

Learning from Art Appreciation

*Approaching the process of art appreciation through
the lens of the meta-competence model*



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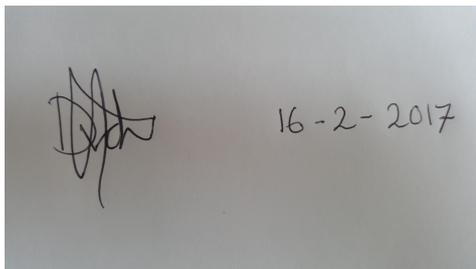
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Introduction

When studying art, scholars can choose to conduct their research from a variety of perspectives, such as the relation between the artist and the artwork, the relation between the artwork and its social, political, cultural or historical context, the artwork itself as an autonomous entity, or the relation between the viewer and art. It is in this last category that my interest has been sparked to answer a question, namely how a spectator's capacities play a role in consciously viewing an artwork – also known as art appreciation, and vice versa, which capacities one can strike up when partaking in conscious art appreciation.

In short, I am eager to assess what one can learn from art appreciation. An answer to this question does not appear to exist in any literature, leading me to find a way to set a pioneering step to gain insight into the underlying process of consciously viewing art. Since the question at hand is rather broad, I will specify and demarcate my research question for this thesis in order to be able to provide a piece of the puzzle. In this demarcation, I have chosen to focus on contemporary art, more specifically three case studies of artworks from the exhibition *Global Imaginations* that ran from 27-6-2015 till 4-10-2015 in De Meelfabriek in Leiden. In these case studies, I will scrutinize my viewing of the artworks, after which the so called meta-competence model by philosopher of education Frits Meijering will be used to decipher and understand out of which components the experience of consciously looking at art is made up out of.

In other words, art appreciation is not only my research method, but also the subject of research. Both aspects will be framed and deepened by the meta-competence model, which is based on a theory that is usually employed to investigate professionals in organisations, but will now for the first time be adapted to the field of art studies. The research question now reads as follows: Which meta-competences do viewers use for conscious art appreciation, and which meta-competences can one develop through art appreciation?

The first chapter of this thesis will elaborate on what the term art appreciation signifies, what the meta-competence model entails, why combining these two perspectives may be fruitful, and finally, will briefly inform the reader about the nature of the chosen case studies. The second chapter will contain the case study *Fever, Fever* by Raqs Media Collective. Then *Contingent* by Rivane Neuenschwander will be appraised in chapter three, after which in chapter four attention will be focused on Ghana Think Tank's *Monument to the Dutch*. A fifth chapter will compare the case studies findings. In the conclusion of this thesis, my aim is not only to provide insight into the intricate process of art appreciation, but also an evaluation of what one can learn from art appreciation.

Chapter 1: Building a Foundation to Connect Art Appreciation to Meta-competences

1.1 Art appreciation as an active encounter

Since prehistoric times visual artistic creations have played an important role in societies all over the world, and they have been used for numerous purposes, such as religion, politics, marketing, and entertainment. What each of these diverse domains in which art plays a role have in common, is that artworks are made and used to influence beholders in some way. Those who deal with the question as to what it is in an artwork that speaks to people, and how people absorb an artwork and process it, find themselves in the realm of art appreciation. In Dutch, the term *kunstbeschouwing* is used for this approach towards art. It is a word that refers to looking at artworks in a conscious, studious and structured way, in order to gain insight and understanding of them.¹ A translation that fully covers this Dutch term is lacking in English. The translation that comes closest to carrying the load of the word *kunstbeschouwing* is art appreciation, although in a first instance this may not appear to be the case since the word appreciation is often merely associated with the expression of gratitude. Therefore, one may interpret art appreciation to solely refer to the liking of an artwork, or to put it differently, the expression of admiration for an artwork. However, the word appreciation has in fact a more expansive definition, as it can also mean the ability to understand the worth, quality, or importance of something, full awareness or understanding of something, sensitive awareness, or a favourable critical estimate.² The combination of these definitions can be linked to the conscious and purposeful approach to viewing art that is implied in the word *kunstbeschouwing*, and it is this understanding of the word that will be meant when the term art appreciation is used in this thesis.

An important question within the field of art appreciation is how one can or is supposed to analyse art, there is a whole range of ways in which people favour or argue to do so. For instance, the focus may be on determining the intended meaning of the artist, analysing the relation between an artwork and visual reality, or studying an artwork in terms of standards of beauty and quality, to name but a few of the most common approaches. Two aspects that are linked to these and most other perspectives, are the subject matter of an artwork and/or its formal aspects, such as shapes, colours, lines and composition. Throughout the years, discussions have taken place concerning the importance of the different approaches, such as, for example, the significance of analysing what is represented in an artwork versus studying its formal components. According to Cor Blok, former professor of Art History at Leiden University, both sides of the coin are of importance when analysing art, an opinion that I share. Blok argues that each visual artwork represents something or contains

¹ See <http://www.kunstbus.nl/kunst/kunstbeschouwing.html>

² See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/appreciation>

referents, which are not limited to something in the visual reality outside of the artwork. Also, ideas, opinions and other more abstract phenomena may be represented. The artist uses formal aspects to create these referents. It is in this sense that both the subject matter and the formal components are of importance, as they depend on one another. (Blok 2003, pp. 9 and pp.25-33) In order to gain insight into these different dimensions of an artwork and be able to analyse them, well-known Leiden art historian Henri van de Waal (1910-1972) created a model in which, besides subject matter and formal aspects, or content and form, he added the function of an artwork as a third dimension.

Content, form and function

As explained by one of van de Waal's students, Hans Locher (2006), this theory and analysis model are based on the idea that an artwork has three components: content, form and function. Content relates to what is represented in an artwork, thus the level of subject matter. The form of an artwork is what it is made up of, for instance design aspects such as lines, colours, shapes, positions, directions, rhythms, and materials. Function refers to the intended effect of the artwork. That is, how it functions in the world.³ Van de Waal argued that one may choose to focus on solely one of these three dimensions, although it should not be forgotten that in actual experience, content, form and function cross paths, as they are intertwined and in principal form a unity. This means that the viewer's interpretation of meaning is always dependent on the consolidation of all three components. Van de Waal's model visualizes this conception. (see graph 1) The triangle represents the artwork, and each of its three dimensions are positioned in a designated corner. While the possibility is granted to describe only one of the corners, it is herein not possible to make a precise distinction of where the area of one corner begins and that of the other ends. Another noteworthy aspect of this model, is that the semi-circle lines in each corner do not function as boundaries. They are placed there to indicate that content, form and function are never separate from aspects in the world outside of the artwork. (Locher 2006, pp. 113-126)

The fact that it is impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between content, form and function, does not prevent one from constructing an interpretation of an art work with the aid of the model. The three dimensions may still be approached separately, as long as there is an awareness of their underlying unity. Additionally, during the process of visual analysis, contextual information is often included, for instance about the artist, interpretations by other art historians, or comparisons with similar artworks,. Due to such cases of further looking and further research, one's initial interpretation of the content, form, and function of an artwork may be changed or sharpened, since looking and interpreting are dynamic processes. (Locher 2006, pp. 119)

To sum up, Van de Waal's model provides art scholars with a way to identify not only the elements and characteristics of an artwork, but also the reactions that these evoke, thus providing a structure for analysing and interpreting art, as well as making those who engage in art appreciation

³ I have some additions to this interpretation of the artwork's function, and will elaborate on this argument further on in the text.

aware of the relation between the different dimensions of an artwork.

In its most basic form I recognize three questions that are reflected upon during art appreciation that are also linked to the model: What does the artwork look like? What does the artwork mean? What does the artwork do? In the following chapters of this thesis, these three basic questions will be employed to structure my encounters with the artworks in the case studies. Concurrently, the act of answering these questions will also constitute a topic of research for this thesis. There are, however, two concepts from critical theory, Performativity and Agency, that require to be addressed in order to fully comprehend what these questions encompass.

Performativity and Agency

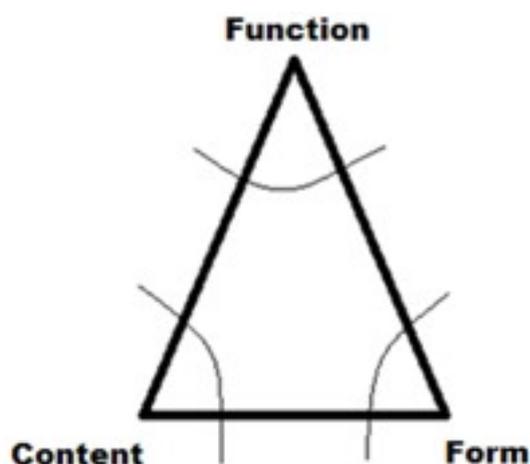
Artworks as active entities

For a long period, artworks have been approached as though there is an ultimate meaning embedded within them, waiting to be distilled by the viewer. In this conception of visual art, the artwork is seen as a passive container from which the viewer can absorb the meaning that has been implemented by the artist. (Locher 2006, pp.145) Within such an understanding of art, the art appreciator is mainly focused on the signification of an artwork in terms of representation. (van Alphen 2008) Bearing such an approach in mind, it is interesting that Van de Waal emphasises and incorporates the analysis of the function of an artwork, since this denotes that there is more to art than representation and signification. Implied in van de Waal's theory, is the idea that an artwork is capable of affecting the world outside of itself, thus herein indicating that an artwork is active rather than passive. Considering art in such a manner was not yet standardized in the time that he created his analysis model, but nonetheless the inclusion of van de Waal's idea of function has opened new doors for the way art appreciation may be practiced. Though the conviction that artworks have active properties often raises confusion, for how can creations of non-living matter possibly be active?

A fathomable and recent explanation of this somewhat ostensible contrariety is provided by Blok. An important part of this explanation is the awareness of the fact that since the origins of art, the goal of artistic creators has been to evoke a certain response in viewers, to titillate them, make something present that is not actually there, communicate a message, tell a story, or give an

instruction.⁴ He also notes that every concrete thing or object is entangled in a tension with its surroundings. They take up a piece of space that cannot be occupied by anything else anymore. In nature this is a given, but when encountering an artwork, it demands a position within the space of the viewer's attention span in a manner that one is not accustomed to in daily life, leading the viewer to become incorporated in an out of the ordinary tension between the object and its surroundings. In this respect, an artwork may evoke questions in the perceiver, such as what is it that I am perceiving,

what is it doing here, and why is it here?⁵ (Blok 2003, pp. 23 and 213)



Graph 1: Van de Waal's model

In my opinion, the fact that the beholder is prompted to ask questions when encountering an artwork, or perhaps feels or thinks something else, albeit a reaction as slight as boredom, is already an indication of the artwork's active character, since its presence has led an occurrence to take place outside of the artwork's static representational self. The form and content of the artwork transcend the materiality in which they are embedded, and in so doing allow for new situations to take place. This may range from small

occurrences such as someone experiencing a sense of beauty or reading a certain interesting meaning into the artwork, to evoking social discussions, or in some extreme cases physical behaviours such as kissing or destroying an artwork. More information on such repercussions of art's presence will follow further down in the text, but before continuing in this line, I would like to note that it still seems somewhat odd to refer to an artwork in terms of activity, since it brings a picture to mind of physical movement. More suitable is *Performativity*, which is a concept coined by philosopher

⁴ In prehistoric times, when artistic creations were still connected to daily practices and rituals, the form of the objects - to stay with van de Waal's terms - was always created in such a way to ignite a particular feeling or behaviour in the person looking at it or using it. Researchers are in agreement that the form was made for purposes that surpassed the mere utility functions of the objects, albeit that opinions are diverse on the nature of the non-utility functions that such artefacts have. While present day art is often disconnected from societies daily practices due to being on display in special designated places such as museums, they are still always created to influence something in the world outside of itself. For examples or an elaborate argumentation concerning in which sense art since its origin has been and is still always created to in some way *exercise something on someone* see Dissanayake, Ellen, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes from and Why*, Washington: University of Washington Press 1992; Van Damme, Wilfried, 'Introducing World Art Studies' in: Zijlmans, Kitty and Wilfried van Damme Wilfried (eds.), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2008, pp.23-61; Dutton, Denis, *The Art Instinct. Beauty, Pleasure and Human Evolution*, New York: Bloomsbury Press 2009.

