdf.

Vignette 2

«The inauguration of the House of Austrian History opens a new chapter in the Neue Burg: the Republic finally has its first contemporary history museum that sees itself as a forum for discussion. What was once designed for the monarchy is now a place for the democratic republic.»

→ Sommer, Monika, and Oliver Rathkolb. 2018. «Vorwort». In *Ruth Anderwald, Leonhard Grond: Dazwischen Geschichte: Eine Künstlerische Baubegehung: Between History: An Artistic Construction Site Inspection*, edited by Monika Sommer, 15. Vienna: Haus der Geschichte Österreich.

Vignette 3

«Today [...] it is already impossible to imagine the Austrian museum landscape without the young house: the public accepts the museum of contemporary history as a place of information, of exchange at eye level, as a [...] sparring partner and contact person in many ways.»

→ Sommer, Monika. 2018/2019. «Jahresbericht», 7. Accessed 5.4.2022. https://www.hdgoe.at/items/uploads/module_pdf/Jahresbericht_hdgoe_2018-19.pdf.

Vignette selection KHM

Vignette 1

→ von Leithner, Quirin.
1876. *General-Programm für die Systematische Organisation der Kunsthistorischen Privat-Feidcommiss-Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses, 2.*

«The purpose of the private art-historical collections of the All-Highest Imperial House is primarily to bear witness to the sense of art [...] with which the rulers of Austria have always endeavored to cultivate and support art and science.»

Vignette 2

→ Fillitz, Hermann.
1989. *MEMORANDUM zur Situation der Bundesmuseen unter Einbeziehung der kommenden FOG Novelle für die Bundesmuseen (Teilrechtsfähigkeit), 3.*

«An art history museum as a whole is a grandiose, almost hardly exhaustible monument of occidental culture. [...] The scientific and conservational care, as well as the development and dissemination of the knowledge gained, are therefore the most noble task of the museum.»

Vignette 3

→ Haag, Sabine
«Management». n.d.
Accessed 5.4.2022.
<https://www.khm.at/en/explore/organisation/management>.

«Our intent [...] is to think about the institution of the museum [...] from the visitor's point of view [...]. The museum can only welcome and serve as many guests as possible if investments are made in an appropriately visitor-friendly infrastructure. The essential requirement in gaining new audience groups is the deliberate adoption of a fundamentally visitor-oriented approach by the museum and its employees.»

Vignette selection MAK

Vignette 1

«The Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry has the task [...] to promote arts and crafts activities and preferably to contribute to the elevation of taste in this direction. [...] The objects displayed in the museum [...] are to be made as accessible as possible for viewing, use and study, insofar as this can be reconciled with the safety and preservation of the same.»

→ Das kaiserl. königl. Österreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie. 1971. *Festschrift zur Eröffnung des neuen Museums-Gebäudes*, 28–30.

Vignette 2

««Tradition and experiment» indeed express the current situation of the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, the confrontation between «old» and «new», between preservation and radical change. Only through such a challenge can the existing be expanded [and] broken through [...].»

→ Noever, Peter. 1988. «Vorwort». In *Tradition und Experiment*, edited by Peter Noever, 7. Salzburg, Vienna: Residenz Verlag.

Vignette 3

«The MAK is a museum for art and everyday life. [...] [It] addresses our future by confronting socio-politically relevant issues with perspectives and approaches of contemporary art, applied art, design and architecture, and by acting as a driving force for positive change in our society [...].»

→ MAK. n.d. «Mission Statement». Accessed 5.4.2022. https://mak.at/en/the_mak/mission_statement.

Overview of the field research

Visitor panel

Dates

Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art: Tue, 4.5. – Sun, 9.5.2021, part 2: Sat, 12.6. & Sun, 13.6.2021

House of Austrian History: Tue, 11.5. – Sun, 16.5.2021

Belvedere: Tue, 18.5. – Sun, 23.5.2021

Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna: Tue, 25.5. – Sun, 30.5.2021

MAK – Museum of Applied Arts: Tue, 1.6. – Sun, 6.6.2021

In the course of five weeks, 200 free admission tickets per museum were provided in return for feedback, constituting the open group of the visitor panel.

After a welcome and briefing by the «Right to the Museum?» team, the participants of the visitor panel independently visited the chosen areas of the permanent exhibition and then gave feedback in the museum diary, which was provided as a digital questionnaire in German and English. The questionnaire could be filled out on their own mobile devices or on tablets we provided, as well as on paper if desired. At the end, there was an opportunity to share a photo of their own museum tour. In an informal follow-up conversation, the participants were asked about the photo upload, their planned or unplanned participation in the project, and their visit to the museum compared to previous visits.

Between 4 May and 13 June 2021, a team of 14 field researchers collected 903 complete questionnaires from the visitor panel. The difference between this and the 1,000 possible responses is due to unredeemed admission tickets or questionnaires that were not completed.

