

# 'I Did Not Think About That!'

## *New Media for Stimulating Exhibition Re-interpretation*

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### Introduction

This chapter discusses the role of new media tools to inspire the visitors' interpretation of an exhibition. In the chapter we investigate the implications of the use of new technologies in museum spaces and look at the opportunities offered to visitors to experience unexpected nuances of curatorial projects. Our primary objective is to emphasize the interpretive opportunities afforded by new media. The main question is: How do visitors perceive and reflect upon the messages conveyed through new media in an exhibition?

The discussion is based on a new media project developed for the exhibition *Sibelius and the World of Art* held from 17 October 2014 to 23 March 2015 at the Ateneum Art Museum in Helsinki, Finland. The exhibition was part of the celebration events marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. A new media work was realized through a design research project in cooperation with the Finnish National Gallery, the Ateneum Art Museum, and the Media Lab at Aalto University. The tangible goal of the project, which included the authors of this chapter, three Master of Arts students and curators and managers of the Ateneum, was to produce an introductory video (in panorama format) for the exhibition. The introductory video was created to unveil Sibelius' life and stimulate visitors' interpretation during the visiting experience.

In this chapter, we describe different stages of the project focusing on the features of the new media. In the first section, we concentrate on features that make the museum a space where people can create and build their *own* perceptions. The focus is on the communication shift triggered by the increased use of new media in museum spaces. In the second and third sections, we present and discuss the exhibition *Sibelius and the World of Art* and the activities conducted in the project for producing the introductory video. In the fourth section, we evaluate the potential impact of new media on enriching visitors' interpretation of the exhibition. We present the impact of new media through the description and discussion of interviews we conducted

with a number of visitors. Our chapter concludes by presenting and summarizing the outcomes of the research.

### Museum as an evolving experience

During the mid to late twentieth century, the role of museums shifted from being a symbol of monolithic power to becoming an instrument for serving the ‘collective good of the state’ (Bennett 2013). As a result of this transformation, contemporary museum activities, such as exhibitions, interweave the latest topics and concerns of society with educational and civic principles to inform and create interrelated forms of knowledge (Bennett 2013). Social, educational, and civic messages are communicated to the public via the museum curatorial projects and materialise *in* and *through* visitor involvement. The curated information, which can often be characterized as interpretive, becomes embedded in narrative structures created for the exhibition spaces to draw a communicative configuration. Communicative configurations of exhibitions inspire visitors’ opinion and act as a hub for social aggregation (Macchia 2016) and reflect an evolution of the notion of museum from a ‘collection for scholarly use’ to a ‘means of communication’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2013: 35). Moreover, during the last twenty years, there has been an impressive growth in the use of different types of media for engaging museum visitors. This has resulted in an expansion of the communication repertoire of museums (Black 2010). Today, the introduction of media in the museum repertoire enhances the sense of sight as well as the other senses. New media provide visitors with a surrounding and intense body engagement experience (Wagner et al. 2010).

Various authors have emphasized the extended use of new media and interactive technology as a means for empowering visitors to become active agents in the transmission of the message and cultural exchange (Miles 1985; Russo 2011). Moreover, new media and interactive technologies are now regularly used to explicitly support new forms of museum experience (Proctor & Bicknell 2012). Museum professionals are now expected to develop strategies and participative opportunities for the museum that link together content and messages from diverse perspectives and audiences (Hooper-Greenhill 2013). According to Hooper-Greenhill (2013), museums communicate a wide variety of content in very different ways:

[Museum communications] can include communicating information in a clear and effective way, perhaps through a leaflet or telephone answer service; enabling a learning experience related to the demand of a school curricula, with a role-playing session for a small group of school curricula, with a role-playing session for a small group of school-children; promoting enjoyment and fun possible through manipulating interactive technology; and facilitating reminiscence ad mental activity in the old and frail through the provision of sustainable objects as stimulus. (Hooper-Greenhill 2013: 52)

