

GALLERY AS AN INCLUSIVE SPACE OF HUMAN INTERACTION WITH ART IN UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION

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Abstract: As the gallery is a cultural institution, this paper aims to explore its use as an educational space, a venue for knowledge, and a platform for the development of cultural awareness for each person. As part of the study, the research aimed at analyzing the contexts resulting from this relationship was carried out through qualitative research methods in a territorial setting. The research aimed to explore the possibilities and limitations of educational activities in a gallery setting. In terms of content, the research was projected on both an intact and a minority population of gallery visitors. The results of the research identify specific educational opportunities as well as certain limitations and assumptions for the visitor with a disability, even though society tends to be inclusive. The gallery is a space where one encounters art and is confronted as a viewer. This implies that the gallery itself should not only be a cultural and educational institution, but as an inclusive institution open in favour of the heterogeneity of visitors.

Keywords: gallery, gallery programs, cultural institution, educational institution, inclusion.

1 Introduction

The presented paper has the ambition to highlight the gallery as an open space for every visitor's benefit regardless of age, health condition or cultural difference (Kováčová, 2023). The aforementioned heterogeneity helps visitors educate themselves, shape themselves in favour of the perception of culture and know the unknown through visualization (Benčíč et al., 2023). The fact that galleries are no longer just places for exhibiting art can also be observed in the offer itself, and at the same time their role has been significantly enriched in terms of competences. It is a cultural institution, just as a museum provides its visitors with contact with certain artistic artefacts, according to its focus. Galleries are places of learning where education is seen as a process of interaction between the exhibited work, the educator and the visitor (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007).

The gallery as terminus technicus, is not very different from the term museum in other countries. In our conditions, in Slovakia they are differentiated based on the expositions and exhibitions that are offered. This fact is determined by the historical framework of the development of cultural awareness in our conditions. The term gallery can be understood as an institution that deals with the visual arts. They are also engaged in collecting activities, unlike in Western countries where galleries primarily perform the function of selling works of art. Thus, it could be argued that Slovakia still has some way to go in this respect (Valachová, 2021a). The public in our country is accustomed to a different conception of this institution and it is possible that the mentioned approach imaginatively creates a certain distance of people from it (Valachová, 2021b). Nevertheless, it might evoke "business" and thus the artistic, mysterious spirit of the place would disappear. However, fine art is not only presented in galleries but also in art museums. The museums, unlike galleries, have a broader range in terms of the possibilities of focus and the artefacts they can offer to their visitors (Valachová, Kováčová, 2024). Due to the nature and themes of the artworks, the presence of a curator, a professional staff member or a gallery educator in this institution is essential and significant. They can appropriately and professionally explain the artworks in question concerning the target group to which it is presented (Bergerová, 2024).

1.1 Gallery pedagogy through time

Cultural institutions - museums and galleries - are now an integral part of our culture. Their origins and content are the subject of research and scientific studies. We also present the broader theoretical concept in the following text.

The issue of gallery and museum pedagogy is well known within our territory, but less systematically elaborated. At the same time, there is no systematic training of educators focused on this area.

Abroad, the terms gallery and museum are used as one unit, regardless of the precise definition of the concept of gallery and museum. Institutions that present and work only with the visual arts are defined as museums in the global context.

In the global terminology, the term gallery is referred to as an "art operator" for the reason that, unlike a museum, it presents works of art that are intended to be traded, sold or bought, i.e. it does not collect works of art in the form of a collection (Jůva, 2014).

The process of the development of museum and gallery pedagogy from a societal perspective has undergone several social reforms. These were mainly cultural, economic and political changes that also affected these institutions. Based on these facts, museums and galleries have had to rethink their attitude towards the public, and towards their visitors. Therefore, their main strategy became to attract visitors through art education and also through cooperation with schools. It was from this point onwards that the educational activities of museums and galleries began to be increasingly supported. In the 1960s and 1970s, when educational activities began to increase, the concept of museum (gallery) pedagogy was introduced as a scientific discipline. However, the main turning point came in the 1980s and 1990s, when cultural literacy was joined by visual literacy.

Sokolová (2010) discussed this shift as a fact that, within gallery pedagogy, manifested itself in the concept of so-called museum/gallery literacy as a special ability of an individual acquired by deepening visual literacy into the ability to fully orient the individual in the medium of the museum and gallery (ibidem, p. 30). Thus, the very essence of art museums and schools has been fulfilled both practically and theoretically and their common problem has become visual literacy, cultural perceptual competence and the professional platform of gallery pedagogy (Sokolová, 2010).

