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### Permalink

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### Journal

Journal for Learning through the Arts, 12(1)

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### Publication Date

2016

### DOI

10.21977/D912130227

### Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6xw4f5c3#supplemental>

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# Using Social Phenomenological Analysis to Develop a Model of "Pedagogical Art Communication": Introduction to a Research Method and Example of its Outcome<sup>1</sup>

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How is it possible to carry out a meaningful study of a complex situation in arts education that remains largely unresearched? In my research project, I looked at a typical situation in art education and museum education, namely group guided tours, and particularly traditional tours of art museums in which the tour guide talks to the group while standing in front of a work of art. Expanding on this further, other situations would also fall under this category, such as when kindergarten children explore an exhibition space and tell their teacher about their associations and discoveries. The similarities of such situations lay in the fact that the participants form a group, a work of art is present, a form of pedagogical instruction is being carried out and an interaction is taking place among all those involved, including the work of art. This basic model lies at the heart of art education and museum education.

However, very little is known about this everyday situation in art and museum education. So it requires exploration. It is important to understand the situation's structures in order to design and carry out practices that are based on expert knowledge. This is irrespective of which *form* of art education is considered desirable or appropriate. First, it is necessary to reconstruct the behavioural patterns and structural contexts of such situations.

## Research context.

The research question relates to art education and museum education, so it is studied within the framework of these disciplines. But it also touches on other disciplines and discourses.

It is important to ensure that we have a clear focus. In the language of museum education, the situations studied are generally described as *art communication*, *art reception* and *talks about art*. Each of these terms brings its own implications about art and pedagogy. And the question on the interaction between the aesthetic object,<sup>2</sup> the recipient group and the teacher leads to further questions: What is the object of this interaction, an artwork, an

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an elaborate version that offers an introduction to social phenomenological analyses, of Hofmann 2016b. The translation of this article has been funded by the Network Research on Cultural Education (<http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de>) and the German Ministry of Education and Research.

<sup>2</sup> In art education in Germany, the term *aesthetic object* (Otto, 1969) is generally used in preference to *work of art*. The term covers all artistic products in a value-neutral way: "Aesthetic objects may originate from children, students, artists or amateurs, may be finished or unfinished, may be built, shaped, mounted, painted or created in another way" (Otto, 1969, p. 190).

aesthetic object, an exhibit? How can we describe the situation more precisely: as interaction, education, communication, aesthetic experience...?

Secondly, theoretical reference points can be found not only in art education and museum education, but also in general education, sociology and art history.

Third, the state of current research is extremely heterogeneous. Visitor research in museums (Hein, 1998, or Reussner, 2010, for an overview) is generally carried out as part of psychology, sociology or general education and is characterised by the respective mindset and methods of these disciplines. Art education encompasses a number of theories on education, generally focused on school contexts and on practical artistic activities rather than receptive activities. But art education provides a number of carefully crafted and tested methodological tools, namely qualitative empirical research for art education (Peez, 2000) and certain empirical studies on art reception. On the other hand, the development of museum education as an academic discipline has lagged behind that of other subjects: in English-speaking discourse, questions relating to museum education are generally based on visitor research and a general museological debate (Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). In the German-speaking area, the literature on museum education is dominated by reports and proposals about practice (such as the review carried out by Schmeer-Sturm et al., 1990). Alongside this, there is also museum education research, and more recently, a particular focus on empirical research (for example, Nettke, 2010). This overlaps with visitor research.<sup>3</sup>

The development of theories in museum education in Germany is not unequal to that development in other western countries. (For museum education in general, see Reussner, 2010, and Spanier, 2014; for education in art museums, see Hofmann, 2016a). Art education forms a separate discourse in Germany (Peez, 2015), focused on school education, which is occasionally connected to museum education. After a period when museums were considered as 'temples for the muses' (for a critical view, see Spickernagel & Walbe, 1976), they were also seen as places to learn since the 1970's (ibid.). As constructivist approaches to learning are now more important (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Lepenies, 2003), the focus is on the subjective perspective of learners in the museum. This overlaps with promotion of audience development since the 1990's (Hofmann, 2016a). Today, museum education in Germany discusses the role of "Vermittlung," a term that can be understood as imparting or as mediation, i.e. mediation between the interests of children towards an artwork on one side and art history 'facts' on the other (Hofmann, 2016a). For education in art museums, we proposed the model of a "space of experience" (Hofmann & Preuss, 2016), so museum education is not only based on theories of learning, but theories of experience (i.e. John Dewey, Michel de Certeau, Maurice Merleau-Ponty...).

### **Challenges.**

Attempts to study the interaction between aesthetic object, recipient group and educator find the researcher working in a field that has little theoretical structure and where the current state of research is very heterogeneous. No clear orientation could be found in terms of theoretical or practical studies. My research was carried out in a field that has little theoretical structure and has been studied in a number of different ways.

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<sup>3</sup> Tobias Nettke noted that "museum education is neither a methodological orientation nor a precisely delineated specialist discipline" (Nettke, 2013, p. 419).

It was also difficult to pin down the subject of the study. The situation being studied is very complex, as it involves interactions among the participants, the educator and the work of art. In turn, these interactions take place in particular pedagogical, institutional and situational settings and are influenced by social conditions. It must be borne in mind that there is a certain degree of dependence between the 'variables' of art, educator and group, so, for example, kindergarten groups and high school classes will look at different works and generally will be led by different educators. In the study, linguistic and non-linguistic expression had to be dealt with appropriately in terms of methodology, as--particularly with the latter--it must be assumed that they are particularly meaningful in group situations. It was also necessary to reconstruct factors that had an effect over a period of time, such as the influence of the initial welcome on the later situation. And, finally, a summary had to be drawn up of the differences and similarities between the different cases.

### Research Project.



Figure 1. Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, exterior view © Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Photo: Norbert Miguletz

The research project was carried out at Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (fig. 1), one of Europe's premier exhibition spaces, a gallery of around 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space and 300,000 visitors per year. At the Schirn, modern and contemporary art is shown in temporal exhibitions.