Thus, it can be argued that the media and the communications and messages created are themselves an essential component of the exhibition project. Therefore, in line with the role of museums to foster tolerance in human society and vehicle messages through the exhibition of collections (Carr 2011), contemporary museums play a generative role in providing new ways of interpreting information. This evolution of the museum towards a communications-oriented entity has altered the previously existing division between the 'hidden space of museum in which knowledge is produced and organized and the public spaces in which it is offered for passive consumption' (Bennett 2013:103). Within this 'media turn', the communicative activities are brought to the fore to enable content (and information) to be an instrument of change: from being 'disabling institutions' that inject information into the visitors' minds, museums themselves are fast becoming meaningful institutions of change (Miles 1985).

From this perspective, museum spaces can now be regarded as active sites of communication, interaction and exchange with visitor audiences who openly mingle with artefacts exhibited as the result of carefully choreographed narratives created by the museum staff.

It is in this direction that new media have been introduced into museums over the last twenty years, and it is in this direction that media is now used to enhance, change, and impact visitors' interpretation of an exhibition (Stogner 2009).

### *Media for enhancing the messages of exhibitions*

The curatorial activity of museum spaces involves different channels for encountering and speaking to the preferences of a diversified audience. The curatorial activity is built upon a narration embodied in the way content and collections are displayed and represented through educational activities and media.

Primarily, museum exhibitions have the goal to tell visitors a story 'about a period in history, about a culture, the life of an artist, about scientific discovery' (Wolff & Mulholland 2013). The narration of a story may include texts, figures, different organizational methods, the selection and arrangement of chosen objects, and the way that objects relate with one another.

The museum that we know (and is coming into being) is grounded on the evolution of social and political principles that presuppose an institution operating as an active space meant for education, entertainment and the wellbeing of communities. Media play a central role in the success of this paradigm shift. Media provide visitors with a variety of new expressions and a range of possibilities to engage with these new expressions of museums exhibition. Moreover, museum exhibitions are no longer restricted to the local physical space but afford opportunities for expression 'indoors' (Ciolfi & Bannon 2002) as well as 'outdoors' (Stuedahl & Smørdal 2015). 'Indoors', media, sensors, and interactive technology enhance the individual and collective visiting experience. 'Outdoors', social media and web platforms engage visitors by offering the opportunity to share their indoor experience.

Furthermore, the inclusion of indoor and outdoor media provides visitors with a flexible and customizable museum experience. By using media, visitors have the chance to examine a specific topic and build personal connections and interpretations of the story. In fact, media are useful when they receive input and promote reactions from visitors (Dernie 2006). The media can play the role as triggers of visitors' engagement, imagination and interest in the exhibition's topic.

By using media, museums today have the opportunity to change from being 'expert-centric' to 'visitor-centric' (Stogner 2009). Media can provide opportunities for museums to reframe their contents by allowing the design of new forms of narrations. Media can e.g. be combined 'to inform and immerse, providing atmosphere and a temporal and spatial connection to ancient Egypt' (Stogner 2009).

Filling the gap between the experiences *past* and *present* is part of the work that the museum undertakes when organizing an exhibition. This is a monumental task, especially when considering that the experience of the museum visit comprises the public and the collective as well as the private 'inner' dimensions of each individual within the audience. It was in this spirit that in 2014 the Finnish National Gallery, with the collaboration of several other museum institutions in Finland, organized an exhibition to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius.

The next section examines the shift of museums from being exclusive to inclusive institutions by discussing the media design research experience carried on in the context of the *Sibelius and the World of Art* exhibition. Biographical information about the historical events is also presented in order to contextualize our empirical data. The chapter continues with a discussion that calls for reflection on the use of new media for creating communication and encouraging personal interpretation of information in the museum.

### Sibelius' life re-narration

For providing a fair picture of the composers' cultural inspirations, we initially delve into some historical and biographical aspects. We understand that the brief description on these pages cannot do full justice to the complexity of the person, but we think that it will at least offer guidelines and pillars for understanding the design process of the introductory video we created for the exhibition.