Citizen board

The 20-member citizen board was assembled by us to represent the population living in Vienna according to the six diversity criteria of age, gender, education level, migration background, disability/disabilities, and museum affinity. The participants were chosen from the responses to our call and through active search. In the end, the citizen board consisted of 21 people, as a couple with impairments shared a seat to facilitate participation, depending on their current state

of health. The members of the citizen board visited the chosen areas of the permanent exhibitions, each accompanied by a field researcher. During these accompanied tours of the museum, they were asked to «think aloud»; the researchers only encouraged them to articulate their thoughts and inquired about certain statements in a conversational manner. The tours were documented using an audio recorder and a small camera (GoPro). After the visit, the citizen board members filled out the museum diary on a tablet. Finally, a vignette interview was conducted, in which the annotation of the museum self-descriptions was documented via screen recording.

The 100 accompanied museum visits took place from 19 May to 5 September and were conducted by two field researchers. On average, a tour of the exhibition lasted 01:21 hours; with the follow-up interview, a museum visit took at around 2 hours.

Composition of the citizen board

Composition

Gender:

Female: 10 | 9

Male: 10 | 10

Diverse: X | 2

Age:

18-29 years: 4 | 3

30-44 years: 6 | 6

45-59 years: 5 | 5

60-74 years: 3 | 5

75+ years: 2 | 2

Migration background:

9 | 9 people with
migration background

Disability / disabilities:

4 | 4 people with a dis-
ability / disabilities

Highest completed

level of education:

Compulsory school

/ Apprenticeship /

Intermediate vocational

school: 11 | 8

Secondary academic

school / Higher voca-

tional school: 4 | 6

University / University

of applied science: 5 | 7

Museum affinity:

3 | 2 frequent visitors

9 | 9 occasional visitors

8 | 10 non-visitors

Statistics Austria figures were used to calculate the composition of the citizen board. Only the museum affinity, for which we assumed non-visitors with no museum visits, occasional visitors with 1 to 3 museum visits and frequent visitors with more than 4 museum visits per year (before the COVID-19 pandemic), was derived from the evaluation of the Austrian federal museums from 2004 due to the lack of current data.

The figures given in the margins are the calculated ideal composition of 20 persons on the left and the actual composition of the citizen board with 21 persons on the right. As can be seen from this overview, we were able to fulfil most of the criteria. A complex aspect of the composition was that we did not select the members of the citizen board according to just one criterion (such as previous museum affinity) but tried to fulfil all six diversity criteria in a kind of Sudoku manner.

Museum diary

Visitor panel page 1

Museum diary visitor panel

A Intro

“

Thank you for your participation in the “Right to the museum?” project and for sharing your visiting experience at the museum with us!

Completing your museum diary will take about 20 minutes. Please answer freely and as you personally experienced your visit. You will help us to better understand how museums are perceived and to identify points of action for possible changes.

Participation in this project is **voluntary** and may be terminated without reason up until the completion of the museum diary.

Your data will be treated **anonymously** and confidentially. No data will be collected that allows conclusions to be drawn about your person.

The field research team will be happy to answer any **further questions** you may have about the project.

“

By clicking on “Continue”, you consent to the processing of your information as well as to the potential publication of individual anonymised excerpts from your answers.

B Museum Experience

B_01 After visiting the museum today, how much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I felt comfortable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt that my basic needs were met.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found it easy to find my way around.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt welcome.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt entertained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a good time with other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt accepted for who I am and what I know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the information provided to be clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something new.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Museum diary

Visitor panel page 2

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I felt inspired to think further on my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could decide myself what I wanted to look at within the chosen rooms and find my own way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to become active myself and try things out for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to cope well with the range of impressions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I left the museum feeling refreshed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C Exhibition Experience

“

C_01 Silent” objects: Which object / group of objects spoke to you the least at the museum today and why? No exact object details are necessary here. Please describe your impressions freely. (short comment)

“

C_02 Talking” objects: Which object / group of objects spoke to you the most at the museum today and why? Again, no exact object details are necessary. Please describe your impressions freely. (short comment)

C_03 Which informational services did you use at the museum today? (multiple answers allowed)

- Smartify App (Belvedere)
- Artivive App (Belvedere)
- Audio guide (Belvedere)
- Booklet (Belvedere)
- KHM Stories App (KHM)
- Audio guide (KHM)
- MAK App (MAK)
- MAK Design Lab App (MAK)
- None of the above

Museum diary

Visitor panel page 3

C_04 Which of the informational services you used did you find the most helpful?
(multiple answers allowed)

- Smartify App (Belvedere)
- Artive App (Belvedere)
- Audioguide (Belvedere)
- Booklet (Belvedere)
- KHM Stories App (KHM)
- Audioguide (KHM)
- MAK App (MAK)
- MAK Design Lab App (MAK)
- None of the above

D Vignette commentary

D_01: We are now going to show you three short self-descriptions of the visited museum from its foundation until today:

Vignette 1

How much does this description match your museum experience today?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Neutral

- Not really
- Not at all

D_02 What comes to mind when reading this description? (short comment)

“

D_03 Vignette 2

How much does this description match your museum experience today?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- Not really
- Not at all

D_04 What comes to mind when reading this description? (short comment)

Museum diary

Visitor panel page 4

“

D_05 Vignette 3

How much does this description match your museum experience today?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- Not really
- Not at all

D_06 What comes to mind when reading this description? (short comment?)