The SCHIRN focuses on art-historical and historico-cultural themes, discourses, and trends from a contemporary perspective. Its range of offers is multifaceted, international, and progressive; it attempts to open up new points of view and to break open traditional patterns of reception. The exhibitions are devoted in equal measure to contemporary stances in art and art of the modern era. (Schirn, 2016a)

There has been a second case study at a different art museum for to contrast and triangulate the findings.

The analyzed art gallery talks took place in the exhibition, *Gustave Caillebotte. An impressionist and photography*. Paintings and photographs showed the close relationship of impressionism and photography, the beginning of "modern" life in the city and how the perspective of an artist can be seen in his work.



Figure 2. Exhibition view *Gustave Caillebotte. An impressionist and photography*, © Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt 2012, Photo: Norbert Miguletz

The Schirn articulates its educational mission statement as follows:

We consider ourselves the meeting point that brings people together regardless of their walks of life, as a source of inspiration and as a place of critical reflection both on historical and current positions in art. (Schirn, 2016b).

Its museum educators aim to generate a dialogue with visitors in a dialectic movement between the topics of an exhibition and the visitors' world (Rauber, 2013). The artworks' materials, issues, or formal conception are considered as well as the bodily, theoretical, or subjective approaches of the visitors (ibid).

For the case study, a group of kindergarten children was chosen, eight children, about five years old, accompanied by two kindergarten teachers. They were led by a museum educator (who is also a kindergarten teacher).

### **Social phenomenological analysis as a research method and an example of its use**

Social phenomenological analysis was selected for the research project. This involved educational videography and participatory observation, so the work was carried out within the paradigm of sociological ethnography.

In this article, I will first present social phenomenological analysis as an approach, along with its premises and epistemological foundations (2.1). I will then describe the usual procedure (2.2) and the aim of the approach (2.3). This is done from the perspective of a researcher in art education, and focuses on the usefulness of this approach for research in this field. In the second part of this article, the methodological approach will be exemplified within the framework of my research project (2.4).

#### **Social phenomenological analysis.**

##### ***Phenomenological analysis as a concept of sociology and social science.***

The sociological approach of phenomenological analysis should be understood as a development of philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics for sociological research (Bortz & Doering, 1995, p. 278). The approach essentially involves reconstructing the participants' subjective attributions of meaning in order to penetrate the essence of the phenomenon. Phenomenological analysis should be understood more as a "metatheoretical

position of qualitative social research" (Lamnek, 2005, p. 48 f.) than as a formalised method. For art education, the approach was made more fruitful by the works of Maria Peters and Georg Peez (Peters, 1996; Peez, 2000; Peez, 2007a; Peez, 2007b).

As a concept of sociology and social science, phenomenological analysis was formulated in the tradition of Alfred Schuetz and Max Weber, building on the work of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Edmund Husserl developed phenomenology with a view to creating a basis for all sciences, as a bridge "between ideal laws and real experience" (Waldenfels, 1992, p. 14), whereas for Max Weber and later for Alfred Schuetz, the focus was on understanding the subjective meaning of social actions. The concept will be described in more detail below.

### ***The lifeworld as a starting point.***

In line with Husserl's principle of "back to the things themselves," phenomenological analysis begins with the "lifeworld" (Husserl, 1936/2012): the everyday, natural, normal things in life. This should be understood as criticism of a "positivist reduction of everything that exists to natural and historical facts and mathematical formulae" (Lamnek, 2005, p. 35). To paraphrase Edmund Husserl's position, the use of methods that are derived from a scientific concept results in solely artificial constructs that have more to do with the theoretical framework than with the subject of the research (ibid.). Instead, he believed it was necessary to develop methods and ways of thinking that were derived from the lifeworld.

### ***Constructivism, corporeality and intentionality of social action.***

Yet, "the focused 'things themselves' are not obvious to us" (Waldenfels, 1992, p. 17). From a constructivist point of view, it must always be borne in mind that the way the perception of things is not the same as the things:

The object *is* not simply one and the same, it *reveals itself* as the same in the interplay of circumstances and intentions [...] in which it is perceived, remembered, expected or imagined, in which it is judged, treated or striven for, in which it is thought of as real or possible, dubious or negated (Waldenfels, 1992, p. 15, emphases in original).

So the lifeworld's phenomena must be differentiated from the perception that we have of them. Our only access to the world is through our own perception, so each access is (also) subjective. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, corporeality plays a central role in this, as the body is the "'third dimension' on this side of pure consciousness and pure nature, of activity and passivity, of autonomy and dependence, and also this side of reflexive and positive knowledge" (Waldenfels, 1992, p. 59). The intentionality of human action also has to be considered: people carry out actions for specific purposes, and the actions of others are interpreted as intentional--and in doing so, the interpretation also has to be seen as intentional. So every creation of meaning arises from processes of understanding and the attribution of meaning of subjects in the social world; these are always only fleeting, and they change constantly, with the action in turn influencing the deed in circular processes (Hitzler, 2010, p. 112). The sociologist Ronald Hitzler views social phenomenology as having more than just protosociological and parasociological parameters:

In as much as it is generally a question of [...] reconstructing social constructs of reality, preoccupation with the experiences of the subjects is certainly not a *marginal* topic of social sciences, but its systematic core issue. As living, experiencing and acting in the strict phenomenological sense is a primordial sphere

that is only 'really' accessible by the living, experiencing, acting subject, then so-called objective factualities are only empirically (evidently) comprehensible as subjective realities of consciousness" (Hitzler, 2010, p. 134, emphasis in original).