Among the objectives of the exhibition was to portray the genius, the unique life and work of the composer, and the many contexts in which it unfolded, thus establishing links to the *zeitgeist* of his time, including the different historical events and communities that coalesced in his lifetime and in his works. Even today, Jean Sibelius is widely regarded as the quintessential Finnish composer and his popularity as an icon of Finnish culture continues to grow (Ojanperä 2014). In a poll carried out in 2013 Sibelius was even elected as one of the top five most important personalities in Finnish history altogether.

The composer saw it as part of his creative mission to develop music that would be based on and reflect the soul, the landscape and nature, as well as the traditions of Finland. This can be appreciated in his use of mythical figures and themes from the *Kalevala*, such as is the case with the *Kullervo* symphony. This is one of Sibelius' earliest works, from April 1892, and is also considered one of his most complex and significant compositions. In it, Sibelius not only used themes from the epic poem but the choral arrangements are also said to reflect the runic patterns of *Kalevala* (Rickards 2008). It is conjectured that Sibelius even met with Larin Paraske, a well-known Finnish bard also immortalized in the art of Gallen Kallela and other Finnish painters. Many events in his life were connected both directly and indirectly with the emergence, through art, of the *ethos* of the Finnish nation. Sibelius' *Finlandia* was presented at the 1900 Paris World Fair, which attracted great attention in Finnish history. The Finnish Pavilion was a total work of art which presented the story of Finland with exceptional breath (von Bonsdorff 2014).

In this effort to re-contextualize and make more understandable the life and times of the composer to contemporary audiences, the exhibition brought together paintings, sculptures, as well as assorted visual media such as illustrations about Sibelius with immersive music and art installations. Hence, visitors had the opportunity to immerse themselves into a multisensory experience of Sibelius' times.

This was a time of marked contrasts, since the nationalistic spirit that saw its fruition in the creation of the Finnish state also collided with the destructive forces of conflict and war. Considering the role that art and artists of the time played in the development of the notion of Finland as an independent nation, it is not surprising therefore that many of the works shown in the exhibition are part of what is now regarded as the canon of Finnish national romantic painting. As Sibelius moved in these artistic circles, it turns out that a large number of the works shown were created by close acquaintances of the composer.

An example of this can be seen in Image 1, *The Aino Myth*, an 1891 oil triptych by his close friend Akseli Gallen Kallela, depicting the tragic tale of Väinämöinen's loss of the young maiden Aino (Knuutila 2011). This tale also from *Kalevala* had its own musical composition created during Sibelius' time by Robert Kajanus, a composer who, as a contemporary, has often been described as both mentor and competitor of Sibelius. Accompanying this work in the exhibition, and also by Gallen Kallela, was *En Saga*, another very famous work that depicts a romanticized version of the young composer. His head is topped by unruly curls and every feature of his face is glowing 'with happy genius' (Rickards 1997, 2008).

Artworks about the composer were shown together with works such as Oscar Parvianen's *Invocation* ('Child's Death', 1910) which bears direct reference to the death of Sibelius' daughter; Pekka Halonen's *Heikki Playing* (1903), portraying violinist Heikki Halonen; Albert Edelfelt's *Larin Paraske's Lamentations* (1893), a rendering of the famous kantele player and bard, and *Portrait of Opera Singer Aino Ackté* (1901). These were further complemented with landscape paintings such as Pekka Halonen's *View over Heikko* (1899) and Eero Jarnefelt's *Landscape from Koli* (1928). Featured in

the exhibition were also contemporary works related to the famous Sibelius monument by sculptor Eila Hiltunen. Additionally, a variety of new media art installations, involving different interaction modalities and created by the current generation of new media artists from Finland, were included and used as both part of the quest for reinterpretation of Sibelius in a contemporary context and to highlight the use of synaesthesia by the composer. Note that synaesthesia – the ability by which one sensory experience, such as sight, triggers a response in another modality such as sound or taste – has been considered a key characteristic of Sibelius’ genius. It has been reported that synaesthesia enabled Sibelius to experience the environment differently from others (von Bonsdorff 2014).