E Summary of the museum visit

E_01 After my visit, I would describe the museum with the following three adjectives:

Adjective 1:

Adjective 2:

Adjective 3:

E_02 After your visit today, how likely is it that you would come back to this museum?

- Highly likely
- Most likely
- Fairly likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

E_03 How likely would you be to recommend a visit to this museum to friends and colleagues?

- Highly likely
- Most likely
- Fairly likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

E_04 Book of complaints: Here is space for your complaints: What did you not like at all at the museum today?

E_05 Declaration of love: Here is space for your compliments: What did you really enjoy at the museum today?

Museum diary

Visitor panel page 5

E_06 How often have you visited this particular museum?

- Today for the first time
- One to three times
- Four times or more

E_07 Have you used any of the following online services of the visited museum? (multiple answers allowed) (selected examples from the five museums)

- Homepage
- Online tours (Belvedere)
- Web-exhibitions (hdgö)
- Online tours (KHM)
- Virtual 3D tours (MAK)
- Blogs (VKM)
- Social media channels
- None of the above

E_08 How did you visit the museum today?

- On my own
- In company (number of people including yourself: -----)

“

E_09 Have you already participated in the “Right to the Museum?” project at another museum?

- Yes
- No

“

E_10 In the “Right to the Museum?” project, you had free admission today. What do you think of the regular admission price of € 8 (Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art hdgö) / 14€ (MAK) / 16€ (Belvedere, KHM)?

- Adequate
- Too expensive
- Too low
- Other: -----

F Sociodemographic factors

F_01 Gender

- Female
- Male
- Diverse

Museum diary

Visitor panel page 6

F_02 Age

F_03 Highest completed level of education

- Compulsory school
- Apprenticeship
- Intermediate vocational school
- Secondary academic school
- Higher vocational school
- University/University of applied science
- Other: -----

F_04 Nationality

F_05 Country of birth

F_06 What was the average number of times you visited museums (before the Covid-19 pandemic)?

- Never
- One to three times a year
- Four or more times a year

G Outro

Thank you for completing our questionnaire. You will now be redirected to our cloud storage, where you can upload a photo of your museum visit. If you did not take any photos or do not want to upload a photo, you can simply close the window after the redirection.

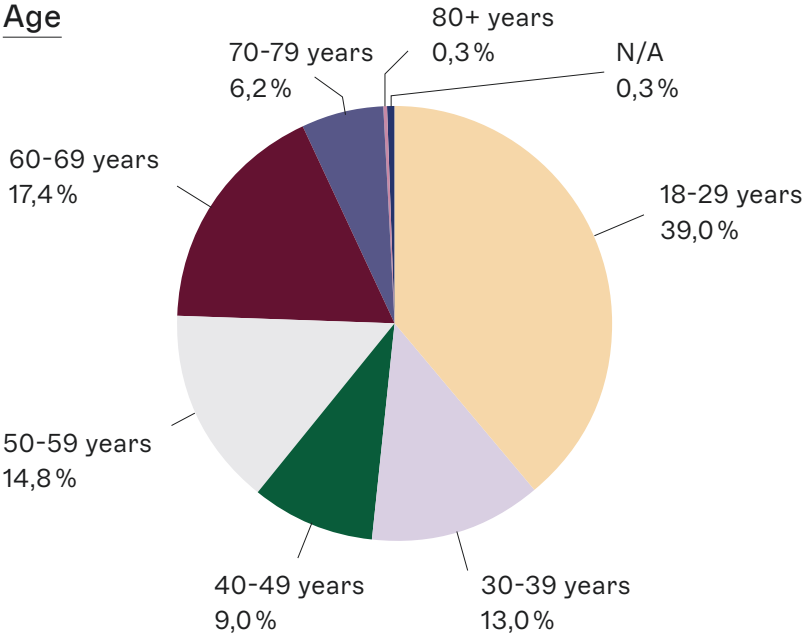
If you are interested in the results of our project, feel free to leave your email address with the research team.

Thank you for your comprehensive information and for supporting our research on the perception of museums!