### ***Phenomena as individual reflections of subjective meaning.***

Phenomena as observable reflections and traces of subjective meaning are indeed our only available route to understanding social action. By analysing them we can reconstruct people's attributions of meaning. Therefore the claim to validity of phenomenological analysis does not relate to the recognition of reality in any shape or form but:

Because reality does not consist of brute facts, but of meanings, it is above all the 'essential' task of social sciences to understand how meanings arise and persist, when and why they can be termed 'objective' and how people *construe* the social, 'objectivised' meanings and bring forth their own 'subjective' meaning – and in this way play their part in the construction of 'objective reality' (Hitzler, 2010, p. 135, emphasis in original).

### ***Two examples of research in art education using social phenomenological analysis.***

Since the 1990's, the use of empirical research methods is discussed in German art education (Peez, 2000). From the beginning, quantitative empirical approaches have been denied, stressing that learning processes in the artistic field are highly complex, multi-modal and open. However, a need for empirical findings has been claimed (ibid.). So several researchers used quantitative methods like social phenomenological analysis. In his case study, *Lara's first doodling* (Peez, 2007b), Georg Peez observes a 13-month-old girl who doodles for the first time. He aims to research childrens' drawings not only based on its result, the picture, but on the process, because the scribbling process seems very important. Making a series of photographs of the situation and analysing them piece by piece, he gathers important findings: The scribbling of the girl at first sight seems coincidental, but taking a closer look, one can see a specific learning process. The girl takes the piece of chalk and moves her arm forward, holding the piece of chalk in a way she can't see it. Thus, we can conclude that her aim is not to 'draw something' (as we often suppose). As she realizes that there is a white line on the black paper now, she repeats her movement--and learns that the trace is caused by her movement. For her, drawing is making traces. At this age, assumes Peez, drawing is a senso-motoric activity. He stresses that childrens' drawings have not only a communicative dimension ('a picture with a meaning'), but an important senso-motorical dimension; they are traces of the handling of a material and of self-efficacy. These findings have been gathered by an open, detail-focused and also holistic method: social phenomenological analysis.

In a research project called *View, word, touch: the aesthetic potential of difference* (Peters, 1996), Maria Peters researches art reception of a school class at the museum. The 17-year-old pupils explore sculptures of Hans Arp, Aristide Maillol and Franz Erhard Walther in different ways: they grope them blindfolded, then examine them, describe, draw. The researcher analyses the "processes of notation" (Peters, 1996, p. 161) of the pupils. Her method is social phenomenological analysis. Following this, she discovers a sort of displacement and concentration of meaning in the processes of notion, a difference-making between the artworks and the notes, between the notes and the pupils, between the artworks and the pupils. She concludes that art reception means a "contemplative, corresponsive und imaginative realization of perception" (ibid., p. 285). Therefore, art education works between

an "alphabetization" (ibid., p. 307) and an "eccentric self" (ibid.), that is, with difference-making.

### Approaches in phenomenological analysis.

To reconstruct people's attributions of meaning, we will look at the "targeted analysis of individual phenomena" (Mayring, 2002, p. 108) rather than undertake a broad description of different fields. This involves a precise description as the basis for a comprehensible interpretation of a phenomenon in order to ultimately penetrate its essence. Philipp Mayring presents the phenomenological analysis approach as follows:

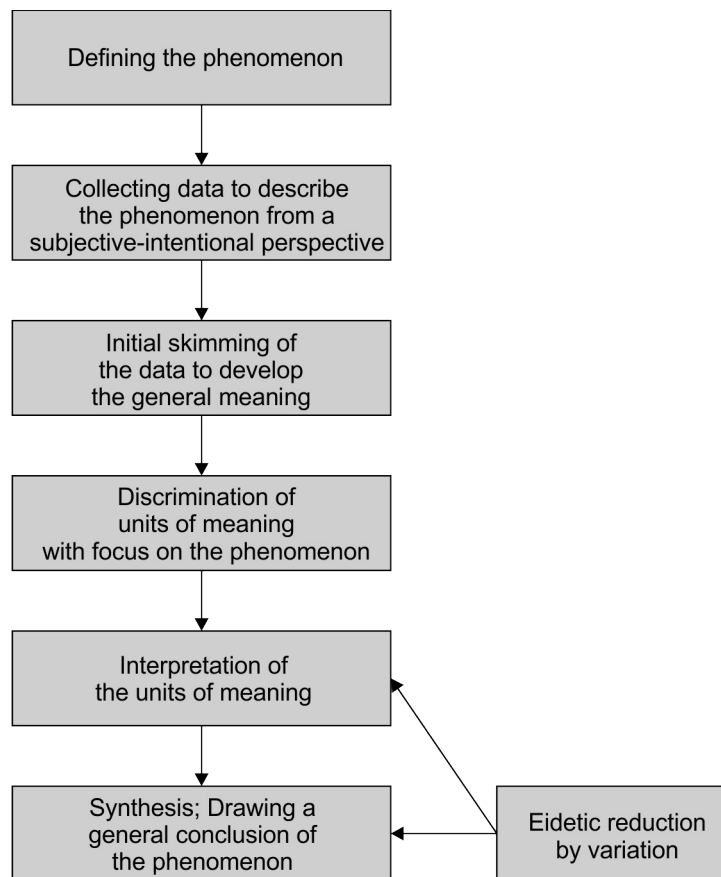


Figure 3. Approaches in phenomenological analysis (Mayring, 2002, p. 110).

It begins with "focusing on the phenomenon to be examined by means of one or several research questions" (Peez, 2007a, p. 29), followed by the gathering of relevant material and "exemplary description" (ibid.). Material is collected that is useful for revealing the essence of the phenomenon. These might be records of participatory observation, photographs, video recordings or material evidence of artistic activity, such as drawings or sculptures. This material is described, so it is put into written form.