⁵ For an explanation of why *in general* artworks can make such a demand on a viewer's perception and cognitive system see Butter, Charles M., *Crossing Cultural Borders. Universals in Art and Their Biological Roots*, Kentucky: CreateSpace, 2012; Coss, Richard G., 'The Role of Evolved Perceptual Biases in Art and Design' in: Grammer, Karl en Eckart Voland (eds.) *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, Berlin: Springer, 2003, pp. 69-130; Grammer, Karl en Eckart Voland, 'Introduction' in: Grammer, Karl en Eckart Voland (eds.) *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, Berlin: Springer, 2003, pp.1-5

John Langshaw Austin. This concept originated in the field of literary theory, within which it refers to words or sentences that, besides signifying a meaning, also constitute an action. A well-known example of such a so called performative speech-act is the phrase “I do” in the marriage ceremony.⁶ The appliance of the term *Performativity* has also spread to the realm of visual art theory. The main point that art theorists make with this concept, is that artworks produce a certain reality rather than merely describing or representing it. They have the power to solicit behaviour in viewers, to influence them, and are in this sense performative. That what an artwork exercises on the world outside of itself is referred to as its *Agency*, which is a concept formulated by anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945-1997), who argues that the reason artworks have agency is connected to the fact that mankind has a tendency to respond to lifeless objects, including art, as though they are living beings. Throughout space and time there have been countless instances in which people are known to have responded to artworks in a manner that is usually reserved for living beings. Examples of such reactions towards a work of art are speaking to and kissing statues, or feeling and physically expressing intense hatred for an artwork. Suchlike instances indicate that the artwork’s presence is experienced as equivalent to an animate being.⁷

This topic of research, also known as the *living presence response theory*, has widely gained attention in the past decades. In Gell’s research method, he treats artworks as though they are analogous to persons or social agents, in order to make an anthropological analysis of the different ways in which artworks engage in relationships with agents in their surroundings. Within his method, Gell refers to the artwork or material object as the *index*, who mediates agency by evoking responses, inferences or interpretations in those who are (intended to be) affected by the index. This affected party are the *recipients*, and that what the index represents, is classified as the *prototype*, which can be mimetic or non-mimetic, visual or non-visual. (Van Eck 2010) When translated to van de Waal’s theory, the index can be interpreted as the *form*, the prototype as the equivalent of *content*, and the agency of an artwork as its *function*. Since Gell’s theory concentrates on the agency that artworks exercise, his research can be said to be directed towards the *function* dimension of van de Waal’s model. This is interesting seeing as, according to Art Historian Caroline van Eck, most living response theories emphasize aspects of the object itself, thus focusing on the form and content that trigger the viewer to respond as though the artwork were animate, rather than studying aspects of the response itself. Van Eck, during a quest to make the theory of Art and Agency suitable for art historical research as supposed to anthropology, continues to aim attention towards the agency of the inanimate index and the recipient’s response to it, rather than analysing the properties of the object itself. Herein, she has made a compelling addition to the entailments of the concept of Agency, by

⁶ For more information about Austin’s theory and the entailments of performative speech-acts see Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962

⁷ Many examples are given in C.A. van Eck, J.J. van Gastel and E. van Kessel (eds.), *The Secret Lives of Art works. Negotiating the Boundaries Between Life and Art*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014

shedding light on the experiential character of the viewer's response. She argues that while Gell's *Art and Agency* (1998) maps the various ways in which artworks influence the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of viewers, it is lacking in details concerning the actual experience of the affected recipients. Yet, van Eck argues, it is precisely in the experience of the viewer that the inanimate becomes animated. Beholders attribute animate qualities to an artwork not because they consciously mistake it to actually be alive, or have a mental disorder, but because they *experience* the artwork as if it is a living being.

In van Eck's research, agency and the experience of the living presence response are examined by the aid of relatively extreme cases of people treating artworks as living matter, such as the occurrence of a woman who, during a museum visit, got so angered by a painting of a naked woman, that she deliberately stabbed the fictive two-dimensional character in the exact places where her vital organs would have resided had she been an actual breathing human being. Yet, as earlier mentioned in my discussion of Performativity, a viewer is always triggered to respond. Be it the experience of disinterest, or an elaborate chain of thoughts and feelings, there is always a degree of performativity and thus agency involved. Therefore, I would like to argue that not only drastic instances of living presence responses lend themselves for an analysis in terms of agency, but also every other possible encounter between an artwork and a viewer. Even more so, when conducting research on the relation between the beholder and art, it ought to be *necessary* to take the performative character of the artwork into account. Furthermore, it should be noted that in this area of art research, as earlier mentioned as an argument by van Eck, the viewer's experience is an important aspect to include, since this is where the manifestation of the artwork's agency takes place. Or, to bring it back to van de Waalian terms, the viewer's experience is a crucial part of an artwork's function.

Art appreciation as experience

What the Performativity and Agency of art actually initiate, is an extension of attention from what an artwork depicts and represents, to including the effects of an artwork, or, to follow Austin, a shift from what it "says" to what it "does", and an important aspect of this "doing" is the experience of the viewer. However, many people, including scholars, believe that spectators' responses towards art solely take place in the mind of the perceiver. Though those who have approached art through the lens of sciences such as Biology and Psychology know for a scientific fact that humans also have an embodied response towards artworks. As Blok argues, art appreciation is not merely an act of rational thoughts. No matter what humans perceive, they always respond from the body, the one object that they are connected to their entire life and is the most fundamental tool that mankind uses in order to familiarize themselves with the world around them, especially through the senses. Not only is looking at an artwork always accompanied by a bodily experience, but it also plays a significant role in the appreciation of an artistic creation. (Blok 2003, pp. 20-23 and 70-76) Professor of Literary Studies Ernst van Alphen appears to echo this body of thought in his essay *Affective*

Operations in Art and Literature (2008) when he states that art appreciation commences with a tactile affect rather than conscious cognition and reasoning. Rather, the first triggers the latter. To quote van Alphen, “sensation thrusts viewers into thinking and into an encountered or embodied mode of critical inquiry”. He therefore pleads that new modes in contestation on art and literature require to not only focus on meaning and message, but also take into account the non-rational component, which van Alphen addresses with the term *Affect*.

Although the word *affect* is often used as a superordinate term for phenomena such as feelings and emotions - as will be the case when I use it in the case studies, van Alphen regards affects as physiological or sensory changes. He argues that affects differ from feelings and emotions, because the latter two are more than bodily reactions. Feelings occur when an individual becomes aware of her sensory and internal bodily responses and interprets them. That a distinction is made for emotions is based on the conception that the origin of an emotion is embedded in the individual, whereas affects and feelings may descend from something or someone else and be transmitted to somebody. Briefly put, affects do not contain any specific content or meaning. Rather, they can be understood as energetic physiological intensities that evoke feelings and thoughts. In this regard, an artwork may be the transmitter of an affect or feeling. There is thus an analogy to be found between van Alphen’s body of thought, and the theories on Performativity and Agency. Similar to an aforementioned assertion by Blok concerning the demand that an artwork makes on one’s attention span, van Alphen contends that artworks evoke sensations that grasp viewers involuntarily, forcing them to engage with the artwork, to think, look and interpret. This last sentence encompasses a crucial aspect that is involved in art appreciation, for it hints at an active role of the viewer.

Activity of the beholder and art appreciation as an interaction

Up until this point in this thesis, the idea has been scrutinized that artworks are experienced as entities that a viewer encounters in a space. The result of this acknowledgement of the artwork’s active character also makes room for the heightening of the viewer’s status to that of an active party, since the beholder is prompted to gain understanding of the object that so directly enters her consciousness to evoke a sensorial affect. Differently put, the beholder is incited to *create* meaning rather than, as was long thought, passively absorbing the form and content of the artwork. In effect, regarding both the artwork and the beholder as two active parties suggests that some sort of exchange takes place between them when they meet each other. It is in this regard that art appreciation may be understood as an interaction and a process.

Bearing this in mind, I would like to revisit the idea of analysing the content, form and function of an artwork. In this thesis, when considering an artwork’s function, the focus will be aimed at its performativity, thus on what the artwork *does* rather than how it functions in terms of utility or the artist’s intended workings. Included will be an awareness of the fact that the artwork’s form plays a role in its agency, since, as noted by van de Waal, Locher and Blok, the form of the artwork channels the content and function. When interpreting the content of an artwork, a consciousness will

be present of the fact that the signification that I attribute to an artwork is actively created through an interaction between the artwork and myself, the viewer.

This manner of approaching and comprehending art appreciation not only as a process of meaning production, but also as an affective experience, is especially of importance when dealing with contemporary art, since it often has a compelling experiential character that many people find difficult to access. (van Alphen 2008)

Contemporary art

Contemporary art is a term that can be understood in various ways. It can signify all art that is made currently; however, this is not the interpretation that is implied in this thesis. As Terry Smith (2006) explains in his article 'Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity', contemporary art often elicits experiences derived from the current reality. For works that are related to this theme of the contemporary world it is characteristic that the spectator is drawn into an engaged relationship with the artwork. Affective responses of the viewer play a significant role in this process during which the viewer is invited to become aware of and reflect upon certain essential aspects of current reality.

Locher provides a comparison to make what is meant by this act of reflection more graspable: When a traffic light turns green, it is a custom for people in daily life to engage in a movement of crossing the street. Imagine if someone were to decide not to join the rest in their movement, by stepping aside to observe the occurrence. This form of stepping aside is the essence of consciously appreciating art, especially contemporary art, which therefore makes it an important aspect to keep in mind when analysing contemporary art. (Locher 2006, pp. 10 and 14)

What can thus far be concluded, is that art appreciation entails more than the common conception that one merely has to look at an artwork and wait for a feeling or interpretation to occur, or that it solely takes place on a rational level. Rather, art appreciation is a performative exchange between the object and the perceiver, during which the viewer strives towards a comprehension of the artwork.

Studying this encounter as an interactive process appears to be a rare research approach. It is curious why it is such an untouched subject, considering that in the beginning of the previous century from the field of philosophical aesthetics, Philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) already argued that art appreciation should be regarded as an experiential process that needs to be researched in its entirety. In his view, this process commences with the artist that contributes to creating the material artwork that he calls the expressive object, which is a term that partly may be interpreted as an equivalent of classifying an artwork to be performative, seeing as Dewey states that the expressive object is the source of triggering dialectical processes. However, Dewey primarily emphasizes the dialogue between the viewer and the artist, rather than the interplay of the artwork and the viewer. Additionally, his work is essentially a plea for an attentional shift towards art appreciation as an experiential process, rather than scrutinizing this interaction. (Dewey 2005) Nevertheless, Dewey's

writings invite (art)scholars to consider and study art in operational terms.