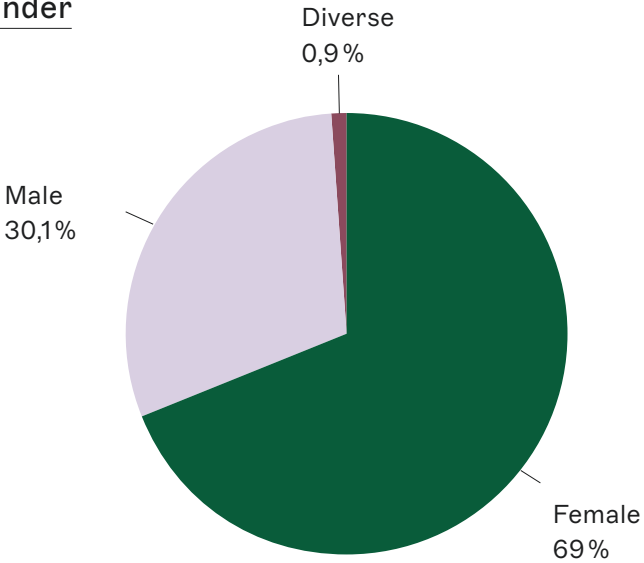
Participants Visitor panel

across all five museums (n=903)

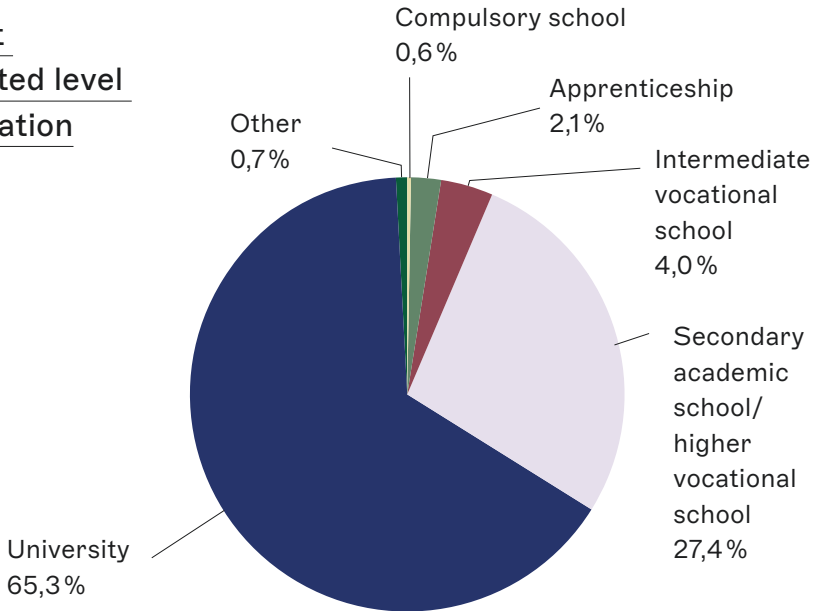
Age



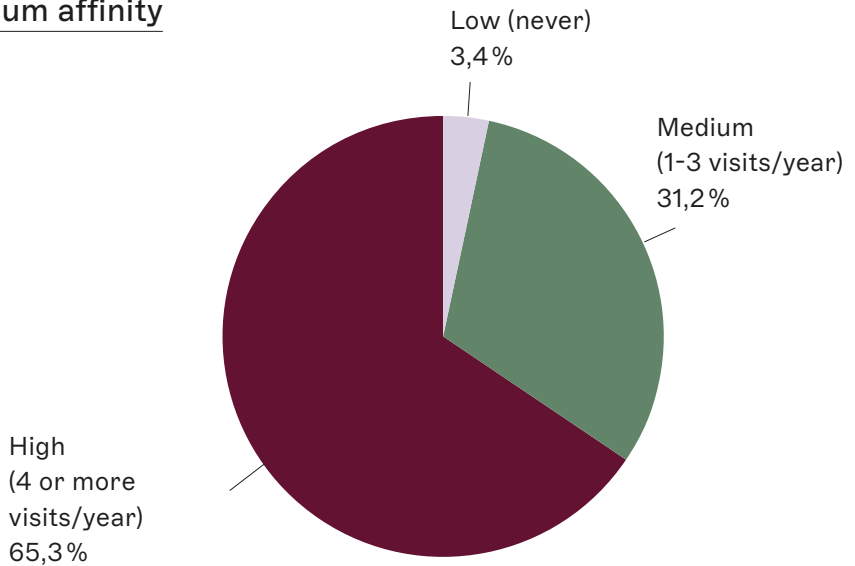
Gender



Highest completed level of education



Museum affinity



Visitor rights

Visitor panel

across all five museums, from highest to lowest agreement (n=903)

B_01: After visiting the museum today, how much do you agree with the following statements?

No. 4: I felt welcome.



No. 11: I could decide myself what I wanted to look at within the chosen rooms and find my own way.



No. 1: I felt comfortable.



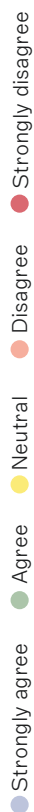
No. 9: I learned something new.



No. 7: I felt accepted for who I am and what I know.



No. 2: I felt that my basic needs were met.



No. 10: I felt inspired to think further on my own.



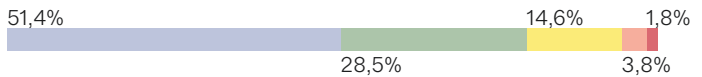
No. 5: I felt entertained.