The goal of the introductory video was to give key access to the story of the composer from a contemporary perspective – a challenging task if one considers the complexity of the times in which he lived. In the next section of the chapter we describe how we investigated new media practices as a tool for communicating exhibited subjects in a different light.



**Image 1.** The Aino Myth

The Aino Myth, Triptych, by Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1891, Public Domain). The triptych illustrates the story of Väinämöinen’s doomed betrothal to Aino.

### *Building awareness of media development*

The situations and events as portrayed in official narratives of Sibelius’ life guided and inspired our video production. However, a deep understanding of Sibelius’ life was to be combined with additional information about implications related to introducing contemporary media into the exhibition. Thus, a set of related activities were organized, including lectures and critical discussions with experts. These complementary activities nourished our understanding throughout the conceptualization of the piece since the insights obtained would either support or invalidate our design ideas and thus guided our decisions on what aspects to stress in the video.

Three MA students from at Aalto University's Media Lab – Antti Hietaniemi, Mari Kemppinen and Tommi Koskinen – designed and created the video panorama and music remix, *Pieni Valosinfonia* ('Small Light Symphony') installation as part of their work in the so-called 'media design research seminar'. During the spring of 2014, the educational goal aimed at engaging students by using the notion of new media artefacts as forms of 'expressive artefacts'. We discussed the use of new media to generate representations of the world (Diaz 2004). Such representations of the world are created with new media and can provide a setting for the audience to engage in a process of reinterpretation.

We scheduled the course in two parallel sections: Together with traditional lessons on design research methods, we built a series of complementary activities. The complementary activities were planned in the form of seminars and an open lecture series that focused on a range of topics related to the *Sibelius and the World of Art* exhibition (Table 1). These sessions aimed to provide and build competences for the students to produce a media work for the upcoming exhibition. By participating in the complementary activities, the students considered the request of the museum management to design and produce an introductory video that targeted a young audience (ages 10-16 years of age) and expressed Sibelius' life by using a contemporary lens that could even include the notion of pop stardom.

**Table 1.** Schedule of development activities in the project

Date	Activity
11 February	<i>Remixing culture</i> seminar session at Media Lab Helsinki: Lily Díaz discussed on how to re-think how 'ways of seduction' are used in an established genre such as a rock music concert.
18 February	History of Ateneum and the exhibition of Sibelius: The class met with museum experts Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff and Siina Hälikkää at the museum.
25 February	Artist, researcher and curator Juhani Räisänen presented the topic of <i>Synaesthesia in the art of Jean Sibelius</i> from a critical perspective.
4 March	<i>New media opportunities for cultural institutions</i> : A discussion on The Orchestra app for iPad was presented by museum expert Anu Ahonen.
11 March	<i>Approaching the study of a phenomena</i> : Visiting researcher Teresa Macchia described how to use online surveys and social networks as tools for preliminary studies.
18 March	Elaboration of the concept: A workshop activity was held that focused on development of concepts to present to the museum management
8 April	A review of the two concepts for the video developed by students was carried out with selected members from the museum present.
21 May	The first presentation of the video prototype given to a larger audience at the museum.
15 August	Presentation of the final draft for the video.
16 October	Final video showed during the press opening for the <i>Sibelius and the World of Art</i> exhibition.

*Comment:* The organization of the complementary activities can be divided into two periods that respectively ended and began on 8 April.

As Table 1 shows, the organization of the complementary activities can be divided into two periods that pivot on 8 April, an important day for the evolution of the project. While activities and meetings before this date had the purpose of preparing the ground for developing the concept communicated by the video, the following meetings were meant to harmonize the museum management's needs and preferences with the students' interpretations of the task. Subsequent to the presentation by the students of their two design concepts, the museum management initiated a conversation about the two different concepts and provided useful feedback. The feedback allowed the students to tune the design of the video along the desired interpretative lines for the exhibition.