Since the end of the past century, important first steps have been set in this direction of grasping an in depth understanding of the process of art appreciation. The advances are relatively small when one considers the comprehensiveness of the process, yet they are huge progressions when regarding their innovativeness and their enriching addition to art scholarship. The body of research that I am referring to is the perception component of viewing art. More specifically, the way stimuli in an artwork are processed by the senses and interpreted by the mind and brain of the spectator. This approach is starting to gain attention in various research fields, of which an example is the work of cognitive psychologist Robert Solso (2003) with his book *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain*. Also, neuroscientists such as Semir Zeki devote themselves to decoding what comes to pass within the brains of spectators when they perceive art. What these and similar approaches have in common, is their focus on the subjects of taste preference in art, the aesthetic experience of beauty, and how these phenomena take place in the brain.⁸ Most of akin research appears to revolve around the physical processes of the perception system and cardiovascular responses in art beholders. Herein relations to emotions and cognition are sometimes mentioned, but not elaborately discussed. It appears as though no research up to date has thoroughly made an attempt to fathom the underlying process of art appreciation beyond the stage of perception, taste preference, and the experience of beauty and disgust.⁹ In other words, what appears to be lacking are studies that aspire to decipher or describe the operations of art appreciation in its entirety. No research appears to touch levels of emotional responses and the interpretation of meaning that surpass bodily functions and the stage of perception in combination with the understanding that consciously viewing art is a dynamic dialectical interaction. In her doctoral dissertation, Art Historian Janneke Wesseling also mentions the absence of such research, especially pertaining to contemporary art. Yet, similarly to my aim, she too set out to shed light on the, usually subconscious, process of contemporary art appreciation, albeit from another angle, namely the field of reception aesthetics.¹⁰ For both her research as well as mine, the questions that we raise are embedded in the understanding, as brought forward by Van de Waal, Locher, Blok, van Alphen, and van Eck, that consciously viewing art is a multi-levelled interaction between two active agents, the artwork and the viewer. While Wesseling uses tools from reception aesthetics to understand and articulate this dialogue, I employ a more practice-based approach. Before explicating this method, I will briefly recapitulate the questions that I aim to answer in this thesis.

⁸ See Zeki, Semir, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999

⁹ As has been made clear up till this point in the thesis, the assumption is that the types of reactions that art can evoke are much more widespread than responses such as 'liking' and 'disliking', or experiences of aesthetic beauty.

¹⁰ See her dissertation Wesseling, J.C., 2013, Dissertation Leiden University

As has been articulated in the introduction and hinted at throughout this chapter, I am eager to unravel what happens during a conscious meeting with an artwork. One of the main motivations behind this ambition is by virtue of the wish to assess how cognitive, emotional, and other types of human capacities play a role when a viewer practices art appreciation. In extension, it is my aim to assess whether one may potentially learn and develop certain competences through art appreciation. These questions concerning the relation between competences and art appreciation appear to be an untouched terrain in the academic world, since extensive literature on the subject is as good as absent. Therefore, the objective of this thesis is to set a first step in assessing what one can learn from consciously engaging with art. The research that will be conducted in this thesis is thus one of a pioneering nature.

In order to realise this goal of connecting beholder capacities to the operations of art appreciation, I will research how so called ‘meta-competences’ play a role when an individual, while concerned with contemporary artworks, engages in the questions: What is perceived, what does the artwork mean, and what does the artwork do? However, before embarking on this endeavour, an explanation is in its place concerning what meta-competences encompass.

1.2 The theory of meta-competences

Philosopher of Education Frits Meijering developed a model to map the tacit knowledge of people whose professions primarily exist out of taking in, interpreting, using and distributing knowledge and information. They are also known as knowledge workers or professionals.¹¹ Tacit knowledge is difficult to pinpoint and transfer to others. It is broader and more complex than its counterpart *explicit knowledge*, which is a subordinate term for factual information, for example ‘a peugeot is a type of car’, or in the case of art history, explicit knowledge could be information such as ‘Picasso’s painting *Les Femmes d’Alger* was made in 1907’. Such explicit knowledge is easy to comprehend for oneself and is also easily verbalised and expressed to others. An example of tacit knowledge is the ability to play piano. It is a complex skill that is relatively difficult to explain to another person. When someone is playing the piano, they perform an act that encompasses many automatisms which involve knowledge that cannot be verbalised. Moreover, the ability to play the piano is a skill that is learned and developed through experience, as is characteristic for every example of tacit knowledge.¹²

According to Meijering, problems in businesses and organisations can be solved if more attention is paid to non-explicit capacities in professionals. His research into tacit knowledge resulted in the creation of the meta-competence model. It exists out of six dimensions of so called *meta-competences* or *capitals*. His model includes the psychological, social and cultural capital, which

¹¹ The information regarding Meijering’s theory has been gathered from a video of his flash lecture on meta-competences from the Master Educational Theory in Groningen, which can be viewed on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r87WKonshs8>

¹² See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacit_knowledge

together form the *undercurrent* or the *emotional quotient* - EQ, and the operational, intellectual, and innovative capital, which together form the *upper current* or the *intellectual quotient* - IQ. (See graph 2) Each meta-competence or capital overarches somewhat forty competences or behaviour types, which means that a meta-competence is in fact a combination of various types of skills, attitudes and knowledge.

By means of providing an impression of what the model comprises, each meta-competence will now briefly be introduced. Hereby it is noteworthy that the sequence in which they are presented, is also the order in which the meta-competences developed throughout human evolution. Each consecutive capital includes a more complex manner of converting information than its predecessor.

The EQ or undercurrent

Psychological capital: Is linked to personal functioning. It involves aspects such as energy, emotional stability, independence, courage, integrity, assertiveness, and persistence.

Social capital: Regards interpersonal functioning and collaboration. Included are person oriented capacities such as empathy, the ability to act agreeably in contact with others, respond to verbal and non-verbal signals, listen, summarize, ask further questions, negotiate, and being able to work together with others.

Cultural capital: Is also person oriented. It encompasses skills involved in language usage, such as the ability to use clear and situation appropriate language, attention for body language, and self-presentation.

The IQ or uppercurrent

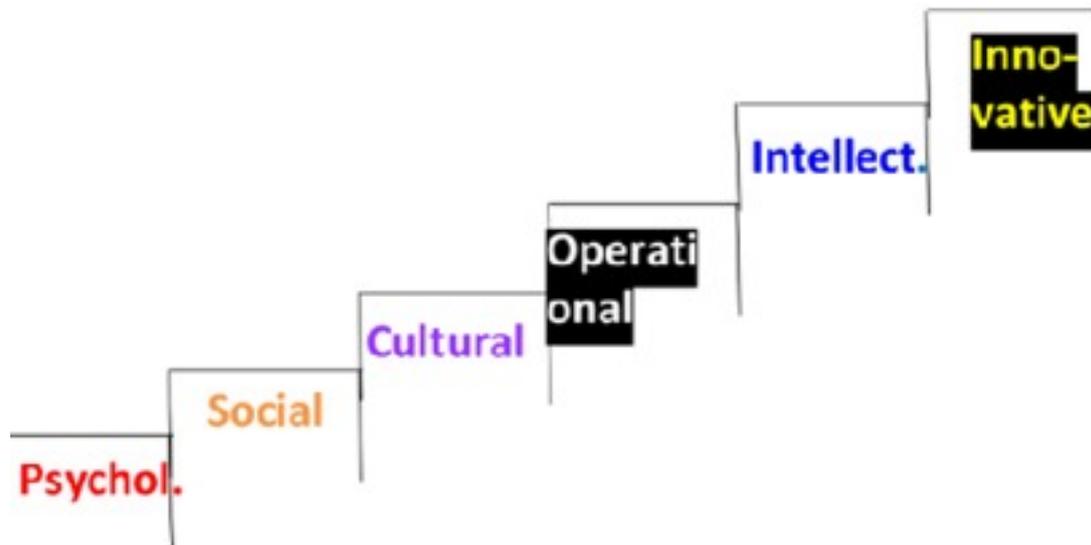
Operational capital: Executive professional handling is the core description of this meta-competence. Its content is linked to internal orientation. It exists out of characteristics such possessing a broad variety of knowledge, discipline, a sense of responsibility, the ability to adapt to change, the capability to keep an overview of processes and procedures, and influencing people.

Intellectual capital: Is linked to internal orientation and collective action. Included are components such as accessibility – being open to new knowledge and experience, analytic skills, recognizing relationships and patterns in information, and detecting causes. Also, insight of quality, creating structure, and awareness of effects are a few components of the intellectual capital.

Innovative capital: Revolves around vision and innovation, and one's external orientation. It entails the capacity to take a step back from daily practice in order create conceptions of the future and proceed in new directions. Competences that are connected to this ability are creativity, inventiveness, flexibility, persuasion, and openness.¹³

¹³ The information concerning what the six capitals each encompass is derived from two documents, one pdf and one word docx, that Frits Meijering added in the Dropbox account of our workgroup.

An important aspect to mention with respect to the manner in which this model is presented here, is that although the fact that the meta-competences developed in a certain order during the evolution of mankind, they do not have to be approached in an hierarchical manner. Each capital is of importance. Even more so, the undercurrent or EQ is extremely significant for the functioning of the meta-competences of the IQ.



Graph 2: Frits Meijering's meta-competence model

The meta-competence model as a research tool

As aforementioned, Meijering applies his model to research and solve problems in organisations and business cultures. For instance, the relation between theory and practice appears to be an issue within educational programmes for teachers. A solution may lie in the implementation of competence directed education. Meijering suggests to develop competence profiles for teachers in training. He uses the meta-competence model as a heuristic to do so. (Slagter et.al. 2004, pp. 102-107) The theory and model are fluid, which indicates that they are adjustable to explore and solve problems for different types of organisations and professionals. Likewise, the relation between the different capitals are open for further inquiry, since a new or distinctive relation between the various meta-competences may be identified when executing research departing from the meta-competence model.

Employing Meijering's model as a research tool provides a method that may lead to new insights concerning certain individuals and collectives in a specific work field, for instance a hospital or a school, yet its potentiality does not yield here, since by virtue of its fluidity and mouldable character, the meta-competence model may in principal be translated to many other domains, including art appreciation. Due to this hypothetical potential of the model to be connected to the viewing and study of art, Frits Meijering, Professor of Art History Kitty Zijlmans, psychologist Sikko de Jong, and myself formed a workgroup in 2015 in order to assess if and how this may be done.

The main reason why I see potential in the meta-competence model as a tool to analyse art

appreciation, is that the model has been developed to research knowledge workers and elucidate their implicit competences. Like knowledge workers, people who consciously engage with an artwork are also taking in, interpreting, using and distributing knowledge and information. Thus, art spectators are likewise suitable to be analysed through the lens of meta-competences in order to make the tacit knowledge that they exert explicit.

It is my aim in this thesis to determine if the model indeed contributes to a deeper understanding of the process art appreciation. In order to assess this assumption, the dynamics and processes between the viewer and the artwork will be analysed and contemplated upon on the basis of the six capitals. Since testing against case studies is necessary in order to conduct a useful and focused research, the next sub-chapter briefly introduces the chosen case studies.