The description and selection of materials based on the research questions is followed by analysis and explanation (Lippitz, 1987; Mayring, 2002, p. 108f; Lamnek, 2005, p. 56). The analysis includes an initial skimming of the materials "to gain a general overall understanding" (Mayring, 2002, p. 108). The second stage of the analysis involves creating units of meaning from the material. These units of meaning are then "interpreted in terms of the phenomenon" (Mayring, 2002, p. 109); this is carried out using hermeneutical premises



(Rumpf, 1991, p. 327 f.; Rittelmeyer et al., 2001; Wernet, 2006). The art educator Georg Peez states that those that interpret themselves in the course of the interpretation should "also be aware of the subjective constitution of the phenomena in the consciousness of the person who gathers and interprets the material" (Peez, 2007a, p. 29).

Finally, the interpreted units of meaning are compared, linked, connected and a "general interpretation of the phenomenon" (ibid.) is carried out by means of variation and reduction: "The objective of the analysis is, however, to penetrate to the core, the very essence of things" (Mayring, 2002, p. 107 f.). All elements that detract from the focus on the essence should be removed, with the aim of summarizing the key elements. The sociologist Siegfried Lamnek refers to

capturing the essence [...] by analogy with eidetic reduction in the Husserlian sense, in that one tries to consider and describe the subject being investigated from as many angles as possible in order to peel away the layers and reveal the core of the subject (Lamnek, 2005, p. 57).

Finally, the results of the study are summarized.

### **Objective and outcome: Reconstructions as intersubjectively comprehensible interpretations.**

The "subjective perspective of an individual actor as the *last* point of reference for sociological analyses" (Hitzler, 2020, p. 134, emphasis in original) is the reason why the objective and outcome of phenomenological analysis is the reconstruction (not an understanding or explanation) of subjective meaning. (For examples, see below). It demonstrates sociological approaches as constructs above constructs of the subject from everyday life, so second-rank constructs (these sort of outcomes are illustrated below). To strive for total adequacy between the researcher's construct of subjective meaning and the actor's construct of their subjective meaning is therefore an "unachievable ideal" (Hitzler & Eberle, 2001, p. 114). According to Alfred Schuetz, holding on to the subjective perspective offers "the only, and of course the only adequate guarantee that social reality is not replaced by a fictive, non-existent world that has been constructed by some scientific observer" (Schuetz et al., 1977, p. 65 f.). The principle of phenomenological analysis in subjective meaning, which is accessible as a path to the phenomena of the lifeworld, does not lead to 'objective' findings, but to intersubjectively convincing interpretations (Peez, 2007a, p. 29). In this sense, the research has to assess whether its point of view is convincing: "Exemplary description is an act of meaning, which has to ensure it can be monitored in communicative and intersubjective terms" (Peez, 2000, p. 162). Thus, the recipients and readers of research studies become "co-thinkers and co-researchers" (Peez, 2000, p. 161).

Phenomenological statements do not fulfil the requirement for generality in the positivist sense, as they contain specific implications, yet a high degree of engagement can be achieved in dialogue with real or imaginary others (Lamnek, 2005, p. 57).

It can be most helpful to "work out the ambiguity of a situation and clarify the different perceptions to the extent that meaningful (pedagogical) action is possible" (Rauschenberger, 1988, p. 279). Georg Peez says that it is precisely through the variation of similar situations (which, however, may generate different meanings) or through exposure to opposing opinions, that it is possible to "penetrate to the essence of research subjects" (Peez, 2000, p. 163). This should also be understood as "rejection of linear attributions" (ibid.) and as "recognition of contingency aspects" (ibid.).

**Specific approach in the study entitled "Pedagogical Art Communication between acquirement and imparting. Empirical case studies of two school classes and a kindergarten group at art exhibitions"<sup>4</sup>.**

Case studies were carried out in three situations involving different works of art, groups, educators and exhibition contexts. Material was gathered using educational videography and participatory observation within the paradigm of sociological ethnography. Finally, cross-case structural characteristics of the interplay among aesthetic object, recipient group and educator were reconstructed within the framework of social phenomenological analysis.

***Defining the phenomenon.***

A case study (or, more precisely, the description and interpretation of a case study) should be as useful as possible, and communicate both general and specific elements in an adaptable and innovative way (Fatke, 1997; Lamnek, 2005; Peez, 2007a). The entity of general and specific elements of a typical situation of gallery talks can be seen as a 'phenomenon' in terms of social phenomenological analysis. Therefore, the following situation was selected: a talk to a group about a work of art. In this situation, art education is a process that takes place with other people, in front of the original artwork. It is not simply a linguistic process (but also visual and performative, for example) and is led by an educator (fig. 4). This kind of situation constitutes a case study in this analysis, with its structure as the phenomenon to be explored.

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<sup>4</sup> This is the title of the dissertation that was accepted in 2014 by the Goethe University Frankfurt/Main (Germany). The work was awarded the Arnold-Vogt-Prize by the HTWK University of Applied Sciences Leipzig (Germany) and the "Stiftung\_A" foundation. See Hofmann, 2015

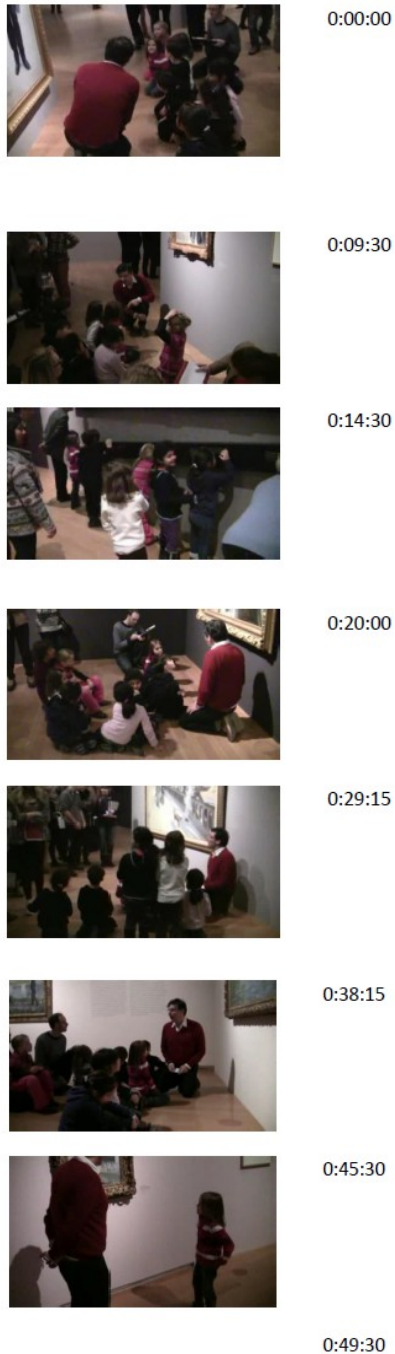


Figure 4. Overview of an observed situation (video stills); kindergarten group at the exhibition *Gustave Caillebotte: An impressionist and photography*.