The formation of gallery pedagogy in Slovakia and the Czech Republic could not be formed quickly and easily, even though its practical form had a continuous development. The main consequence was mainly the social changes that took place after the Second World War. Nevertheless, their 'cultural and educational activity' was considered one of the most important educational tools during the period of socialism (communism). In contrast to the Western countries, where the development of gallery pedagogy progressed significantly, in our territory it did not yet manifest any basic features of science. In the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, gallery pedagogy did not contain basic elements, such as an underdeveloped theoretical background (in the form of publications), nor was it reflected in the content of university teacher education. Thus, in the 1980s, no significant change had yet taken place, and therefore the cultural and educational activities of this institution were captured only in very rough outlines in the form of seminars or proceedings (Sokolová, 2010).

Since the birth of gallery pedagogy in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, we can say that this institution has tried to develop work for the public, so it had its social mission, which was applied based on the results of professional work. As the development of gallery pedagogy did not progress significantly until the 20th century, its decline and disappearance occurred in the 1990s. This was mainly because the emphasis was placed on other priorities for the institution. In particular, new ways of presenting galleries and museums were coming to the fore, which focused on activation, exhibition and grant activities that

presented new opportunities for art life (Čarná, Tribulová, 2018). An intense interest in this discipline emerged in the Czech Republic around the mid-1990s, when the greatest interest was shown mainly by university professors, who contributed to the domestic development with their interest. In the domestic development of gallery pedagogy, authors such as Jůva (2014) and Horáček (1998) were especially involved, who, based on the authors' publications, introduced the issue of art mediation from an educational point of view. Fulková (2008), Slavík (2011) and Horáček & Zálešák (2007) are also among the leading authors in this field, who have elaborated this issue into a theoretical form with possible insights into its development and expansion into the space of practice.

Based on their research intentions in the field of gallery pedagogy, the issue of gallery education in the Czech Republic has become one of the most dynamically developing fields of study.

In Slovakia, the situation concerning gallery pedagogy developed mainly based on the Bratislava City Gallery, which introduced the Child's Gallery project in 1979-1993. Until 1993, the Children's Gallery was represented in the Bratislava City Gallery, but in that year it reduced its professional educational work. As a replacement, it became a public relations workplace department (Čarná, Tribulová, 2018). The Slovak National Gallery began its educational work in 1999, establishing a centre for marketing and public relations, which also led to the creation of the Slovak National Gallery's Education Department and Children's Workshop (Sokolová, 2010).

A very significant role in the development and professionalization of gallery pedagogy in Slovakia was also played by the nationwide educational programme Closer to the Museum, which was implemented between 2004 and 2007. This programme was created with the help of Lukáčová & Sprušanská and was aimed at developing the educational function of galleries and museums in Slovakia. It was inspired by the functioning of galleries and museums at that time, whose educational activities for visitors were perceived as very limited or not at all. In particular, the programme was intended to help the staff of these institutions to expand the educational function of these organisations and thus to contribute to the functioning of the educational department of the galleries or museums. Through this programme, the general public also had a greater insight into the perception of gallery pedagogy, museums and galleries are thus an example that communication does not have to be only verbal, but also the object of communication can be whatever object, whether created by mankind or by nature, which is presented by a given institution and accepted by the other party (Dolák, 2015).

Nowadays, gallery pedagogy is becoming an integral and essential part of galleries. In collaboration with educational departments, they contribute to making the work of galleries more visible to the public. Through gallery pedagogy, the gallery seeks to make the most of its potential, which aims to expand its educational field not only for the child viewer but also for young people and adults of all ages. Thus, we consider gallery pedagogy to be an important factor in the relationship between the gallery's future and art education.

We would like to mention that gallery pedagogy in Slovakia should nowadays be emphasized more in the direction that galleries, as institutions, can expand their theoretical and practical possibilities among its visitors.

2 Research findings with a focus on the gallery space

The research design was based on assumptions and available but untested information about realising the possibilities and limitations of educational activities in a gallery setting. The aim of the research in terms of a qualitative approach is to interpret and understand the phenomena through exploration and description. The data collection methods used in qualitative research will focus on texts and words. According to Handel

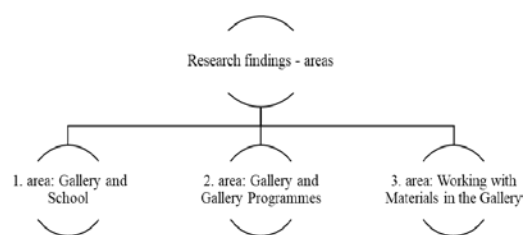
(2012), the types of analysis and interpretation in qualitative research will be the use of interpretive methods.