1.3 The Exhibition Global Imaginations

My point of departure was to visit a place that contains artworks, in a pursuance to trace and analyse the behaviour I display when consciously looking at contemporary visual art. What is meant by the term behaviour, are physical actions as well as the activity in my internal world. I avoided a premeditative consultancy of specific literature or other types of sources, for if done otherwise, the risk exists that, while experiencing the exhibition, one may merely focus on how one's observations relate to pre-existing theories, thus perhaps overseeing alternative observations.

The location where my research commenced was the exhibition Global Imaginations in De Meelfabriek in Leiden that ran from 27-6-2015 till 4-10-2015. This exhibition took place in a former flour factory, where twenty leading contemporary artists from different parts of the world exhibited works of art that express their vision on the current globalised world.¹⁴ While visiting Global Imaginations, I attempted to observe my interaction with the exhibition by contemplating which of its aspects grasped me, which elements did and did not speak to me, which thoughts were triggered, which feelings were aroused in me, and which choices I made while wandering amongst the artworks. Afterwards, I selected three artworks that made the biggest impact on me, after which I reflected upon my experiences with them. In the following chapters, my personal findings regarding these three artworks, which are *Fever, Fever* by Raqs Media Collective, *Monument to the Dutch* by Ghana Thinktank and *Contingent* by Rivane Neuenschwander, will be scrutinized on the basis of acknowledgements concerning van de Waal's model, and the concepts of Performativity and Agency, after which the assembled findings will be brought into a dialogue with the meta-competence model.

What the case studies thus entail, are examinations of my encounters with the artworks. These examinations are framed by the field of art appreciation, art theory, and the meta-competence model. Noteworthy is that herein, the artworks themselves will *not* be considered in terms of a discursive framework, since the emphasis is placed on the interaction between the artworks and myself, rather than a connection between the artwork and other domains. By means of such a practice-based method, through which my personal involvement with the artworks from Global

¹⁴ See www.lakenhal.nl/nl/verhaal/over-global-imaginations

Imaginations is combined with the meta-competence theory, connections between the two different frameworks will be sought for as well as challenges, which in effect will expectantly lead to useful insights and conclusions concerning this pioneering aim to assess the relation between art appreciation and the employment and development of (meta-)competences. The first case study follows in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 Raqs Media Collective – *Fever, Fever*

2.1 Encounter with *Fever, Fever*

The act of perception

When setting foot on the first level of one of the two designated buildings of the exhibition, where *Fever, Fever* by Raqs Media Collective was situated, one initially encounters nothing more than a wooden wall that demarcates part of the large factory space into a room. For the rest there is little to perceive visually when entering the first floor, apart from the factory setting. Aurally, however, there are instantly more new stimuli to be perceived, as electronic frequencies, peeps and tones appear to be produced from within the still mysterious 'room'. They trigger an inquisitiveness to discover what events are taking place behind the wooden slabs.

After further entering the space, the curiosity is partly satisfied, since one then learns that the other side of the separation walls are covered in an intense black shiny paint with a rough structure, which invokes the vision that the walls have been besmirched with tar and oil. Hanging on them are three framed artworks that require some time to make sense of, and around the corner a niche is to be found in which, on a big screen, a video projection is on display. After glancing at the video, it becomes apparent that the three aforementioned artworks are video stills derived from the projection.

Up until this point of the viewing, the first question that was prompted during my contact with the installation has been answered: The curious room shows itself to be a dark hutch containing puzzling visual imagery and bizarre sounds. What remains unclear at this stage of the interaction with *Fever, Fever*, is the signification of the installation. What am I actually perceiving? What does that what I see mean?

Meaning production

In consideration of answering these questions concerning the artwork's meaning, it is necessary to continue the viewing, despite the fact that the entire artwork has already undergone a visual examination. Further looking may provide additional information. Judging by its size and impact, the video projection gives the impression of being an advantageous starting point for further inquiries.

It commences with a pitch-black screen. Slowly the black departs from the screen in a manner that bears a resemblance to a thick black liquid slinking off, which anew conjures an association of tar and oil. The image for which the substance makes place is reminiscent of a black and white photo collage of a stone temple from a 'non-Western' antiquity. Residing in this temple are stone human figurines that are swaying from side to side. (see image 1 a) An appurtenant audio is played that, due to its consistency of varying mechanic sounds and bleeps, brings the atmosphere of a science-fiction film to mind. Then the black goo reappears by creeping out of the corners of the video, while simultaneously the outer space audio transgresses into a repetition of a monotonous

soft banging noise. Subsequently, an ominous frequency falls in, when a naked yellow male figurine wearing either a space or submarine helmet emerges from the left corner of the screen. He is similar to a Greek *Kouros*, which is the art historical term that is used to refer to an ancient Greek sculpture of a young naked man, although this yellow specimen looks like a contemporary version of such a sculpture. After his entrance, the modern *Kouros* snaps up a chair with which he bashes the temple, leading the building and the small temple that flanks it to catch fire. (see image 1 b and 1 c) Then the yellow man infiltrates the temple, apparently in order to evacuate the figurines that were wavering there at the beginning of the video. (see image 1 d) An audio that sounds like an evacuation alarm strengthens his interpretation.

How I thus far understand the projection, is that it portrays a clash between antiquity and modern day. In this interpretation, the temples and sculptures represent past cultures and civilizations, whereas the yellow figurine and the fluorescent light that shines in the temple after his expulsion, symbolize modernity. By reason of the inclusion of fire and oil referents, in combination with the ominous atmosphere of the installation, the idea is conjured up that, on one level, this installation is making a statement about contemporary ecological problems. Moreover, the fact that the yellow figure creates chaos with a man-made object, namely a chair, raises the conception that the referred to ecological issues are those that developed on the accountability of human hand, such as the repercussions of the oil industry.

I also sensed the feeling of mankind's regret and hopelessness with regards to its responsibility for the chaos and negativity that modern resources have created. This image is made tangible near the end of the video, when the *Kouros* sits himself down on a chair in the empty temple, while emitting a dispirited attitude and posture. (see image 1 e) When the figure disappears, all that remains in the temple, under flickering fluorescent light, is the headgear of the *Kouros*. Finally, the screen once again becomes overflowed with tar and oil.

Perhaps the message that is implied in this ending, is that mankind will perish if nature, its resources, and man-made creations continue to be abused and misused. In this respect, the title of the installation may refer to a drive humans have displayed throughout history, namely the expropriation and exploitation of all phenomena that are encountered during an expedition, notwithstanding the consequences. In this installation, such a drive is portrayed in the form of a fever for oil, analogous to the gold fever that struck people in the 19th century. My understanding of *Fever, Fever* as a metaphorical example of the human tendency to explore, conquer and confiscate, is reinforced by the headgear that the yellow figurine is sporting, since it is typically used during explorations on earth and the atmospheres that surround it – the underwater world and space.



1.a



1.b



1.c



1.d



1.e



1.f

Image 1. Six video stills from Raqs Media Collective, *Fever, Fever*, 2015, video animation. Photo: Darila van der Linden

The Performative

Fever, Fever made a powerful aesthetic impact on me. Firstly, diverging feelings arose, including curiosity, confusion, pleasure, enthusiasm, surprise, uneasiness, sadness and anger. For instance, the intensity and mystery that was palpable from the black tar-smeared walls evoked a sense of pleasure, and the act of piecing the information from the video and other cues together provided me with feelings of excitement and gratification, which is perhaps comparable to the type of enjoyment that people playing games such as crossword puzzles experience. Furthermore, it has an enchanting effect on the viewer that *Fever, Fever* stimulates the senses in an intense, out of the ordinary manner.

A notable consequence of its intensity, is that the titillating and pleasing visual elements alongside a perilous atmosphere, conjured up a feeling that I cannot properly define, though this enigmatic affective response can be described as a certain tension that results from the merging of confusion and pleasure. Additionally, the video is particularly bustling, which overthrows the viewer and makes it challenging to grasp the content of the artwork. Nevertheless, I managed to make sense of the artwork and read meaning into it. This personal interpretation in effect triggered emotions, including interest, namely to contemplate on the current issues that are linked to the oil industry, and mankind's attitude towards its past, the earth, and all living and non-living matter on it.

2.2 Deciphering the experience

Now that the encounter with *Fever, Fever* has been sketched, it is possible to proceed with an analysis of the viewing process. It commences with the orientation of a spectator in a new space, and her attempt to make sense of the surroundings and the stimuli that it contains. By means of this assimilation, questions are asked, and answers to them are sought for, resulting in a back and forth between the viewer and the cues. This interaction appears to be fuelled and facilitated by a combination of and exchange between sensory perceptions, feelings, and thoughts. What thus takes place, is a dynamic synergy of sensory, affective and cognitive activities that are constantly influencing one another. It is impossible, and for this thesis unnecessary, to specifically map these exchanges out in precise order and detail.¹⁵ Rather, I suggest to comprehend the communication between the viewer and the artwork as a fusion or alternation of a beholder who orients herself to the external world in order to make sense of it, then pays attention to how the stimuli in the external world affect her internal domains, which then prompts the spectator to refocus on the extraneous phenomena in a new way. This process may become more extensive and touch higher levels of experience as one continues the engagement with the artwork. Within this broad understanding of art appreciation, it is conceivable to examine how meta-competences play a role in this process.

Since meta-competences consist of behaviour types or competences that encompass combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, I devised a procedure conducive to screening the text concerning my meeting with *Fever, Fever*, in order to reveal which types of behaviours the text encloses and pertains to - behaviour in the broadest sense of the word. In a following step, I classified the identified behaviours with a competence, after which I determined under which meta-competence these competences should reside. What I have done, briefly put, is make the meta-competence model tailor made for art appreciation. Comparable to Meijering who produces profiles for various types of professionals, I have attained a way to create a *profile of an art appreciator*. See table 1 for the results of this translation of my experience with *Fever, Fever* to the meta-competence model.

¹⁵ Such research belongs to psychological fields, and scientists are still varied in their opinions concerning the exact details of the interaction between emotions and cognition.

<i>Meta-competences</i>	<i>Competences</i>
Innovative Capital	<p><u>Adaptability</u>: Capability to switch between mind-sets and allowing to be taken in different directions by the artwork</p> <p><u>Abstract thinking</u>: Creating personal interpretations concerning the meaning(s) and function(s) of an artwork</p> <p><u>Critical thinking</u>: Re-evaluating interpretations</p>
Intellectual Capital	<p><u>Analytic thinking</u>: Making connections between information from the artwork, its context, prior-knowledge, and affective responses</p> <p><u>Interest</u>: Eagerness to negotiate meaning</p> <p><u>Accessibility</u>: Being open to new experiences</p>
Operational Capital	<p><u>Practical Thinking</u>: Paying attention to the production of the artwork in terms of the employed techniques and materials</p>
Cultural Capital	<p><u>Communication</u>: Translating experience into language</p> <p><u>Iconological insight</u>: Recognizing referents, signs and symbols in aspects of an artwork</p>
Social Capital	<p><u>Empathy</u>: Reading emotions into aspects of an artwork</p> <p><u>Social awareness</u>: Observing interactions and relations between characters in an artwork</p>
Psychological Capital	<p><u>Sensomotoric awareness</u>: Observing body movements of characters in an artwork</p> <p><u>Self-awareness</u>: Awareness of personal affective responses that are evoked while perceiving an artwork</p> <p><u>Autonomy</u>: Approaching an artwork with the mentality that an interpretation can be created solitarily</p>

Table 1

The relation between the different meta-competences

Besides providing an overview of what each individual meta-competence contributes to art appreciation, the table also makes it possible to analyse how the ‘capitals’ relate to one another during an encounter with an artwork. To illustrate both aspects, my interaction with the various figurines from *Fever, Fever*’s video will function as an example throughout each meta-competence.