**Data gathering.**

The collecting of data was carried out by two people. I carried out the participatory observation while a colleague produced a video recording. The focus was on observing interactions, the internal viewpoint of the participants and aspects that cannot be captured on camera. The observations were recorded in writing and using sketches of the surroundings.

It was not possible to set up a fixed camera for the video recording, because the group moved around the exhibition space during the tour. We also believed the interaction could be properly observed only if a mobile camera was used to record interactions. Depending on the

particular situation, these focused on individual people, the whole group, the work of art, etc. The recordings were made using a hand-held camera. A dictation machine was also used. This was fixed to my clipboard and allowed me to record conversations from a second position in the room. It was not necessary to draw up a data collection record, because the information was already recorded in the participatory observation.

**Data analysis procedure.**

The field notes on the participatory observation were transferred to an observation protocol. This has a narrative format and describes the tour from a first-person perspective, from the moment the observer/researcher arrives at the museum until the educator says goodbye to the group.

The video observation data was edited using video editing software from *Pinnacle Studio 14*, so that the whole tour was contained in a single file. It was then split into individual segments, each containing a talk. All segments were listed in a summary table, combined with a video still and notes on the key occurrences during the tour.

Audio data was recorded using the video camera and the dictation machine. The latter was used to produce audio records of selected talks. (See below on how the talks were selected.) The selected talks were then described. Depending on the research question, the focus here was on the interplay among the aesthetic object, the recipient group and the educator.

**Interpretation.**

The interpretation was carried out within the framework of social phenomenological analysis. The definition of the phenomenon and construction of the case studies has already been presented in the section entitled ‘Defining the phenomenon’. Material was gathered, cases were observed and an exemplary description and case description drawn up.

For the interpretation/case study analysis, first the video material of each full tour was viewed and interesting points were noted. This "initial skimming of the data" (Mayring, 2002, p.110) helps to develop the general meaning. Often, one gets an idea of general meaning at first sight. But only by a systematic analysis can one gather valuable findings. Therefore, social phenomenological analysis is done in hermeneutic circles, including at-first-sight-findings and detailed analysis.

The video recordings of the school classes each involved a tour with nine talks. The recordings of the kindergarten group involved a tour with six talks.

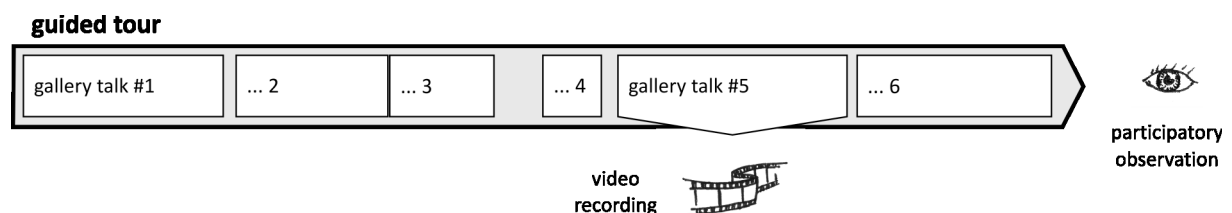


Figure 5. Overview of the data selected for evaluation using the example of the kindergarten group case study.

A video recording of one talk per group was selected, selected for what was typical of the tour given to the particular school class or kindergarten group. Reasons for the selection were presented on a case-by-case basis. An initial skimming of the selected talk aimed to capture the essence of the situation: typical factors, actions, constellations, utterances, etc.

Later, this stage was repeated for other talks in order to revise the material selection or add in other talks.

For each case, one typical talk was interpreted sequentially in order to be able to understand correlations. The interpretation was carried out on the basis of the description and using the audio transcription or video material as necessary. First, a description was drawn up; then the units of meaning within the individual sequences were distinguished. Finally, the units of meaning for the whole situation were interpreted.

#### **Example: Description of an interpretation of a gallery talk with kindergarten children<sup>5</sup>.**

*First, you will find the description of the video taken at the gallery talk. This cutout contains about three minutes, taking place in front of Gustave Caillebotte: Le pont de l'Europe, 1876. In the description, reference on data is marked as follows:*

*- "ATK5" = audio transcription #5 of the kindergarten group*

*- "VK5" = video #5 of the kindergarten group*

*Names are pseudonyms.*

#### **Description of sequence 2 (00:00:26 to 00:01:26).**

*(...) Suddenly, Henri points - straightening his arm over other children, in front of the educator's nose – the signature of the painting: "1800.... 1876 (ATK5, Z. 7-8). Mr Galanis startles a moment, confirms: "Ri-ight..." (ATK5, Z. 9). Obviously, he wants to make an issue out of this interjection for the whole group, and he raises his voice as well as his forefinger. Doing this, he bends over, over Naida und Bianca, who are facing each other and talking. At that, a visitor approaches the group and bends over to the painting (VK5, 00:01:10 ff.). Mr. Galanis glances at him, and then asks the question he had just begun: "Does somebody know... there... why is this date...?" (ATK5, Z. 11-12). The two boys are raising hands, pressing forward, apparently wanting to give the answer. The educator refuses Henri and calls Elias: "Well, you have... Now you can say..." (ATK5, Z. 12). While Elias is giving the answer and getting confirmation by Mr Galanis ("E.: Because he painted it then. MrG.: Right. In this year, he painted the picture.", ATK5, Z. 13-14), Naida und Bianca are playing this up: They are clapping each other's hand, finally holding hands and turning to the artwork.*