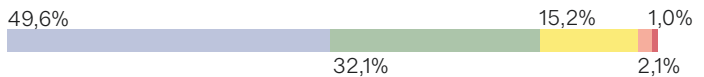
No. 6: I had a good time with other people.



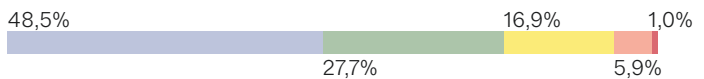
No. 8: I found the information provided to be clear.



No. 13: I was able to cope well with the range of impressions.



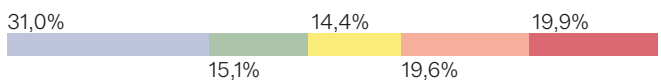
No. 3: I found it easy to find my way around.



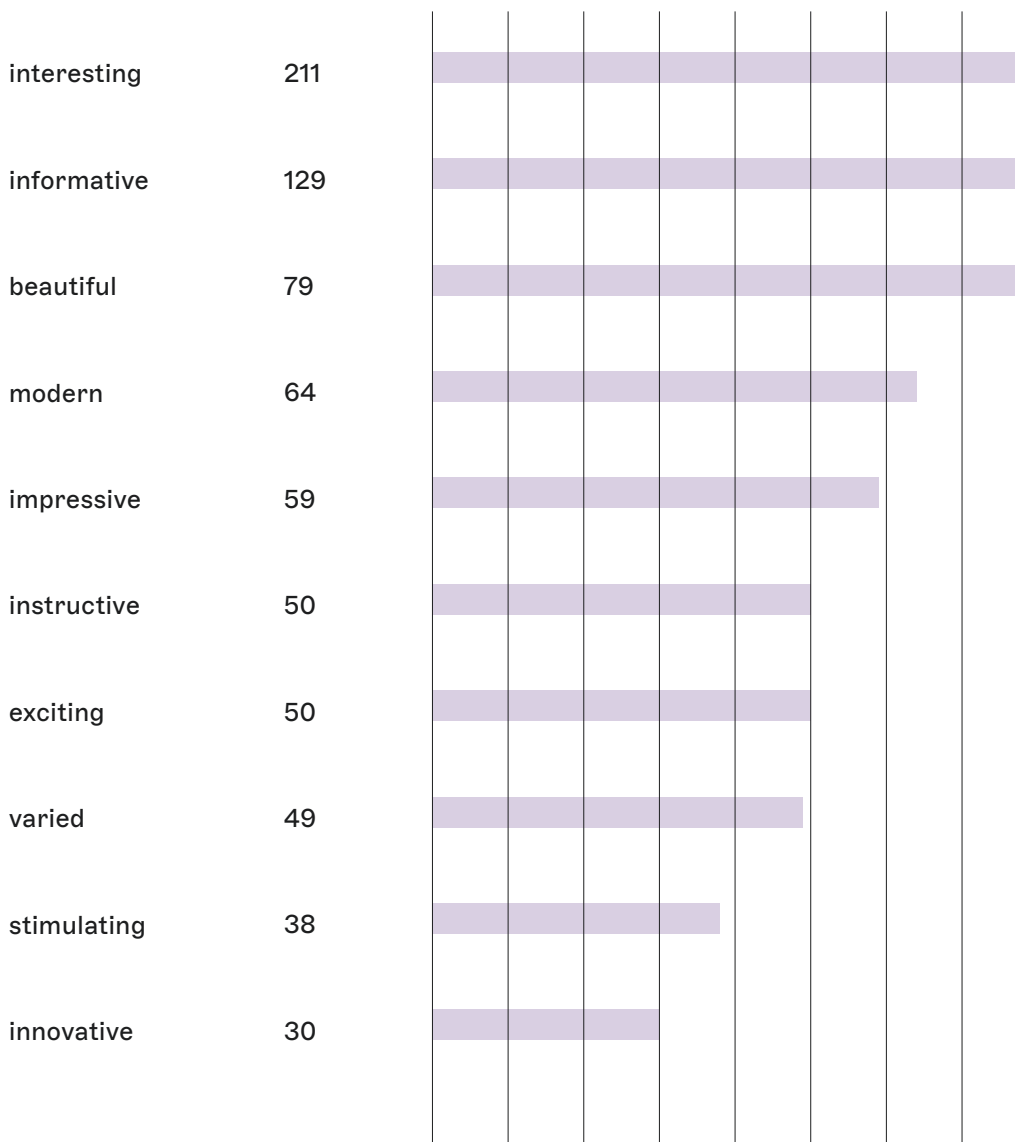
No. 14: I left the museum feeling refreshed.