The feedback received was positive and welcomed our reinterpretation of Sibelius' life. The conversations after the presentation gave the students ideas on how to proceed with the prototype for the next viewing (planned for 21 May). For example, suggestions were made to include allegories and symbols associated with Sibelius, such as the violin (Image 2 recalls the video frames representing Sibelius' violin) or the piano. To have a deeper understanding of what the video would eventually introduce, the curators provided us with access to the exhibition materials that included information on Sibelius' travels, his life in Helsinki and the countryside, his association with Finnish folklore, and details about Aino Sibelius – his wife and unyielding supporter. Thus, we decided to design the video combining the natural and urban environment, and making use of folkloric ornaments (see, for instance, Figure 3). Moreover, we took inspiration from Petri Sakari's remarks about the composer being a 'rough diamond'. Sakari – one of the main interpreters and conductors of Sibelius' music – served as inspiration for the 3D animated sequence used at the beginning of the video. Additionally, Tommi Koskinen's musical score that included segments from Sibelius' work provided by the museum gave the work a contemporary electronic feel in contrast with the traditional and folkloristic symbol in Image 3.

We think that the video piece named *Pieni Valosinfonia* ('Small Light Symphony'), broke the Museum's expectation of reframing the figure of Sibelius. At the end of the projection held on 16 October 2014 (See Table 1), the response from the audience was completely absent: Not a word or a single clap. However, after a couple of moments thunderous applause broke the silence. Afterwards, we discussed with the students whether this was a cultural reaction rather than an effect related exclusively to the video. We agreed that, while culture might have had some influence, the pause and the applause might have had more to do with a feeling of surprise generated by the unconventional approach to the topic.

In this context, it became relevant for us to understand whether the video indeed influenced the audience's interpretation of the exhibition. With this in mind, we organized an ethnographic session for the three subsequent days consisting of interviews with museum visitors. We decided to act quickly after the opening to avoid comments from journalists and critics influencing the authentic reactions from visitors. The intention of our study was to gain a picture of the visitors' perceptions about Sibelius' life as portrayed in the exhibition before, during, and after watching the video.

The following section describes the project and discusses the activities through which we found inspiration for designing and producing the video.

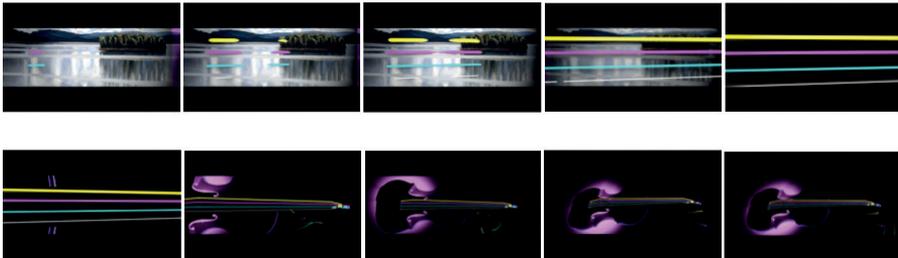
### A panorama video for Sibelius' 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition

This section includes additional highlights from the project and materials from visitor interviews. The interviews have been conducted right after the opening of the exhibition as part of our aim to expand our knowledge on the role of media communication processes enacted in the gallery space and how, and if, the video in any way influenced the visitors' interpretations.

#### *Closing the gap*

In seeking to portray Sibelius as a contemporary, we asked questions such as: Who would he have been today? Could we recognize in him and the events of his life traits of some of the famous music celebrities of today? With these questions in mind, we unpacked the main traits of the Finnish composer's life – such as his love for Finnish nature and landscape, his interest in the local customs and folklore, how, instead of using the piano, he composed for the violin – and re-proposed them in video frames.

For instance, Image 2 represents a sequence in the video that introduces two main aspects of Sibelius' life, the landscape of the country and his violin, to interlace together the artistic style and narration of Sibelius' time and the contemporary eclectic music tradition of the country.



**Image 2.** Sibelius' violin

Representation of Sibelius' violin, a symbol of his career that interweaves the natural landscapes that often inspired the music of the Finnish composer.