#### **Description of sequence 3 (00:01:27 to 00:03:05).**

*After the educator has waited a moment until a calm second arrives, he asks: "What are we seeing in this painting?" (ATK5, Z. 14-15) He is leaning a bit forward, moving his body to a position in front of the girls and in the middle of the group. The constellation is: The children are sitting in front of the painting, at a distance of about three feet, in two rows (front row: Naida and Bianca), forming a rectangle, while Mr Galanis is situated at the fringe, at the right side of the painting. He looks at the group a bit from beside', not from the front. As he is now leaning forward, Elias rises for a moment, in order to look over at the educator, but takes his place again. Bianca places repeatedly her fingers on her eyes, forming glasses, covering one eye or wiping out one eye. Alina and Shreya are yawning (VK5, 00:01:31 ff.).*

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<sup>5</sup> As social phenomenological analysis focuses on every detail, it is not easy to demonstrate it on a text translated from German to English.



Figure 6. Video still, 00:02:12:06

*After a question posed by the educator, Naida raises her hand fitfully and bolts upright; Lin raises her hand too. Mr Galanis calls Lin, and Naida keeps her hand raised. Anna comes closer and raises her hand too (VK5, 00:01:38 ff.), elevating herself on her knees. Alina does the same. Bianca tousles her hair and yawns. The children's answers are given tersely: "L.: A dog." (ATK5, Z. 18) "B.: People. Two... three..." (ATK5, Z. 20). The educator is nodding in confirmation, repeats, inquires and looks by alternating to the children speaking and to the painting. The contributions of the children go at different speeds to different directions: While Mr Galanis asks for more details (men or women?), and gets an answer from Lin, Bianca is slowly counting the people in the painting.*

*The educator sits on his haunches, leaning on his right knee, his right hand lying on the leg, or gesticulating, his left hand holding the tickets, his forearm lying slightly on his left leg (VK5, 00:01:50 ff.). Although he asks questions successively, leading to a special direction, he follows interruptions: "MrG.: (...) We want the woman, to start with the wo...Yes? You've seen something, too? Tell us!" (ATK5, Z. 26-27). He now leans his right hand on the floor and advances to the child. Naida is rising to her knees as she answers, points to the painting, and Galanis draws back for this. On her second answer, she is rising up, standing and pointing: "There is a train" (ATK5, Z. 30). Mr Galanis is finally pointing to the train, too, his arm exaggeratedly pointing, and confirms: "MrG.: A=ha. You discovered something. A locomotive" (ATK5, Z. 31).*





Figure 7. Video still, 00:02:37:10

*Bianca is rising on her knees, Mr Galanis points again to the painting and waits a moment, because the children are apparently interested and searching in the painting. Now, Bianca stands up, searches the locomotive, finds it and points at it, her finger nearly touching the artwork.*



Figure 8. Video still, 00:02:51:12

*The educator intervenes by holding her back with a gesture (VK5, 00:02:11 ff.). Because of that, the child goes down sitting on her haunches, but seems excited, wants to get up. While Mr Galanis continues his talk with Naida, following her discoveries*

(locomotives, carriage, umbrella), Bianca – searching for the locomotive – discovers something: She had stood up and had approached the painting (and had been rejected by Mr Galanis). While the educator is lost in the dialogue with Naida, she stands up again, leads her finger close to the painting again and states: "Hey, but there is glass over it" (ATK5, Z. 45). The educator confirms and agrees; he puts the question to the whole group: "What is... yes ((nodding)) Why is glass over it? What are you thinking?" (ATK5, Z. 47)

### **Interpretation of sequence 2.**

(...) After the educator became irritated or insecure by different occurrences, he now takes advantage of Henri's comment to regain leadership of the situation.

### **Interpretation of sequence 3.**

Subsequently, he takes control of the situation. He asks an initial question about the artwork ("What are we seeing in this painting?", ATK5, Z. 14-15) and advances to the middle of the group. But this constellation is a disadvantage for Elias, who is excluded now and has a restricted view to the artwork. This problem is immediately apparent by his body language (rising, VK5, 00:01:28 ff.), but primarily by his behavior in the following course of the gallery talk.

The talk the educator had initiated is further moderated by him: He asks questions, calls children, turns to them, repeats their contributions and confirms them. But there are too many answers; there is shoving and calling out – and even a child turning away, frustrated because he has not been called.

The educator had created something close to a school situation with the kindergarten children; his initial question seems like a memorized, trained pedagogical phrase, meant to start a pre-defined form of interaction. The acquirement of the artwork subsequently is not subject-centered, and the children have no chance to build their own impressions or opinions. But soon it is apparent that the school-like interaction does not work in this situation.

The school-like interaction that was introduced by the educator is underpinned by the way he talks. He is using quasi theatrical means, such as an exaggerated facial expression and intense gestures, or strong accentuation. Further, he often pretends not to know answers, for example in pretending amazement as the children discover the locomotive in the painting (ATK5, Z. 31). The children participate intensely in the talk, but it is striking that the course of the talk as a whole is disconnected.

For some children, we can see a bodily and gesture-led acquirement of the artwork, sometimes a bodily-spatial acquirement: They are rising on their knees, getting up, pointing or moving toward the painting. Bianca tries several times to touch the painting. The constellation of the group does not hinder or prohibit it, as the educator sits not in front of the group, but more at their side (in contrast to the case study "Duererschule", Hofmann, 2015, p. 305 ff.). The bodily acquirement of the artwork is prevented by Mr Galanis several times, but only by gestures (VK5, 00:02:11 ff. und 00:02:50 ff.).