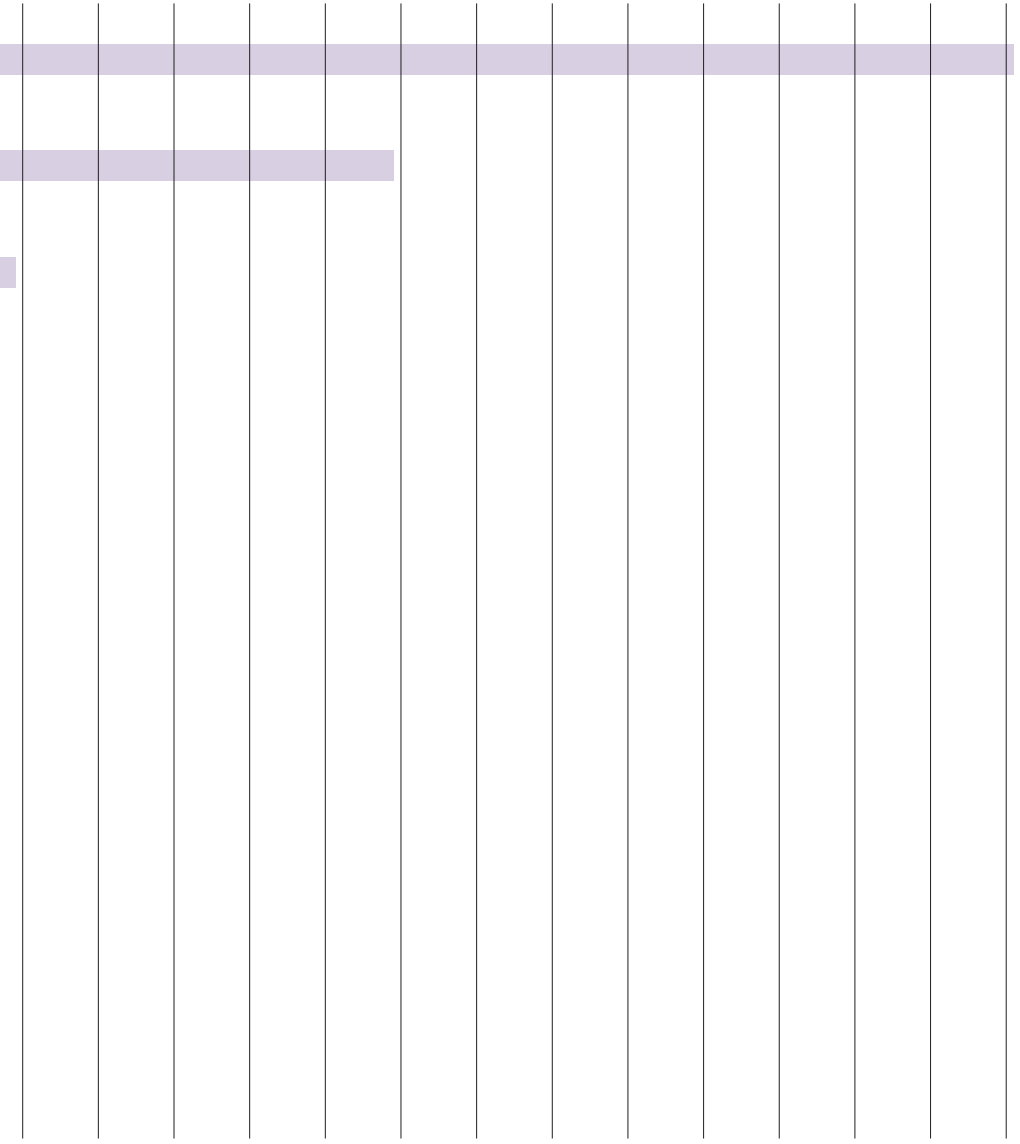


No. 12: I was able to become active myself and try things out for myself.



The ten most frequently mentioned adjectives to describe the five museums





Price perception

Visitor panel

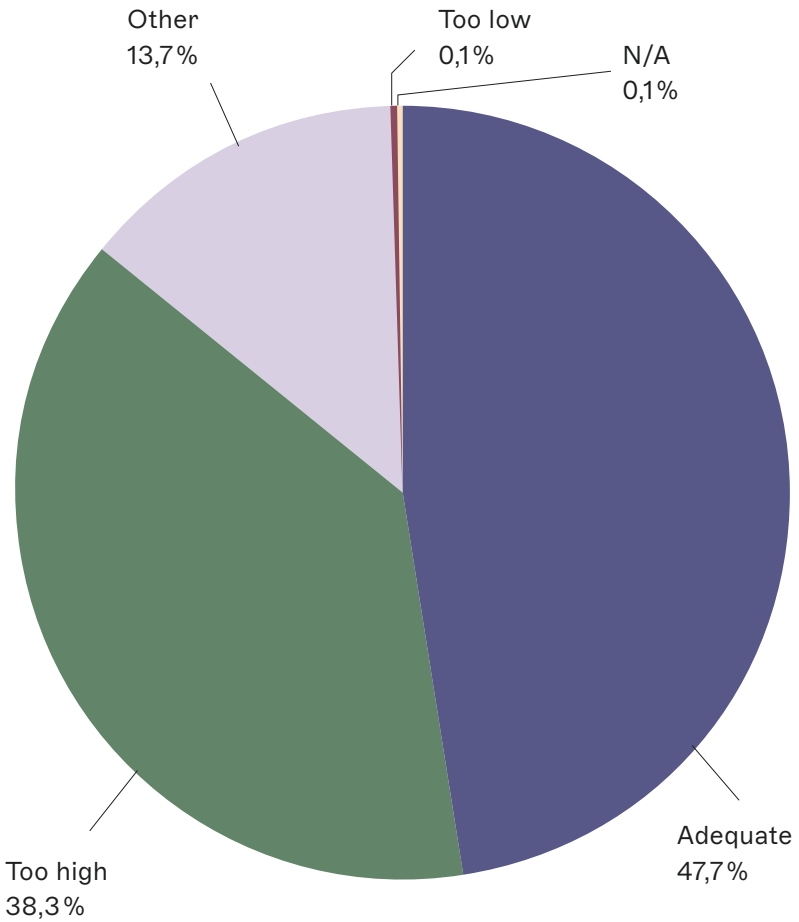
across all five museums (n=903)