There is a point during my encounter, at which I notice that there are stone human figurines swaying from left to right in a temple. Here, attention is paid to the body movements of the figurines, without attributing a signification to their movements. The focus is on a domain that is mainly connected to the figures themselves. Therefore, this part of art appreciation, which I have called senso-motoric awareness, has been placed under the 'psychological capital', since this meta-competence is connected to types of behaviour that are strongly connected to basic personal domains of an individual. Hence the reason that the viewer's affective responses and her awareness of them, also falls under this meta-competence.

Perhaps a description of the 'social capital's role will further elucidate what is understood under the so called personal domains of an individual. Rather focussing on aspects of singular elements, components of the social capital observe interactions between different actors. This is illustrated by the following quotation from the sketch of my encounter: "Then the yellow man infiltrates the temple, apparently in order to evacuate the figurines that were wavering there at the beginning of the video". Evidently, my perception was focused on the physical interaction between the characters rather than merely that of an individual character. In extension, I attributed emotions to the figurines, which is also an indication of social behaviour, since it entails the capacity to empathize with others.

The 'cultural capital' ascends from the previous two capitals with its contribution to recognizing one to one references between aspects of the artwork and phenomena outside of the perceived object. A good example of this type of reading, is my identification of the yellow figurine as being a Greek Kouros. Hereby, I connected a property that is not specifically addressed in the video, but that is embedded in cultural knowledge, to the yellow figurine. According to Meijering, the interpretation of non-verbal signs, as well as verbal language, belongs to the realm of the cultural capital. In a meeting, he explained that besides spoken and written language, body language, gestures, attributes, and other types of visual characteristics that entail a certain (culturally) agreed upon symbolism or reference to something outside of itself are included in his usage of the word 'language'.¹⁶

According to Meijering, the 'operational capital', when connected to art appreciation, includes the attention that the viewer pays to aspects of the material and technique of the artwork. I interpret this to be quite a practical approach, which leads me to link it to a competence that I call 'practical thinking'. During my encounter with *Fever, Fever*, thoughts concerning the used materials and techniques passed my mind. I, for instance, amongst various other observations concerning the materials employed for this installation, recognized the figurines to be made out of stone.

¹⁶ 19-5-2016, Leiden. Thus the difference, albeit a slim one, between the cultural capital and the psychological capital with respect to the reading of the body, is that due to the competences of the cultural capital, a culturally embedded meaning is connected to the body movements. In fact, in this respect, the psychological and cultural capital run through each other, meaning they cannot and do not have to be seen as strictly separate.

The loose segments of meaning and experience that are gathered by virtue of the aforementioned meta-competences cannot unify into an overarching meaning or a story unless they are pieced together. This gluing of information is, in my opinion, facilitated by the intellectual capital. The information that requires merging descends from aspects of the artwork, the context of the artwork, the feelings and sensations that arose during the encounter with it, and prior knowledge of the viewer. For instance, the black liquid on the screen and walls that I interpreted as tar and oil, the unsettling feeling that the audio of the video triggered, the chaos that the yellow Kouros created, the knowledge conceptions of the current world are portrayed in *Global Imaginations*, and the knowledge that the oil industry has a variety of dire consequences, each contributed to my overall understanding of the artwork because they became linked together in my mind.

These ingredients that were assorted, led me to interpret the Kouros figure as a symbol for ‘Western’ man and his responsibility for ecological destructions. In other words, due to the linkage of diverging aspects of the viewing experience, a platform arises from which a story or overarching interpretation may be fabricated by the spectator. For this part of the process of art appreciation, I argue that abstract thinking is a competence that is involved, since I contrived a theme for the installation while it is not directly represented in the artwork, nor is my interpretation of meaning derived from an already existing or agreed upon combination of signs and symbols, which is the case for the recognition of meaning in the cultural capital. Of importance for this step in meaning production, is the capacity to be able to switch and adapt in functioning on account of the changing of circumstances. When viewing *Fever, Fever* it was necessary to constantly refocus and adapt my perceptions, due to new impressions and interpretations that occur. For example, the figurines in the video-projection find themselves in various new situations that ask for a reinterpretation and readjustment of perspective in order to grasp their doings.

The fact that the capitals have just been handled in a certain order does not mean that the process of art appreciation is truly structured in this hierarchy, or that hierarchy at all comes about between the meta-competences. More than that, they appear to continually influence each other, and activated in different sequences. For instance, the capitals of the EQ feed the IQ, since it is the EQ that processes information from the artwork such as emotions, social interactions and symbols. These interpretations of the undercurrent can reach the viewer’s awareness thanks to the fact that the cultural capital makes it possible to (mentally) put words to the experience of the encounter, thus facilitating a deliberation of meaning rather than merely being overthrown by undefined feelings and impressions. However, the upper current can also influence the undercurrent. For example, my interpretation regarding the repercussions of and issues revolving around the oil industry, evoked emotions, and led me to continue looking at aspects of the artwork in a different manner, which demonstrates that the intellectual and innovative capital influenced meta-competences of the EQ.

It is beyond question that there are more entailments of the meta-competences to be identified in this case study, and the same goes for the relationships between the different capitals. However, this chapter has already provided multiple interesting insights, and perhaps these will be echoed and augmented in the following chapter, which scrutinizes my encounter with *Contingent* by Rivane Neuenschwander.

Chapter 3 Rivane Neuenschwander - Contingent

3.1 Encounter with Contingent

The act of perception

On the ground floor of the kettle house, which is the second building of the flour factory that was allocated as exhibition space for Global Imaginations, the visitors enter a dark, cold, and narrow



room that contains two video-projections on monitors that are displayed on the walls.

Firstly, my attention is caught by the video *Contingent*. I puzzlingly ask myself what I am observing, as a white background on the monitor is riddled with insects that are moving around extremely fast. Initially, I understand the insects to be flies that are swarming up and down and across the screen, though later I realise they are fast-forwarded ants.



2.b



2.c

Image 2. Three video stills from Rivane Neuenschwander, *Contingent*, 2008, film projection. Photo: Darila van der Linden

When I commenced viewing the video, the screen was as on image 2 b. The video restarted after about five minutes, after which it became clear to me that, as is to be seen on image 2 a, the ants actually start off by forming the outlines of a map of the world. The continents appear to be made up out of a substance that the ants are attracted to, probably something sweet and sticky, leading most of them to group around and on the continents rather than randomly being scattered across the screen. As the video progresses, the continents are slowly eaten away by the ants, which in effect results in the decreasing of the world map until there is nothing more left of it. All that remains on the screen is a small number of ants.

Meaning construction

I strongly wondered what this artwork, in which the world is being eaten, was about. Most likely this is a metaphor, though for what? A first thought was that the artwork is perhaps a critical portrayal of mankind's consumerism, though when taking into account its title, this interpretation shifted into a different direction: Contingent is a word that can refer to a group of soldiers, and a large group of ants are often referred to as 'an army of ants'. The combination of this reference to war and the fact that the world map disintegrates due to the intrusive and greedy ants, evokes the idea that the artwork is visualising the chaos and destructiveness of war, and perhaps even a visualisation of a possible future doom scenario. However, the word contingent is also uttered to proclaim an uncertainty, a possibility. This definition causes a slightly different interpretation to develop, since it eliminates the link I made to the element of war. Within this second meaning of the term contingent, my initial interpretation resurfaces and progresses: If mankind persists to executing its greed, the chances are that there will be little left of earth as we know it. However, the artwork does not state this doom scenario, it merely suggests it as possible outcome, hence the title *Contingent*.

The performative

Despite the length of the video, which is approximately ten minutes, it is lacking in an elaborate story line for the spectator to follow. Nonetheless, I felt strongly compelled to continually analyse the restless ants. Moreover, it was titillating and pleasurable to do so. What I also experienced was great admiration for the artwork, by reason of the opinion that it is an inventive, smart, effective and affective visualisation of a crucial theme of the contemporary world. To see hundreds of ants crawling across the screen, as well as perceiving a gradual disappearance of the world map into nothingness, makes a powerful visual and mental impact. When, towards the end of the video, nothing but a small island remained, into which the leftover ants were trying to gain access, I imagined what it would feel like if the earth were to become destroyed to such an extent that the places where it is safe and fruitful to live are so scarce that it becomes a battle who can gain access to the last bit of liveable land and its resources. Those last ants seemed to be the few survivors of a self-induced apocalypse, a conception that evoked feelings of worry and sadness, for what if this is indeed the future that we are embarking on? In effect, I reflected on which people in the world already experience such an exclusion of the resources that the world has to offer. These heavy connotations also trigger self-reflection in terms of one's own negative contributions to the earth's well-being. However, these darker thoughts and emotions did not entirely colour the overall feeling that *Contingent* induced in me. The slow disintegration of the map also contained a sense of aesthetic beauty, which counterbalanced the weighty responses out.

3.2 Deciphering the Experience

When analysing my encounter with *Contingent*, I recognize that it opened with a strong desire to attach meaning to the artwork. Then, I patiently observed the course of action of the ants, while feelings and associations began to emerge that in effect influenced my reading of the video. Herein included are various questions that passed under review, such as: What are the ants doing? What do they represent? What does what they are doing represent? And how does this affect me? The process of answering these questions and the effect of the generated answers resulted in reflections on certain themes of current day life, as well as intense emotions.

In order to facilitate these different constituents of the interaction the meta-competences played a role. Analogous to the previous chapter, I have structured the skills, knowledge and attitudes that made the experience and the composition of meaning possible, into a table. (see table 2)

The relation between the different meta-competences

An important aspect of my encounter with *Contingent*, is the initial attitude that it is possible to create a meaningful interpretation of the artwork, despite the fact that no further information is provided, for instance, in the form of a text on the wall. All I was firstly confronted with, was a mass of insects that were, seemingly random, buzzing across the screen. Nevertheless, led by the belief that an interpretation of the artwork would follow soon enough, I decided to continue viewing the occurrences on the monitor by, in the first instance, merely observing the movements of the insects. Both the act of observing movements as well as the attitude that meaning may be constructed, are aspects that appertain to the psychological capital.

The social capital was also present during my appreciation of *Contingent*, albeit not in an overly present manner. Although I was analysing the ants, I did not pay attention to how they interacted with one another. I therefore did not add the competence *social awareness* in table 2, whereas I did do so in the previous chapter. Instead, I noted *objective social observation* as a skill, and in this case, it refers to observations such as recognizing the activity of the ants as eating a sweet substance. An interesting feature of my viewing, with regards to the social capital, is that I read psychological properties into the ants, since I experienced them to be intrusive, greedy, and consumed with desire. I find this interesting because, in a literal sense, they are but ants crawling and eating across the screen.

It is evident that the cultural capital played a role in my experience of *Contingent* due to the fact that I recognised a world map, since such a recognition is related to the ability to process signs and symbols. Understanding the meaning of the word contingent is also a deciphering of symbolism, in the sense that a word is always a symbol for something. These forms of information processing, as is to be seen in table 2, belong to the realm of the cultural capital.

The Operational capital added to the process of my appreciation of *Contingent* by its involvement in the awareness that the artwork is a video, that it is fast-forwarded, and my pondering

about parts of the production, such as by which means the artist managed to get the ants to form a perfect outline of the world map.