Considering this, we can distinguish the childrens' different forms of acquirement: While Naida is searching and naming items in the painting, Bianca is counting the



*figures. Plus, Bianca is approaching the artwork and therefore realizes it is not only an image, but an object with a frame and glass. The educator gets into this for a moment and explains the protecting function of the glass. By that, he is stressing the pedagogical and civilizing role of the museum (preservation of artworks from visitors) and contributes to a museum-socialization of the children.*

The next step was to proceed with a triangulation for each of the three groups using the data collected from the participatory observation for the whole tour. Then, after reflection on the subjective observation content, there was a check of whether the units of meaning derived from the video observation could be confirmed, changed or completed. By the end, there were about ten interpreted units of meaning for each of the three cases, for which a talk was analyzed.

Finally, a synthesis was produced (known as an *eidetic reduction* in phenomenological terminology, see below). The interpreted units of meaning from all three cases were summarized with the aim of presenting the essence of the situation and its structural characteristics. Ten cross-case categories were used:

1. The participants have aesthetic experiences. The educator's communication focuses on transmitting knowledge and at the same time on creating and maintaining a pedagogical communication.
2. It is clear that a form of socialization is occurring alongside the pedagogical activity.
3. The educator's methods are based more on specific understandings of art, institutions and roles than on expert didactic concepts.
4. There are differences between the imparting and acquirement of knowledge
5. There is a correlation: original art work – body – acquirement.
6. There is a correlation: institution – compulsion/power - imparting.
7. Complex, dynamic and contingent situations are coordinated.
8. The original artwork enables and forces a dialogue.
9. The observed didactic vacillates between play and appearance.
10. The role of the chaperone schoolteachers remains undetermined.

Using variation and reduction to the essence, the situation was classified under these categories or sub-headings; this led to a general interpretation of the phenomenon, a summary of the essential and a structural generalization. The characteristics of the individual cases were synthesised to produce an overall statement. This general structure was then looked at in light of the state of current research and developed into a functional structural model for art and museum education.

### **Benefits of the method.**

The approach that was selected allowed the situations that were being observed to be studied in a comprehensive and methodical way, along with the development of cross-case structures. Thus, it was possible to gather findings from a close look to specific situations and reconstruct the core of the specific situation, a typical situation, and connect it with other exemplary situations. This allowed the reconstruction of key characteristics of the interplay among aesthetic object, recipient group and educator. Connecting this reconstruction with other models or theories (particularly Kade, 1997; Hausendorf, 2010; Gruetjen, 2013), the method made it possible to construct a model for thinking about art talks. A heuristic, descriptive model of *pedagogical art communication* was developed, based on empirical research and linked to the summary of the current state of research and the theories discussed. Therefore, the evaluations provided a model, a typology or an example of this situation, which

allowed generalizations to be drawn despite its specificities. Now it is possible to use this model to view the situation differently and act in other ways; pedagogical reflexivity is stimulated to view such situations "differently" in order to act in a more professional way (Peez, 2000, p. 161).

**Result: a heuristic, descriptive structural model of "pedagogical art communication".**

## pedagogical art communication

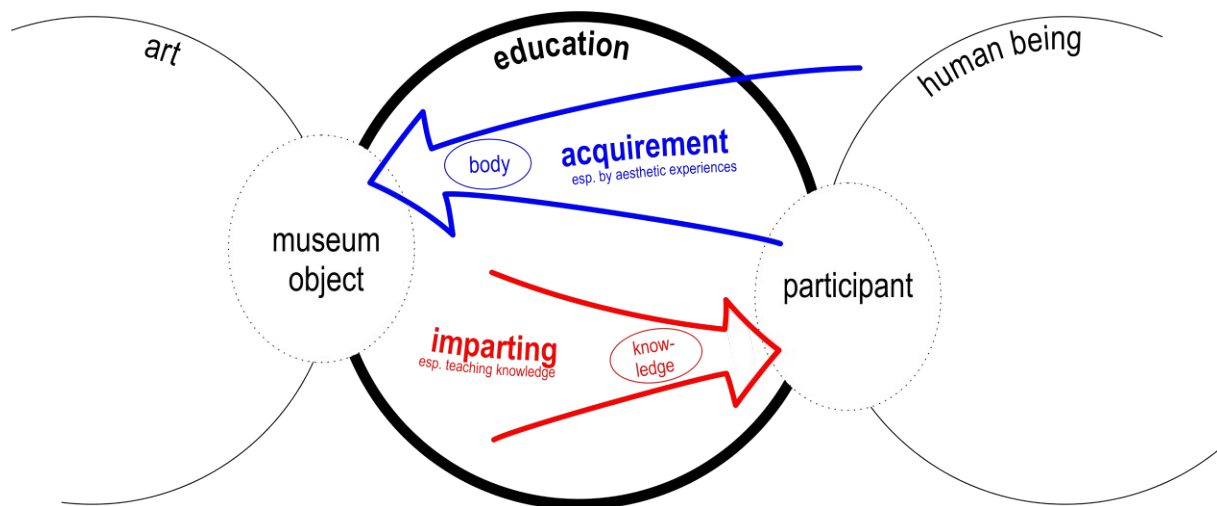


Figure 9. Research outcome: Schematic presentation of the basic structure of pedagogical art communication.

The interplay among the recipient group, the aesthetic object, and educator is characterized by the participants acquiring (i.e. by aesthetic experience) and the educator imparting (especially) knowledge through pedagogical communication (Kade, 1997). In addition, the educator is to maintain *pedagogical communication*, avoiding its becoming an everyday communication or even to stop.

In this interplay, there would be a close relationship among the original work of art, the body, and the process of acquirement. Similarly, there would be a close relationship among the institution, compulsion/power, and imparting.