The object of investigation is the conceptual representation of the reality under study - the possibilities and limitations of educational activities in a gallery environment. The research aimed at analysing the contexts arising from this relationship was carried out using qualitative research methods in a territorial setting.

The aim of the research was to explore the possibilities and limitations of educational activities in a gallery environment. In terms of content, the research was projected on both an intact and a minority population of gallery visitors.

The basic research findings are formulated in several constructs, which are approximated and then described in the graphic treatment.

Figure 1: Constructs of the research findings



Source: own elaboration

The first area we studied in the scope of the research is the area named Gallery and School. We found that there is still current cooperation between the gallery as a cultural institution and the schools as educational institutions. The alternative environment of the gallery promotes the development of a critical approach to the perception of visual representations of contemporary media. It leads to the recognition, naming, as well as the creation of individual elements of visual imagery in the creative process. The actors are thus led to become aware of the communicative and informative nature of contemporary visual imagery (Kováčová et al., 2021). Cooperation creates a space for children's independent, critical and creative approach not only to art and culture but to the whole society. It deepens the interest in creative approach and dialogue in the field of visual cognition and communication, thus expanding education to all visual signs and stimuli that we are confronted with on a daily basis (Kováčová, 2023).

Thus, gallery pedagogy refers to an interdisciplinarity that goes beyond the visual arts and relies on other areas of education, in all contexts (Horáček, Zálešák, 2007).

2.1 The second area we explored in our field research is Gallery and Gallery Programmes

Based on the analysis that we have carried out as part of the research; we can conclude that the development of gallery education programmes depends on the exhibitions and displays that the gallery offers at any given time. The main component for the functioning of a gallery education programme becomes the guided tour of exhibitions or displays or specific exhibits on display. Nevertheless, the use of the original works offered by the gallery is considered to be very essential, which are linked to the distinctive characteristics, methods and quality of the communication of art.

Table 1 Theoretical programmes

THEORETICAL PROGRAMMES	
Guided tours by a lecturer	The focus in theory must be: professionally correct, reasonably extensive, comprehensible and attractive
Guided tour with a teaching aid	Supplemented by a small activity, without a tutor, prepared aid - indirect facilitation
Discussion	occasional activity, knowledge addition,
Lecture	Theoretical form, monologue of the lecturer not suitable for children

Source: own elaboration

Theoretical programmes have the longest tradition and are probably the most familiar to the public. The form used mainly talks with artists, e.g. illustrators of children's books, where children have a live experience with the artist.

Table 2 Practice programmes

PRACTISE PROGRAMMES	Art workshops	Art studios	Art courses
	The common denominator is a practical art activity related to a specific exhibition. They can also function independently from the exhibition.		

Source: own elaboration

Practice programmes are part of the public programmes. When selecting, it is best to keep in mind the length of the programme and the content of the programme, which includes both theoretical and practical art activities, so that they correspond to the age of the participants.

Table 3 Combined programmes

COMBINES PROGRAMMES	Animations	Projects	Creative etudes
	Animating activities which in their principles, technologies and content focus are related to the observed artwork.	Combinations of different long-term events based on project-based learning.	Is a short and practice activity that is part of the animation

Source: own elaboration

Currently, gallery animation is one of the most sought-after educational programmes. Gallery animation actively combines the physical, mental and creative abilities of children. Visitors are active participants in an educational programme in which they are drawn into the world of the exhibits through learning, imagination and self-reflection (Valachová, Juhász Muchová, 2023). Through these programmes, visitors have the opportunity to glimpse the world of art, which can often seem unexciting and uninteresting to them. Despite the fact that these programmes are mainly designed to create a positive relationship between children and art, they also indirectly develop a person's inner spiritual world.

The third area that we investigated in the field research is the area named Working with Materials in Galleries. The materials offered by galleries include various types of catalogues for specific exhibitions and methodological materials for educational activities.

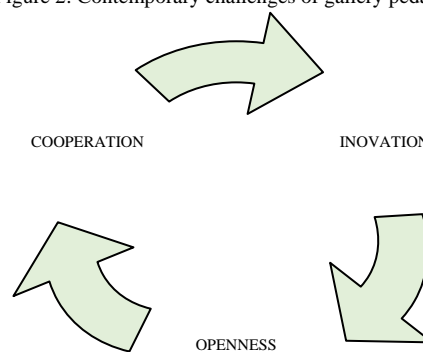
The publications are the following:

- informative to inform about ongoing and upcoming events,
- methodological-didactic to activate the visitor's perception interestingly and engagingly,
- playful to guide the visitor through the exhibition or exposition in a playful way,
- motivational they serve as catalogues, books and other forms of publications, which should provoke the visitor to search for answers to the questions raised and thus motivate him/her to visit again after the visit to the gallery/museum.