As is the case for the psychological capital, the intellectual capital is also fuelled by an attitude, in this case the eagerness to negotiate the meaning of the artwork. This attitude is necessary to continue the process of interpretation as well as to link information together. Reading the ants as a metaphor for the army was not merely an association that randomly popped up. Rather, it occurred as a result of the fact that the signification of the word contingent became linked in with the information that I had thus far processed. Such an interpretation thus requires a mental will to do so, as well as an openness to let impressions come in. I would like to argue that only then, the linking process of the intellectual capital can be set in motion. What is more specifically meant by this so called linking process, is the collection of information from one's personal knowledge library, which then is connected to the input gathered from the undercurrent and the context of the artwork.

Ultimately, I understand *Contingent* as a metaphoric manifestation of the world's future if mankind proceeds to satisfy its hunger for excesses. The fact that people engage in warfare is, in my opinion, the ultimate example of how people go to all lengths to grant their needs, notwithstanding the repercussions. This understanding of the video has quite a loaded meaning while in fact, if taken completely literally, the viewer is merely looking at a large group of insects eating a substance that is spread out on a surface to look like a map of the world. The meaning I attach to the artwork can therefore be seen as a self-created metaphor, a skill that is related to abstract thinking, which prompts me to connect it to the innovative capital. Another competence that is involved here, is adaptability (see table 2), since I switched between interpretation multiple times, for instance between the theme of consumerism versus the theme of warfare. In order to make suchlike shifts, it is necessary that the viewer be open for adaptation, as opposed to clamping on to the first interpretation that comes up.

<i>Meta-competences</i>	<i>Competences</i>
Innovative Capital	<p><u>Adaptability</u>: Capability to switch between mind-sets and allowing to be taken in different directions by the artwork</p> <p><u>Abstract thinking</u>: Creating personal interpretations concerning the meaning(s) and function(s) of an artwork</p> <p><u>Critical thinking</u>: Re-evaluating interpretations</p>
Intellectual Capital	<p><u>Analytic thinking</u>: Making connections between information from the artwork, its context, prior-knowledge, and affective responses</p> <p><u>Reflective capacity</u>: Contemplations about themes or situations that are triggered in the viewer due to perceiving the artwork but do not directly revolve around the artwork</p> <p><u>Interest</u>: Eagerness to negotiate meaning</p> <p><u>Accessibility</u>: Being open to new experiences</p>
Operational Capital	<p><u>Practical Thinking</u>: Paying attention to the production of the artwork in terms of the employed techniques and materials</p>
Cultural Capital	<p><u>Communication</u>: Translating experience into language</p> <p><u>Iconological insight</u>: Recognizing referents, signs and symbols in aspects of an artwork</p>
Social Capital	<p><u>Empathy</u>: Reading emotions into aspects of an artwork</p> <p><u>External empathy</u>: Reflecting upon the creative mind of the artist</p> <p><u>Objective social observation</u>: Unbiased observation of the acts and behaviours of characters in an artwork</p>
Psychological Capital	<p><u>Self-awareness</u>: Awareness of personal affective responses that are evoked while perceiving an artwork</p> <p><u>Sensomotoric awareness</u>: Observing (body) movements of characters in an artwork</p> <p><u>Autonomy</u>: Approaching an artwork with the mentality that an interpretation can be created solitarily</p>

Table 2

When examining the functions that each meta-competence fulfils during my experience with *Contingent*, I discern that the psychological, social and cultural capital process fundamental cues in the artwork, such as movements, emotions, and symbols. These are shaped by the intellectual capital by virtue of the adjoining prior knowledge and knowledge of the concept of the exhibition to the input from the undercurrent. The merged information becomes endowed with an overarching

meaning in the innovative capital.

However, my encounter should not be understood as such a linear progression through the meta-competences, for it has become apparent that the meta-competences influence each other in various ways. For instance, the innovative capital produced an interpretation that the artwork represents a possible gloom prospect for the world. Similar to a feedback loop, this overarching meaning triggered the intellectual capital, which caused me to reflect upon such a doom scenario. In a manner that became slightly disconnected from the artwork, I found myself pondering about the earth's demise, which then conjured up emotions, thus involving the psychological capital. This is merely a small example of the non-linear relation between the meta-competences, but the entire encounter is made up out of a multitude of comparable interactions and exchanges between the six capitals. However, this web of activity is far too complex to literally map out. Furthermore, attempting to do so would be tedious, as well as beside the purpose of this thesis. Instead, additional insights concerning how the meta-competences play a role during art appreciation will be sought after in the third case study, in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 Ghana Think Tank - Monument to the Dutch

4.1 Encounter with Monument to the Dutch

The act of perception

When entering the floor of the flour warehouse, where *Monument to the Dutch* is positioned, one perceives an abundance of components consisting of diverging media, which together form an installation. The element with which I firstly made an acquaintance, is a relatively small house which has been built into the old factory setting. (see image 3 a) The exterior of the little building bears a resemblance to the architectural style of typical Dutch housing, due to its slanted tiled roof, the addition of a small attic window, and the employment of red bricks. However, when entering the miniature home, it becomes apparent that its interior is not comparable to a traditional or common Dutch residence. In the middle of the room, the house exists out of one square space, a stairway is positioned in which, on the other side of its steps, an altar is built. This altar contains a rosary, a Kippah (which is a Jewish cap), and three religious books, namely a Jewish Tora, a Christian Bible and an Islamic Quran. (See image 2 b and c) The shape of the altar is reminiscent of an Islamic design style, as are the figurations that are applied on it, albeit in a Delft blue pottery style. Additionally, the carpet is also provided with Islamic-looking forms.

After departing from the house, I proceeded to view the rest of the installation. On various walls that circle the house, plates reside showing pictures and texts that pertain to issues and examples of religious and intercultural tolerance deriving from Dutch history. (see image 3 d) Another component of the installation is a variety of video-projections which are displayed, on monitors, behind and beside the small house. They present 'think tanks' from so called 'Third World' countries who are discussing problems that 'First World' countries experience, including the Netherlands, in order to conceptualize solutions for them. (see image 3 e)

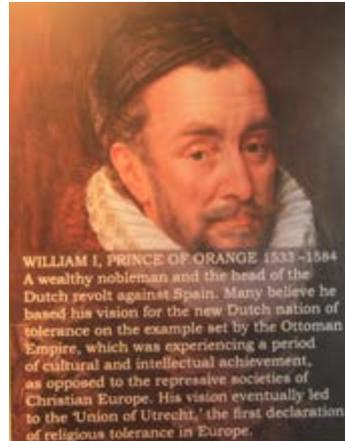
Meaning Construction

As can be concluded from the text above, *Monument to the Dutch* is an extensive art installation that provides the viewer with a large amount of information to process. As a result, it triggered multifarious thoughts and associations. An example of one of these cognitive processes is my understanding of the visual aspects inside the small house as a unification of three big religions under the roof of a Dutch house, which evokes the idea that this is a symbolic wish for the Netherlands to be a country in which all religions and cultures 'can go through one door together'. This is a literal translation of a Dutch expression that denotes a hassle-free relation between people. In light of this interpretation, the house in its entirety then becomes a tangible manifestation of this expression. The house functions as a symbol for the Netherlands, while the visual stimuli inside it refer to a harmonious coexistence between Christians, Muslims and Jews.

I read the stairs in the middle of the house to be a stairway to heaven, which symbolizes the belief that all human beings, notwithstanding their cultural or religious background, are capable of gaining access to the paradise of ultimate bliss. Then, I reflected on how ultimately, everybody is equal.



3.a



3.d



3.b



3.c



3.e

Image 3. Five photographs of various components of Ghana Think Thank, *Monument to the Dutch*, 2015, Multimedia Installation. Photo: Darila van der Linden

The plates on the walls and pillars that surround the house also feature the theme of tolerance. Their message is that endurance in the Netherlands may increase if the Dutch gained knowledge of and contemplated upon certain aspects of Dutch history, including the occurrences in World War II and positive historic relations between the Dutch and Islamic countries. Due to these plates, a more plausible interpretation of the small house surfaced, namely the conception that it is a miniature version of the Anne Frank house. The stairs are then no longer a symbolic stairway to heaven, but to Anne Frank's attic room, where she hid herself during the Second World War. Despite the fact that my first interpretation is less likely than the second one, I still decided to favour the prior one.

An additional message that the plates transmit, is an appeal to the Dutch to broaden their knowledge of current Islamic beliefs and practices. A similar directive was palpable in one of the video-projections, when a girl from the Gaza think tank advised the Dutch to read the Quran before judging Muslims.

Ultimately, after having concentrated on each of the installation's components, I interpret the little Dutch house as a portrayal of an alternative way of living together in the Netherlands. The wall plates and video-projections function as suggestions and solutions to realise this ideal, or at least as nudges in this right direction, which may then stimulate a more harmonious multi-cultural society under the overarching Dutch roof.

The Performative

Besides evoking a concatenation of thoughts, *Monument to the Dutch* also caused some strong affective responses. While calmly seated on the ground in the intimacy of the small house, taking my time to let the stimuli enter my consciousness, the visual aspects did not only trigger me to reflect on what a country with unity in a diversity of cultures may entail, they also led me to actually experience a feeling of such harmony. Cognizing elements such as three divergent religious books, and Islamic figurations made up out of Delft blue stylistic qualities, is a combination of aspects that one rarely to never encounters anywhere, which makes it such a powerful combination, for this mix of features enabled me to experience an embodied vision of oneness within humanities multiplicity. In effect, this sensation evoked a rich sense of warmth, admiration and happiness. Contrarily, I also became touched with sadness due to the awareness that this sense of harmony in the Netherlands, as well as in the rest of the world, has yet to be achieved. This last thought formed the platform from which I continued viewing the rest of the installation. In this proceeding of the encounter, I entered many dialogues with the wall plates and videos. For instance, in the videos, think tanks from various 'non-Western' countries discussed questions and problems that Dutch citizens submitted. A prevalent remark in these queries, was something like "Who are we to send our petty little problems to people who have such serious problems", to which the think tank in Indonesia responded with the comment that the Dutch are obviously under the supposition that the Indonesian standard of happiness is lower than their own. However, the Indonesian think tank intimated that the Dutch have lower self-esteem, therefore arguing that, despite Holland's economic welfare, they are not more prosperous than Indonesians. This line of thought is extremely inciting, as it raises interesting questions of how to define wealth and happiness. The judgement or measurement of happiness will be different when wealth is understood as financial welfare or material possessions, rather than when it is assessed in terms of, for instance, love and kindness. According to the Indonesian think tank, as well as some of the other think tank videos, it is the latter concept of prosperity that is in less of an abundance in first world countries, in comparison to many so called 'developing countries'. They state that the cause for this phenomenon is related to the substantial role that individualism plays in the 'Western' world. This commentary, among similar convictions that were expressed in the other think tank videos,

prompted me to reconsider certain ideas concerning the differences between the 'Western' and 'non-Western' world; Western-Europeans and North-Americans often look to the rest of the world, especially the financially challenged countries, with pity, by reason of their conviction that they are exceedingly more fortunate. However, the videos in *Monument to the Dutch* taught me that the reversed is also conceivable. Other cultures also have reasons to empathize with 'Western' countries. Correspondingly, the ideas of the African Holot detention camp think tank in Israel caused a switch of perspective. Their loving response to the Dutch diffidence to submit problems to the so called less fortunate, was that it is perhaps a very good idea to ask Africans for advice, seeing as their experience with many arduous situations has made them equipped for solving problems. They also mentioned that it helps them to advise the Dutch, and that they do this open heartedly. Equivalently, the Gaza think tank refers to their ability and habituation to solve problems due to the truculent circumstances that they are confronted with on a daily basis.