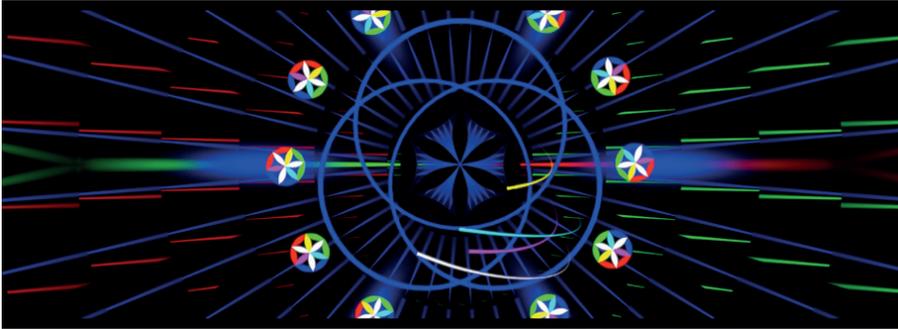
Similarly, the audio created for these frames combined the composition *Finlandia* with sounds from the forest. The audio also included tribal music created by Tommi Koskinen that recalled the epic history of the mythology of the *Kalevala* (see Image 3).

The formal opening of the exhibition was 16 October 2014. The following day we began to investigate the visitors' appreciation and understanding of the video panorama and the exhibition. With the intention of grasping the visitors' feelings and

their understanding, we decided to use ethnographical techniques and interviewed a sample of visitors inside the museum. Each interview was regarded as an interactional experience that evolves with the participation of both the visitor and the interviewer (Suchman & Jordan 1990). We made sure that enough space was left in each interview to allow for those interviewed to actively participate in the construction of the interaction. Still, our main focus continued to revolve around clarifying how visitors, after the experience at the museum, perceived and possibly reconfigured Sibelius' life. Did they, for example, follow the contemporary idea and opinion of fame?

In this respect, we feel the need to underline the difference between fame and celebrity even though this difference appears quite straightforward. The notion of fame creates a complicated interweaving of politics and art, and of stability and changes.

*'It is easy to confuse fame with celebrity. Celebrities come and go. But the famous become the characters in our national story.'* (Slogan that was used in an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, London, 2015)



**Image 3.** Kalevala patterns

Frame from the introductory video: the objects in the frames recall the iconographic patterns associated with *Kalevala* mythology.

The implicit difference between personalities, who persist in and through time inspiring the new generation, and those who momentarily arouse enthusiasm, convinced us to do the interviews. With the video we had hoped to emphasize the influential and leading role of Sibelius' composition in the contemporary music culture in Finland and abroad, and therefore we also wanted to understand if and how the video triggered a reinterpretation of Sibelius' figure. By providing a transparent image of Sibelius through the video, we also aspired to emphasize the complexity of such a famed figure that has come to influence and affect future generations of musicians.

The following section unpacks visitors' interpretation of Sibelius' life before, during, and after watching the video.

## Messages from the audience

The intention of the video was to stimulate and engage visitors towards a reinterpretation of Sibelius' life. In order to understand if, and how, the video supports the reinterpretation of Sibelius' life, we talked directly with a sample of visitors. Hence, for our study, we developed a set of guidelines for conducting interviews. Initially we recorded some demographic data, and then we asked about their general interest in and perception of Sibelius. The interviews were designed to investigate their perception of the video in combination with their previous knowledge of Sibelius. To facilitate a discussion about a re-interpretation of the composers' life based on the input at the museum, we mixed explicit questions related to the video and Sibelius' life, with 'soft' questions about the elements that attracted the particular interviewee. While discussing the reasons for their interest in specific elements of the video or the exhibition, the interviewees went deeply into elucidating their perceptions and opinions of the video.



**Figure 1.** Management and organization of the interviews

As Figure 1 highlights, people usually visit museums in pairs or groups. In our case, we conducted seven sets of interviews: four individuals, one pair and one trio, and a collective one of a group of teenage students from China, led by a 37 years old professor and accompanied by a Finnish interpreter.