Admission prices 2021

€8: hdgö, Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art

€14: MAK

€16: Belvedere, KHM



Selected comments

«Expensive but international standard» (KHM)

«It's intense at first. But there's also something on offer». (Belvedere)

«As a young person it would be too expensive for me, in general I would like to plan more museum visits, but the entrance fees deter my small budget». (Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art)

«Would find it cool if economically weak people also had the opportunity to go. It would be a shame otherwise. For me 8 euros fits, it just depends on how much you have». (hdgö)

«I understand that it costs a lot to maintain a museum, but I don't think there should be any selection by income». (KHM)

«Generally expensive, but there are all kinds of discounts or specials». (MAK)

«[Reasonable] if it also includes the special exhibitions, otherwise unfortunately a bit too expensive». (Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art)

«There is a lot to see, but you don't actually get through it all. For that, 14€ is a lot. I would pay 10€». (MAK)

«If you want to visit often and briefly as a Viennese, it's very expensive. If you come here once (e.g. as a tourist) and in international comparison, it's ok». (Belvedere)

«I think that in the sense of a democratic meeting place for information and exchange, this museum should be free». (hdgö)

Entry questionnaire

Citizen board page 1

Entry questionnaire citizen board

A Intro

“

The project "Right to the museum?" investigates how museums are perceived by the local population. For this purpose, accompanied museum tours with subsequent feedback take place in the following five Viennese museums:

- Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art
- Belvedere
- House of Austrian History
- Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna
- MAK – Museum of Applied Arts

Thank you for your interest in participating in this feedback process. To register, we ask you to answer a few questions. These will help us to put together as diverse a citizen board as possible and to inform you about the next steps for participation.

If you have any questions about or feedback regarding our project, please contact:

Dr. Luise Reitstätter
project lead Right to the museum?“
Department of Art History at the University of Vienna
Garnisonsgasse 13
1090 Vienna
Austria
luise.reitstaetter@univie.ac.at
T +43 1 4277 41451

B Participation

B_01 I hereby confirm my interest in participating in the project as part of the citizen board. I will visit all five partner museums on five individually arranged dates with a researcher and give feedback after my tour. After the fifth visit, I will receive an expense allowance of €200.00.

- o I confirm that I am interested in participating in the project.

B_02 Postal code residential district in Vienna:

Entry questionnaire

Citizen board page 2

B_03 Gender

- Female
- Male
- Diverse

B_04 Highest completed level of education

- Compulsory school
- Apprenticeship
- Intermediate vocational school
- Secondary academic school
- Higher vocational school
- University/University of applied science
- Other: -----

B_05 Nationality

B_06 Country of birth

B_07 Native language/s

B_08 Do you have any form of permanent disability? (multiple answers allowed)

- Yes, problems with mobility
- Yes, problems with sight
- Yes, nervous or psychological problems
- Yes, problems with hearing
- Yes, mental or learning problems
- Yes, problems due to other disabilities
- Yes, multiple disabilities
- No

B_09 What was the average number of times you visited museums (before the Covid-19 pandemic)?

- Never
- One to three times a year
- Four or more times a year

Entry questionnaire

Citizen board page 3

B_10 How did you find out about our project? (Multiple answers allowed)

- Postcard
- Social media
- Personal acquaintances
- Project website: www.rechtaufmuseum.com
- Press
- Other: _____

B_11 Since the citizen board is going put together according to diversity criteria, we cannot immediately guarantee your participation. Alternatively, it is possible to become part of the visitor panel. In this case, you will visit one or more of the participating museums during scheduled weeks with free admission and provide feedback after your tour. If you would like to be pre-registered for this, please select below which museum you would like to visit. (multiple answers allowed)

- Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (Tue, 4.5 – Sun, 9.5.2021, daily 10am–5pm)
- House of Austrian History (Tue, 11.5 – Sun, 16.5.2021, daily 10am–6pm)
- Belvedere (Tue, 18.5 – Sun, 23.5.2021, daily 10am–6pm)
- Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (Tue, 25.5 – Sun, 30.5.2021, daily 10am–6pm)
- MAK – Museum of Applied Arts (Tue, 1.6 – Sun, 6.6.2021, daily 10am–6pm)
- I do not wish to participate in the project as part of the visitor panel.