It must be stressed that there is a difference between the acquirement and the imparting. This difference is inevitable and indissoluble. So it cannot be expected that imparting and acquirement form an complementary process or melt together. However imparting is not impossible in this way. It is urgently needed as one side of the coin, with acquirement on the other side. Without imparting there could be no pedagogical art communication.

In the future, art education and museum education need to focus less on dissolving this difference (in the sense of "methods that work") and spend more time on finding ways of sensibly dealing with the difference between imparting and acquirement of art. So the practice would be a pedagogical art communication in which art educators impart what can be

imparted (to the extent that it is "impartable"), while at the same time stimulating and enabling the acquirement of knowledge – and, at a broader level, coordinating the interplay of imparting and acquirement in social, performative and spatial dimensions.

### **Specific experiences: strengths and limitations of social phenomenological analysis.**

The strength of the selected approach is certainly that it is able to retrace complex situations, integrate various aspects of these situations and consider their interdependencies. From this, it is possible to put together a comprehensive overview of key features and structures.

This approach allowed me to do justice to the complexity of the research subject. The detailed description and analysis allowed me to consider the complex and multilayered situation of a talk about a work of art. The situation in focus is very complex, as there are interactions between the participants, with the educator and with the work of art, and, in turn, these interactions are based on certain pedagogical and institutional settings and influenced by social frameworks. With this "holistic" view of a complete phenomenon, it was possible to make useful connections between various elements such as the influence of the space on the group, the actions of individual participants, external influences and stimuli from the educator. This made it possible to make a comprehensive analysis of the situation.

In this context, it was very helpful to be able to integrate linguistic and non-linguistic utterances. In many situations, gestures, posture and facial expressions were very important; in some situations verbal utterances had to be interpreted quite differently in light of the speaker's body language. This would not have been possible if a purely linguistic approach had been used.

I believe one of the main advantages is that the individual aspects are not looked at in isolation, but can be analyzed in their context. This allowed the interplay of institution, behavior, interaction, pedagogy, etc. to be studied and the "lifeworld of the talk" could be reconstructed, along with all its influences and developments.

As a non-sequential approach, social phenomenological analysis makes it possible to take into account time-spanning correlations within a situation, such as the influence of the greeting on the latter situation.

After focusing on the specific situation, this approach then allows differences and similarities between the various cases to be summarized, as phenomenological analysis uses coding to create cross-case categories. In the end there is an actual "outcome": the reconstruction of the essence of a phenomenon. Critical structures that certainly have an effect but that previously could not be explicitly appreciated in scientific or lifeworld terms can now be reconstructed through phenomenological analysis within the lifeworld, and general connections can be derived (Peez, 2000, p. 161).

However, this strength also delineates the limitations of phenomenological analysis. Reconstructing structures means presenting the status quo of a phenomenon. So, for example, it is not possible to use this method to evaluate the phenomenon. There is no plan to make comparisons with other phenomena or carry out an evaluation using existing benchmarks in this approach. Phenomenological analysis also does not allow the generation of instruction manuals. It is only possible to reconstruct existing things, so this approach can be described as retrospective rather than prospective – as is the case with most empirical approaches. However, phenomenological analysis goes beyond the observed situation. Through the precise reconstruction of a phenomenon, it is possible "to understand educational reality as a

meaningfully structured, culturally formed reality in its meaningfulness and normative structure" (Friebertshaeuser & Prengel, 1997, p. 20) Thus, it is possible to generate models and perceptions that may be used more pragmatically in the future by educators and other leaders in similar situations (Peez, 2000, p. 325f.). Therefore phenomenological analysis offers an opportunity to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon, to grasp its structures and relationships and hence to amend future action.

As with all interpretative approaches, social phenomenological analysis also harbors the danger of giving too much weight to the individual, always subjective, open to interpretation. So here it is all the more necessary to carry out a painstaking reflection of subjective observations and methodically allow for multiple perspectives, such as through triangulation (Mayring, 2002; Lamnek, 2005; Flick, 2010; Flick, 2011). For example, this could be carried out through "data triangulation" (Denzin, 1970; Denzin, 1978) of verbal and visual data or "investigator triangulation" (ibid.) in evaluation groups and study workshops, or also through "systematic perspective triangulation" (Flick, 2010, p. 161; Flick, 2011, p. 20f.), in which different research approaches are triangulated with the methods and data linked to them.

Personally, I found this detailed and initially meticulously descriptive and then precisely interpretative approach to be very practical, though time-consuming. The description of the video sequences was very demanding, because I had to write down a wide range of impressions from the video recording (actions, atmospheres, utterances, room layouts, movements, etc.). It was difficult to present simultaneous actions within a meaningful sentence structure. In the interpretation, it was also a challenge to keep track of everything at the same time while still focusing on what was important. Anyone who wants to use a phenomenological approach, therefore, has to find his/her own structure for the material, (or, to be more precise, work out a structure from the material), particularly when formulating structural characteristics, and then bring them together to come to a general conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

By using social phenomenological analysis in my research, I was able to make a very detailed assessment of the different cases in all their complexity, including linguistic and non-linguistic interactions and other external factors. It was also possible to work out possible, cross-case structural characteristics. I believe I succeeded in understanding and presenting a key situation in art and museum education with all its structural relationships. In the future, this could be expanded upon in theoretical, empirical and practical terms.

I found this method was also practical, because it is very low-tech. There was no need to use special software or complicated methods. Social phenomenological analysis is a descriptive/interpretative approach that is easy to learn and put into practice. It is more important to understand it as a "metatheoretical position" (Lamnek, 2005, p. 48 f.) and take a corresponding attitude towards the research. It also requires a very detailed approach, a high degree of self-reflection and transparency, and the ability to recognize and develop structures.

I believe this research method is suitable for art education, because this is an extremely complex field that in the past has had little theoretical structure. Therefore, social phenomenological analysis is recommended as a research method that can be applied in the "lifeworld" (Husserl). It takes a comprehensive view of a phenomenon and derives general correlations that can then be used in research and practice.

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