The four individual interviews comprised a woman who leads a music foundation; a woman whose family is related to the composer; a young man who plays the violin;

and a teenage girl who writes for her school magazine. We also interviewed a pair of musician sisters and a trio of two high-school students and their teacher.

We looked at each interview as ‘fundamentally an interactional event’ (Suchman 1990: 241) between the interviewee and the interviewer and we adjusted the length for each occasion. Even though we had a guideline that included four areas of investigation, we approached them differently based on who we were talking to. For instance, with the two musician sisters who talked a lot about Sibelius’ music, we adjusted the discussion, and focused on the colours used in the exhibition and whether the colours recalled music for them. This shift helped to reframe the discussion into a different, perhaps less technical, level. Moreover, after watching the video (see Figure 4) they adopted colours for describing their own *new* interpretation of Sibelius.

In our analysis and for evaluating the implications of video, we organized three different clusters of interviews, depending on when those interviewed had seen the video panorama installation:

- three of the interviewees, and the group of Chinese teenagers with their teacher and the guide watched the video before the interview and before the visit;
- three others watched the video after having visited the museum and during the interview;
- the remaining three people watched the video at the end of the interview and after visiting the exhibition.

The interviews were organized and designed to be experienced as an opportunity for expressing personal perceptions (Atkinson & Silverman 1997) about the exhibition and the impression they had about Sibelius prior to and then after the museum visit. Moreover, by leaving the interviews open for dialogue, we expected to facilitate the narration with the support of non-verbal elaboration. Thus, we invited visitors for a cup of coffee or tea at the Museum Café and informally presented the project and ourselves, and asked visitors to tell us about themselves. At the end of the interviews, we gifted visitors with a branded Ateneum pencil and notebook. The young man declined our invitation for coffee or tea and preferred a rather formal interview outside the room where he had watched the video. The other interviewees talked openly about their likes and dislikes about the exhibition and about their understanding of Sibelius’ life.

We adopted a flexible structure for the interviews, encouraging interviewees to give their points of view as if they were stories. In this way, interviewed visitors elaborated their thoughts while talking about the topic (Gherardi & Poggio 2009).

We think that this approach might have prompted a re-examination and re-elaboration of their image of Sibelius with us. For instance, when telling us about aspects of Sibelius’ personality that they knew, interviewees often stopped and said something like ‘I did not think about that’ and then they re-arranged their description of Sibelius introducing their new understanding about the composer’s life. This sort of surprised

reflection was very evident especially in the cases where we showed the video during the interview when visitors were already describing their experience of the exhibition.

We recorded the interviews using a mobile recording device. Unfortunately, because of the huge echoes in the lobby of the Ateneum Café the audio data cannot be used completely. What we have used for this chapter are instead the copious notes that we took during each of the interviews. These notes we also used to let interviewees understand our interest on their opinions. As we took notes, we highlighted words and aspects about the exhibition that the interviews brought up. We let visitors observe how we penned and circled words on their interview notes as an invitation to expand their discussion on specific elements. Highlighting and circling words seemed to work as a means for taking the discourse in a specific direction. We found this method helpful for two reasons. First, this technique helped the flow of the discussion with passionate people and supported the discussion with more introvert people – for instance, the teenaged girl was helped by the notes to take the discussion further than mere answers to the questions. The second reason for writing and circling words is that we think it is useful for interviewees to recognize the interviewer's involvement. In this case, the interviewees not only used the notes as cues to clarify or emphasize what they were saying, but the notes also enabled further reflection. In this way, we think that the notetaking and highlighting helped the interviewer to encourage the reflective and sense-making processes of the interviews, as explained by Pink (2001).