C Contact Information

C_1 Lastly, we ask that you provide us with your contact information so that we may contact you regarding your participation in the project.

E-mail address

C_2 Phone number

C_3 First name Last name

C_4 If you have any further questions/comments about your participation and/or the project, please feel free to leave us a message here.

Museum diary

Citizen board page 1

Museum diary citizen board

A Intro

“ Thank you for your participation in the “Right to the museum?” project and for sharing your visiting experience at the museum with us!

Completing your museum diary will take about 15 minutes. Please answer freely and as you personally experienced your visit. You will help us to better understand how museums are perceived and to identify points of action for possible changes.

Participation in this project is **voluntary** and may be terminated without reason up until the completion of the museum diary.

Your data will be treated **anonymously** and confidentially. No data will be collected that allows conclusions to be drawn about your person.

The field research team will be happy to answer any **further questions** you may have about the project.

“ By clicking on “Continue”, you consent to the processing of your information as well as to the potential publication of individual anonymised excerpts from your answers.

B Museums Experience

B_01 After visiting the museum today, how much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I felt comfortable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt that my basic needs were met.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found it easy to find my way around.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt welcome.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt entertained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a good time with other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt accepted for who I am and what I know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the information provided to be clear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something new.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Museum diary

Citizen board page 2

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I felt inspired to think further on my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could decide myself what I wanted to look at within the chosen rooms and find my own way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to become active myself and try things out for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to cope well with the range of impressions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I left the museum feeling refreshed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C Exhibition Experience

“

C_01 Silent” objects: Which object / group of objects spoke to you the least at the museum today and why? No exact object details are necessary here. Please describe your impressions freely. (short comment)

C_02 Talking” objects: Which object / group of objects spoke to you the most at the museum today and why? Again, no exact object details are necessary. Please describe your impressions freely. (short comment)

D Summary of the museum visit

D_01 After my visit, I would describe the museum with the following three adjectives:

Adjective 1:

Adjective 2:

Adjective 3:

D_02 After your visit today, how likely is it that you would come back to this museum?

- Highly likely
- Most likely
- Fairly likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

Museum diary

Citizen board page 3

D_03 How likely would you be to recommend a visit to this museum to friends and colleagues?

- Highly likely
- Most likely
- Fairly likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

D_04 Book of complaints: Here is space for your complaints: What did you not like at all at the museum today?

D_05 Declaration of love: Here is space for your compliments: What did you really enjoy at the museum today?

D_06 How often have you visited this particular museum?

- Today for the first time
- One to three times
- Four times or more

“

D_07 In the “Right to the Museum?” project, you had free admission today. What do you think of the regular admission price of € 8 (Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art hdgö) / 14€ (MAK) / 16€ (Belvedere, KHM)?

- Adequate
- Too expensive
- Too low
- Other: _____

Visitor rights Citizen board

across all five museums, from highest to lowest agreement (n=20)

B_01: After visiting the museum today, how much do you agree with the following statements?

No. 6: I had a good time with other people.



No. 11: I could decide myself what I wanted to look at within the chosen rooms and find my own way.



No. 4: I felt welcome.



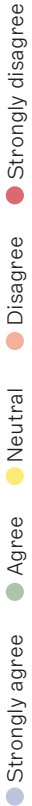
No. 1: I felt comfortable.



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No. 10: I felt inspired to think further on my own.



No. 7: I felt accepted for who I am and what I know.



No. 2: I felt that my basic needs were met.



No. 9: I learned something new.



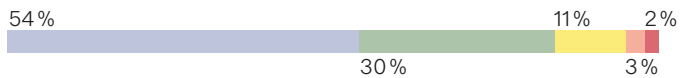
No. 13: I was able to cope well with the range of impressions.



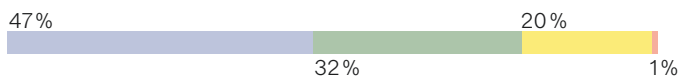
No. 3: I found it easy to find my way around.



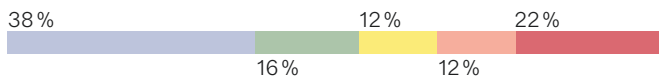
No. 14: I left the museum feeling refreshed.



No. 8: I found the information provided to be clear.



No. 12: I was able to become active myself and try things out for myself.



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Do we have a «Right to the Museum»?

This question was the focus of the research project of the same name, in which archival and field research was used to investigate changes in museums' concepts of the public and the public perception of museums. The study was based on the cooperation with five Viennese museums – the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, the Belvedere, the House of Austrian History, the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts – and Viennese citizens. Ten concise project findings provide information on the relationship between the museum as an institution and the public, and vice versa.

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