To see and hear the beauty and wisdom that emanated from these think tanks is a captivating experience. What is more, the videos possess the ability to bridge a certain gap between the way the so called first world countries look towards Third World countries. They lift the victim status of 'non-Western' man to a more, inherently, equal level, by illustrating that countries that are not at war and have more financial welfare encompass fortunes that are far less abundant in Third World countries, yet the latter as well bear prosperities that still require further development in the 'Western' world. In this light, *Monument to the Dutch* may generate a mental sense of mutual respect and equality, that substitutes 'Western' man's exalted mentality. This agency is embodied and facilitated by the combination of the little house, the wall plates, and the video-projections.

Besides these revelations, I also experienced annoyance towards some aspects of the installation, by reason that they were in contravention with my opinion on the issue of intolerance in the Netherlands. The installation seems to place full responsibility on the Dutch in order to resolve cultural bigotry, by suggesting they should make more of an effort to immerse themselves into the cultures of immigrants. However, my personal opinion on these matters, particularly concerning the relation between the Dutch and Islamic cultures, also places part of the responsibility on the mentality of the latter folks. I deem such an anti-reaction during an encounter with an artwork to be engaging, since it titillates intellectually. One could say it is as though the artwork holds up a mirror in which the perceiver can see her morals and worldviews. In this respect, *Monument to the Dutch* prompted me to contemplate my position and opinions concerning various social, cultural, religious and political issues. It urged me to define my views, argue for them, and in some cases shift them.

In its totality, I regard *Monument to the Dutch* as an artwork that evokes empathic contemplation, and, from a variety of perspectives, presents the theme of cultural tolerance on a worldly scale as well as in the Netherlands.

4.2 Deciphering the Experience

The relation between the different meta-competences

In my dialogue with the installation I experienced a variety of feelings and emotions such as warmth, annoyance, and interest, and I had a heightened awareness of these affects. The strong sense of harmony and warmth that I felt while seated in the little house is an example of this conscious consideration of my affective responses towards the artwork. This self-awareness is an ability that is markedly related to the personal domains of the viewer, hence its placement under the psychological capital. I would like to argue that feelings of liking the artwork and admiring its quality, also referred to as aesthetic appreciation, are involved with this meta-competence too, since such reactions entail an affective arousal within the viewer.

The social capital mainly played a role in the viewing of the video-projections. While listening to the think thanks conversations, I was concurrently judging the characters of the participants on the basis of their facial features and expressions. I, for instance, decided that some of the speakers from the African think tank were sweet and loving people. In other words, I made myself a point of reference while beholding the think tank conversations, which indicates that on a certain level I was also a character connected to the social dimension of the videos.

A proficiency from the cultural capital that is implicated in my encounter with *Monument to the Dutch*, is iconological insight. It bears on the recognition of referents such as signs and symbols in aspects of an artwork, such as the fact that I perceived the external appearance of the house to resemble a Dutch house, recognized a beaded necklace to be a rosary, a small cap as a kippah, and comprehended that the three books were a Bible, a Torah, and a Quran. Such interpretations of meaning are hinged upon one to one relations between an object or visual aspect and an established referent. To put it differently, the viewer has knowledge of a meaning that, on a predetermined collective level, is attributed to an object or other stimulus.

A different type of thoughts, which are involved with the operational capital and barely came up during my encounter, concern the materials and production process of the installation, such as the instance that I spent a moment envisioning and pondering the production process of the small house within the setting of an old factory.

On the contrary, the intellectual capital appears to have been vastly engaged in my experience. This meta-competence is partly characterised by collective action, which I interpret to mean that it encompasses competences that are connected to domains of an individual as well as the inclusion of external forms of information. In this respect, I argue that the intellectual capital facilitated specific types of conversations with the installation, mainly discussions of important social and cultural themes. For instance, concerning the theme of intercultural tolerance, and the relation between the 'Western' and 'non-Western' world, some aspects of *Monument to the Dutch* led to a discussion that caused my pre-existing opinions to be defined and strengthened due to the fact that I was in a disagreement with the artwork, other elements led me to nuance various pre-existing

opinions of mine, while there were also some instances that brought me to completely switch from perspective, or gain new insights. In summary, within these discussions, a connection is generated between the individual viewer, the artwork, and phenomena outside of them, which implies that the encounter enters a collective level.

An important competence that resorts under the innovative capital, is abstract thinking. It was included while interpreting loose segments of the installation, as well as in the conceptualisation of an overarching meaning. Construing the small house to be a symbolic manifestation for the Dutch expression ‘to be able to go through one door together’ regarding social, religious and cultural cohesion, is an example of the innovative capital’s involvement on a smaller scale. In the pursuit to understand *Monument to the Dutch* in its entirety, I attempted to link together my interpretation of the house, the wall plates, and the video-projections. An endeavour during which the viewer works on an abstract and personal level, considering there is no *concrete* connection or overarching meaning of the three components that the installation is made up of.

Meta-Competences	Competences
Innovative Capital	<p><u>Adaptability</u>: Capability to switch between mind-sets and allowing to be taken in different directions by the artwork</p> <p><u>Abstract thinking</u>: Creating personal interpretations concerning the meaning(s) and function(s) of an artwork</p> <p><u>Critical thinking</u>: Re-evaluating interpretations</p>
Intellectual Capital	<p><u>Analytic thinking</u>: Making connections between information from the artwork, its context, prior-knowledge, and affective responses</p> <p><u>Reflective capacity</u>: Contemplations about themes or situations that are triggered in the viewer due to perceiving the artwork but do not directly revolve around the artwork</p> <p><u>Opinion Formation</u>: Drawing an opinion on a certain theme or situation and deliberating the underlying arguments for the opinion</p> <p><u>Interest</u>: Eagerness to negotiate meaning</p> <p><u>Accessibility</u>: Being open to new experiences</p>
Operational Capital	<p><u>Practical Thinking</u>: Paying attention to the production of the artwork in terms of the employed techniques and materials</p>
Cultural Capital	<p><u>Communication</u>: Translating experience into language</p> <p><u>Iconological insight</u>: Recognizing referents, signs and symbols in aspects of an artwork</p>
Social Capital	<p><u>Empathy</u>: Reading emotions into aspects of an artwork</p> <p><u>Social awareness</u>: Observing interactions and relations between characters in an artwork</p> <p><u>Objective social observation</u>: Unbiased observation of the acts and behaviours of characters in an artwork</p>
Psychological Capital	<p><u>Self-awareness</u>: Awareness of personal affective responses that are evoked while perceiving an artwork</p> <p><u>Autonomy</u>: Approaching an artwork with the mentality that an interpretation can be created solitarily</p>

Table 3

As previously addressed, the meta-competences do not follow a specific hierarchal pattern during art appreciation. They are constantly interchanging, influencing one another, and can most likely be active at the same time. To illustrate this complexity, a part of my viewing process will be translated to meta-competential terms:

When perceiving the in- and outside of the small house, I recognized numerous cultural and religious referents, which is a part of the encounter that relates to the cultural capital. The visual elements, such as the figurations on the altar in which Islam style meets Delft blue design, are intertwined. I interpreted this fusion as a symbol and wish for cohesion between Muslims and the Dutch, which is a self-created meaning that I read into the altar decoration, and thus a component of my viewing that is connected to the innovative capital. This interaction between the cultural capital and the innovative capital, in effect, triggered strong emotions such as warmth and harmony, thus activating the psychological capital. After the cognition of symbolic meaning and the emotions it triggered, I was prompted to contemplate the relations between different cultures, and the concept of unity in diversity amongst people with different beliefs and practices, thus arriving in the intellectual capital.

This example is merely an aspect of my entire encounter with *Monument to the Dutch*, yet already it presents an affluence of occurrences. Since the other two case studies provided similar portions of insights, I deemed it to be interesting and beneficial to compare their results, in order to gain more elaborate and clear insights concerning the different roles the meta-competences fulfil during art appreciation, how they function, and what they entail. Conclusions that are the result of such a comparative examination, as well as a general recapitulation of the case studies, are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 - Understanding Art Appreciation as a Process in terms of Meta-Competences

In order to ascertain what one can learn from appreciating art in the sense of consciously beholding it and trying to gain an understanding of the perceived object, I first needed uncover and shed light on the interaction between the artwork and the viewer by making the components of art appreciation, other than physiological ones such as that of the perception system and the cardio-vascular system, explicit. I chose to employ a practice-based approach in which, by the aid of case studies, I scrutinized my encounters with three contemporary artworks from the exhibition *Global Imaginations*. In order to structure these experiences, I employed the meta-competence model in view of its conceivable capacity to help decipher such intricate occurrences, and also by reason of its potentiality to function as a platform from which my research results may be translated to ideas concerning the development of certain competences through art appreciation.

In this chapter, firstly, the insights respecting the entailments of the process of art appreciation that have been congregated from the case studies will be attended to. Thenceforth, these conclusions will be linked back to the notions of Agency and Performativity, since this thesis partly departs from these concepts.

5.1 A Portrayal of Art Appreciation as a Process and Experience

In the previous chapters, a variety of steps were taken in order to facilitate an analysis of art appreciation through the lens of meta-competences, which in effect has led to a meta-competence model that is tailor made for the act of consciously viewing art. The premise for believing art spectatorship to be suitable for a meta-competential analysis, is recognizing that, like knowledge workers, viewers who consciously engage with an artwork are also taking in, interpreting, using and distributing knowledge and information, thus exerting tacit knowledge that can be made explicit with the meta-competence model. The second step is acknowledging that it is unnecessary as well as impossible to scrutinize the interaction between a viewer and an artwork in utmost detail. Rather, in a broad sense, art appreciation needs to be seen as a mix or alternation of the viewer orienting herself to the external world in order to make sense of it, and paying attention to how this effects one's internal domains, which in effect leads to the viewer to refocus on the external stimuli in a new way. Within this broad understanding of the process of art appreciation, which surfaced during my first case study of *Fever, Fever*, it becomes possible to analyse how meta-competences play a role in this interaction between the viewer and the artwork. Namely by analysing the behaviour types that are executed during an encounter with an artwork, considering that meta-competences consist of behaviour types or competences that can be seen as combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In the case studies, I did so by analysing the texts I wrote about my encounters, by means of pinpointing the types of knowledge, skills and attitudes that appeared to be involved during my

conscious viewing of the artworks, labelling these behaviours with an overarching competence, and determining under which meta-competence they should resort.

Since I structured the findings into a table, it became possible to further analyse the contents of each meta-competence with regards to art appreciation. Besides contemplating the role each meta-competence plays separately, it also becomes possible to ponder and recognize relationships between them. The following subchapters will expound on these steps and the results that they have produced.