3. Challenges and limitations of contemporary gallery pedagogy

Research results suggest various opportunities for education and certain limitations and assumptions for visitors with diversity. A gallery can become not only an educational institution but also an inclusive one.

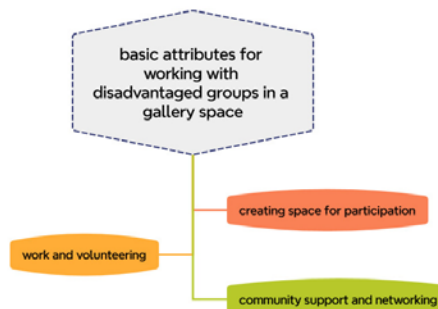
Figure 2: Contemporary challenges of gallery pedagogy



Source: own elaboration

Among the current challenges of gallery pedagogy, we can consider the three attributes listed in Figure 2. Collaboration is one of the main attributes. Collaboration should be directed towards schools, but also towards other groups of actors, such as adult groups, seniors and other specific groups. Within the attribute of innovation, it is appropriate to implement activities that correspond to the latest trends in information technology. These can be instrumental in communicating the artistic experience to different disadvantaged groups of actors. This will also help to open up the institution to disadvantaged groups. In this regard, our findings correspond with the view of Kováčová et al. (2024), who list three basic attributes for working with disadvantaged groups in a gallery space.

Figure 3. Attributes: disadvantaged groups in a gallery space



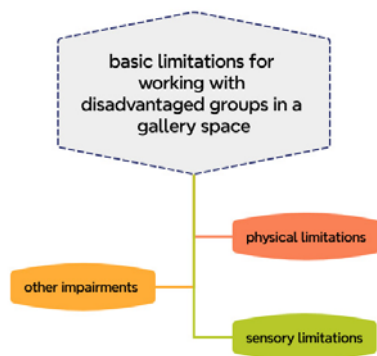
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Source: adapted from Kováčová et al. (2024)

The gallery should be a place where people with disabilities can meet, share their experiences and build community. The research also confirmed the basic limitations that visitors with disabilities register when visiting galleries.

We agree with the opinion of Kováčová et al. (2024), who focused their attention on the limitations for visitors in a study oriented towards opportunities and limitations for visitors with comorbidity as part of the gallery experience.

Figure 4: Limitations: disadvantaged groups in a gallery space



Source: adapted from Kováčová et al. (2024)

3 Conclusion

In the realm of art, individuals often find themselves in dynamic situations that, upon initial examination, appear to present a coherent structure enriched with internal logic and expressive modalities. However, a deeper exploration reveals that these structures are profoundly influenced by the viewer's personal experiences, background, and the varying interactions with their environment and others. As Kováčová (2023) observes, the gallery must be conceptualized as a nuanced and highly individualized space in which people can engage with art unhindered by barriers (Kováčová, 2020). This accessibility is paramount in the quest to foster inclusive interactions that respect the diverse needs of all visitors.

Moreover, the gallery plays an indispensable role in nurturing cultural awareness across all demographics. It serves as a gateway through which individuals of all ages can engage with the richness of human expression, thereby instigating a lifelong journey of aesthetic appreciation and personal growth. The experiences offered by gallery exhibitions have the potential to enrich the lives of visitors by encouraging a profound connection to art that transcends mere observation. Exhibits thoughtfully designed for diverse audiences can foster interactive experiences for younger visitors while providing older individuals with rich visual and sensory stimuli that resonate with their life experiences (Kováčová, Valachová 2024).

In addition to acting as a facilitator for cultural exchange, the gallery emerges as a vital arena for mental interaction and cognitive engagement. Eco (2015) posits that any form of artistic endeavour facilitates open mental interaction, allowing for an array of interpretations and emotional responses that can lead to stimulating dialogues both within oneself and with others. By embracing this idea, galleries can become more than just repositories of art; they can transform into living entities where ideas are exchanged, emotions are shared, and community bonds are fortified (Brendza, Dimová, 2019).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the journey towards inclusivity within gallery spaces demands ongoing commitment and innovation. Gallery curators, educators, and administrators must prioritize the development of programs that actively consider the diverse needs and preferences of their audiences, ensuring that

all visitors feel valued and included. This involves not only physical accessibility but also adaptive educational practices that cater to different learning styles and cultural backgrounds.

In conclusion, the gallery stands as a powerful medium for human interaction with art, contributing to personal development and cultural awareness while challenging the norms of accessibility. By fostering an inclusive atmosphere that embraces human diversity, galleries can cultivate enriching experiences that resonate across generations, ultimately serving as transformative spaces within our communities.

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