Watching the video seems to have mainly stimulated descriptions of Sibelius in terms of symbols, re-interpretation of his personality, and reflection on what the visitors already knew about the artist. However, the young violinist did not really appreciate the characterization of Sibelius' life in the video, lamenting the discrepancy between the national image of Sibelius, and the revised music and images, which, he said, 'did not fit together'. In sharp contrast, the other interviewees described the reinterpretation of Sibelius' life through a new reading key, in terms of challenges. Their description focused on Sibelius' charismatic nature rather than on his professional abilities. For instance, before watching the video, the two sisters were telling us what they knew academically about the composer, using words such as 'music' and 'composition' quite often and referring to the feeling the composition gives to them. However, having watched the video, and even though we had ended the interview, they were eager to re-calibrate their description of the composer with words such as 'controversial' and 'respect' ending by saying 'He wanted to be the best, he represented himself'.

Watching the video during the interview underlined a difference between plain descriptions of the artist and an interpretative approach for describing the *soul* of the composer. The other visitors who watched the video before the interview took an interpretative and exploratory approach to their description from the beginning of the interview, as visitors after having watched the video at the end of the interviews did. For instance, one of the visitors who had visited the exhibition before the interview concluded our discussion with a deep question about artists' lives – 'how do artists get through suffering?'

According to some of the visitors' descriptions, the video was an unexpected and 'surprising' way to interpret Sibelius: a way to look at the composer in a new light, while considering at the same time the 'music', the 'person', and the 'colours' of his life. Similarly, the interviewed visitors underlined how Sibelius' music is still contemporary because he mixed the new and modern with the traditional, together with nature and the landscape of the surrounding country. Because of this ability of the composer, an interviewee remarked, it is possible to bring his music into our time.

Following the discussions of those who watched the video before or during the interview, and those who watched it after, we understood that the video had provided an opportunity for visitors to look at Sibelius' life through new eyes. Perhaps this was not so much because of what the video actually included, but more because it provided time and occasion for the visitors to reflect about the composer on their own terms.

## Conclusion

Today, new media are used to enhance museum exhibitions and improve visitor engagement through their many different formats and genres. The introduction of such expressive artefacts in museums supports and carries information through new channels, changing relationships between the actors and enabling a relational form of communication. Altogether, new media bring innovative practices and reconfigure the existing ones (Bolter & Grusin 2000). Hence, visitors can utilize the introduction of new media to engage in a new understanding of the contents of the exhibition. As we noticed through our experience at the museum, media provide visitors with the opportunity to adopt a reflective perspective and therefore to consider the subject matter in a new light.

The project discussed in these pages had the intention to go beyond the traditionally established and iconic figure of Sibelius in order to engage and stimulate visitors to challenge such stereotypes. Using the video panorama as the introduction to the exhibition on 'Sibelius and the Art world', might have helped to enhance visitors' awareness and understanding of old and new contexts. By adopting media such as the video panorama and the music remix *Pieni Valosinfonia*, the communicative role of museums must be considered. If museums are supposed to play a generative role in providing new ways of interpreting information, it suggests an understanding of designing media for engaging visitors in a communicative interaction network. This entails providing the possibility to encounter links and find connections between the content of the media and the surrounding inputs from the exhibition as a whole. In this respect, media can play a role of communicating information that might be hidden below the surface, or un-described aspects of the exhibition that are not readily apparent, thus providing visitors with a new point of view.

Our experience with interviewing the visitors made us aware of an important feature of the video panorama: the opportunity to develop a new reading key. In this respect,

interviewed visitors developed their discussion through aspects of Sibelius' biography mainly hidden behind the main scene. Visitors contributed to the discussion about the video combining and reframing previous knowledge with new information and details. For example, because of the video, visitors reconsidered the strong influence of mundane activities and experiences on Sibelius' compositions. This seems to suggest that media communication can afford encounters with both mainstream information and the veiled and off-stage aspects of an exhibition.

In relation to the interpretative process, new media can support and motivate the reconfiguration of the meaning of exhibitions. From our project it seems that new media have the potential for redistributing information through new channels and through these channels to touch upon new and less apparent aspects of exhibited topics. Additionally, new media can also be considered as an invitation to enhance visitors' understanding of subjects, by offering opportunities to look at the information from other perspectives.

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