A general description of the process

What has become apparent after studying the results of my research, is that each encounter opens with an innate predisposition to orient oneself in a space and understand the stimuli that are to be found in the direct surroundings, and to gain understanding of the unknown entity that one is confronted with, which is the artwork. During this orientation, the artworks evoke sensations, conscious and subconscious, that prompt the viewer to ask questions, such as what is it that I am perceiving? What is its meaning? And how does the artwork affect me? Initially such questions are answered in a basic way. For instance, in the case of *Fever, Fever*, the viewing commenced with seeing a black and white video projection, in which I recognized certain visual elements to be ancient temples with stone figurines, and I acknowledged myself feeling intrigued. (see image 1) As the viewing and thus communication process progresses, the more specified and metaphorical the answers become. For example, towards the end of my viewing of *Fever, Fever* I interpreted the temples to refer to something abstract, namely as a symbol for antiquity. Finally, I read one overarching meaning into the artwork as supposed to interpreting the different elements in the artwork. From interpreting meaning in terms of literal representation, the interpretation advanced to a metaphorical signification. Within this process, there is a constant combination of sensing, feeling, thinking and interpreting, as well as a continuous exchange between the artwork and the viewer, as well as between the feelings and cognitions within the viewer. These different domains all shape and influence each other, and they became evident in all three case studies.

The meta-competences as individual components of the encounter

In the first chapter, a brief overview was provided concerning some of the general characteristics of each meta-competence with regards to professionals in organisations and business cultures. In this subtext, a similar overview will be given, though in this case the emphasis is directed towards the role of each capital with regards to art appreciation.

Psychological Capital: The experience of feelings and emotions within the beholder, an awareness of these affective responses, and reflecting upon them. The types of feelings are diverse. They may range from pleasure and happiness to sadness or annoyance, and from fascination to confusion, just to name a few examples of the diversity of affective responses towards art. As for the processing of information outside of the beholder, this capital is responsible for registering movements, without

adding any meaning to them. The driving force of this capital with regards to interpreting the meaning(s) of an artwork, is the attitude that it is possible to come to an interpretation, notwithstanding the extent of provided information.

Social Capital: Analysing and interpreting interactions between social agents and objects within an artwork in terms of their physical positions and relations to one another, as well as reading emotions and intentions into them. I would like to suggest that this component is linked to one's knowledge of human nature, and that it largely takes place on an intuitive level. A key component is the ability of the beholder to identify with or understand *others* - in the broadest sense of the word.

Cultural Capital: Interpreting an artwork's form in a basic manner by recognizing one to one referents such as signs and symbols that are agreed upon within a certain community, culture, or on a universal scale. Another important characteristic of this capital is the process of connecting words to sensations, feelings, and impressions, for without such a translation, the encounter with an artwork would be no more than a random experience.

Operational Capital: Approaching an artwork in a practical manner by assessing material and technical aspects of the artwork and its production.

Intellectual Capital: Reflecting upon the affective responses, interpreted referents, the context of the artwork, and one's prior knowledge, by means of connecting them to one another. Such a creation of relations between different components of the experience leads to a more elaborate and coherent interpretation and contemplation of meaning. Of significance in this component of art appreciation are the will to find meaning, and an openness to welcome in new ideas, insights and impressions.

Innovative Capital: Contemplating the meaning of the artwork on a level that surpasses the materiality, visual representation or other domains that are mainly connected to the artwork and agreed upon referents. Contemplation takes place on an abstract level, which means that the thoughts that are fabricated involve more elaborate phenomena and situations outside of the artwork. This can create a platform for the fantasy of the viewer to become active, but also makes way for a critical inquiry of a specific subject, or of one's current interpretation of the artwork. This type of abstract and critical thinking may in effect contribute to the creation of an overarching meaning of the artwork which has no existing referent. To put it differently, it may lead to the viewer's personal interpretation. Besides manifesting on an overarching scale of the artwork in its entirety, such a personal interpretation can also occur on a small scale concerning, for instance, certain parts of the artwork.

Meta-competences	Competences
Innovative Capital	Adaptability FF C MTD
	Abstract thinking FF C MTD
	Critical thinking FF C MTD
Intellectual Capital	Accessibility FF C MTD
	Analytic thinking FF C MTD
	Interest FF C MTD
	Reflective capacity C MTD
	Opinion formation MTD
Operational Capital	Practical thinking FF C MTD
Cultural Capital	Communication FF C MTD
	Iconological insight FF C MTD
Social Capital	Empathy FF C MTD
	External empathy C
	Objective social observation C MTD
	Social awareness FF
Psychological Capital	Autonomy FF C MTD
	Self-awareness FF C MTD
	Sensomotoric awareness _FF C

Table 4. Meta-Competence Profile of an Art Spectator. This table is a combination of all the competences that came to the light in the case studies. The stars behind each competence refer to the case studies in which they were observed. Green stands for the first one *Fever, Fever* (FF), blue is representative for the second case study *Contingent* (C), and a red star shows that the competence was present during the third one, the encounter with *Monument to the Dutch* (MTD).

As can be observed in table 4, each meta-competence was active during each of the three encounters. Some competences within the capitals even played a role in each viewing, albeit that the magnitude of their role differed per case study. There were also instances in which different competences within a capital were active. For example, the social capital contributed to my encounter with each of the three artworks. However, for *Fever Fever* I named the skill at hand *social awareness*, whereas for *Contingent* I noted the competence *objective social observation*. The difference lies in the fact that with *Fever, Fever* I made an in-depth observation and interpretation of the different characters in the artwork and the relations between them, leading me to name this type of viewing *social awareness*, whereas in *Contingent* the observations were not so much connected to interactions between characters. Rather it was a somewhat unbiased analysis of their doings, leading me to refer to this behaviour as *objective social observation*.

Another mentionable insight, is that the extent to which a meta-competence contributes to the beholder's experience, is partly related to the artwork. The social capital, for example, will play a considerably different role for a non-figurative artwork than for one that contains figurative elements. Also, when meeting *Monument to the Dutch*, the cultural capital played a considerably bigger role than during my interpretation of *Contingent*, by reason of the fact that there were far less stimuli to gain understanding of in *Contingent*.

Besides the fact that the characteristics of an artwork influence the way in which meta-competences contribute to the experience of viewing an artwork, it also depends on the viewer. For instance, from the case studies it becomes clear that the operational capital plays a minimal role in my encounters. However, another individual may be inclined to pay more attention to the material domains and techniques of an artwork, which would result in a more extensive activity of the operational capital, which then also effects the content of the information that is analysed by the intellectual capital. I am aware that material and technique are important components that influence how one experiences and interprets an artwork, and the case studies have therefore heightened my acknowledgement of the fact that I do not approach these aspects of art in a conscious manner, which prompts me to be aware of this insight during future encounters with art.

Since there were various competences noted to be present during each case study, I deem it to be interesting to briefly concentrate on them, because they may not only be present during each viewing, but perhaps also be *necessary* in order to engage in a meaningful dialogue with and understanding of contemporary art. It concerns the competences autonomy, self-awareness, empathy, iconological insight, communication, practical thinking, interest, analytic thinking, accessibility, adaptability, abstract thinking, and critical thinking. (see table 4) I am inclined to think that interest, accessibility, and autonomy are attitudes that are of crucial importance in order to transform a superficial glance at an artwork into an elaborate process of further looking. Further, in order to transcend a traditional art historical viewing to a creation of a personal interpretation of meaning, I argue that fundamental competences to facilitate such an encounter are self-awareness,

empathy, and analytic, abstract, and critical thinking.¹⁷ Since iconological insight and communication are responsible for processing basic referents and translating one's impressions into words, it seems plausible to advocate them as also being crucial components of the process of art appreciation. These are of course mere hypotheses, yet it would be interesting for further research to assess the inherent role of these behaviours in art appreciation.

The relation between the different meta-competences

The psychological, social, and cultural capital (the undercurrent) for the most part take place on a subconscious level, and are largely made up out of competences related to affects, intuition, and the processing of basic visual information. The operational, intellectual and innovative capital (the uppercurrent) mainly perform on a cognitive level, and make use of competences related to reasoning, thus also tapping into the conscious working space of the mind. What the case studies have shown, is that the undercurrent provides crucial experiential elements as well as building blocks with which the uppercurrent can work in order to gain a conscious and meaningful experience and understanding of the artwork. However, the process of art appreciation is not a one-way street in which the EQ feeds the IQ. The capitals all influence each other, which demonstrates that there is no linearity or hierarchy between the different capitals. They each have their own substantial contribution. Each capital takes on a different component of the encounter, and it is their collaboration that generates the experiential character of art appreciation and the production of meaning.

5.2 Connecting back to Performativity and Agency

Since this thesis partly originates from theories that suggest seeing art appreciation as a two-way traffic, in which the artwork is regarded to be an active entity that is capable of influencing its surroundings rather than being a passive container, and the viewer is also understood to be operative rather than a passive receiver, it is good to link my findings back to these theories, which, as addressed in chapter one, include the notions of Agency and Performativity. Also mentioned in that chapter, is Van Eck's argument to focus on art's agency in terms of the viewer's experience rather than the properties of the artwork self. I highly value and agree with the emphasis she lays on the viewer, however, bearing in mind that I understand art appreciation to be a process in the form of a communicative interaction between two active agents, and that one of the aims of this thesis is to make this process in its entirety explicit, I also deem it of interest to touch upon the performative features of artworks themselves.

¹⁷ What is meant by traditional art historical viewing, is the tendency of viewers to do no more than judge the quality of an artwork, identify what is on it, assess its relation to the art world, and purely thrive on prior-knowledge instead of incorporating one's own thoughts, feelings and other responses.

The performativity of the viewer

From the case studies, it becomes eminently evident that the viewer performs a wide variety of acts when partaking in art appreciation. Some of these operations befall in a conscious manner, while others take place subconsciously. On both of these levels, the beholder is constantly processing and assessing different types of information, in an effort to fathom the signification of an artwork and the experience that a piece evokes. Moreover, the viewer is in pursuit of *composing* meaning(s) herself in furtherance of comprehending an artwork.

The artwork's Agency

In pursuance to, by aid of the meta-competence model, reflect upon the role that artworks play in the process of art appreciation, it was firstly necessary to fathom the dynamics of the engagement from the perspective of the viewer. To put it differently, I only managed to concentrate on the domains of the artwork after having gained sufficient insight into the other components of art appreciation. Therefore, it is in this part of the thesis, that the agency of the artwork will be attended to more specifically.

The incentive for this approach stems from my belief that artworks can contain a variety of elements that provoke the beholder, which leads me to call such aspects of artworks performative. The combination of these stimuli with certain human predispositions and competences, are what make it that artworks exercise agency, and thus make it possible for art appreciation to be an elaborate experience. In the following part of this text, I have structured various of such performative characteristics of art, that I believe to be responsible for igniting responses in viewer's, into the six capitals of the meta-competence model.

Psychological Capital: Shapes, colours, movements, textures, patterns, sounds and other sensory stimuli trigger responses because they are so called aesthetic universals. While in most cases, people's responses towards the same stimulus would result in a large variety of different types of responses, there are also some sensory stimuli that cross-culturally evoke a similar reaction, and research shows that this happens by the cause of them triggering certain innate human characteristics that have developed during the evolution of mankind. It is these stimuli that are referred to as aesthetic universals. I interpret their capability of prompting specific responses to be a highly performative feature of such elements, and these aesthetic universals are often implemented in artworks.¹⁸

¹⁸ For some examples of aesthetic universals and scientific research that support their existence, see Dutton, Denis, 'Aesthetic Universals' in: Gaut, Berys, en Dominic McIver Lopes (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, NewYork: Routlegde, 2013, pp. 267-277; Thornhill, Randy, 'Darwinian Aesthetics Informs Traditional Aesthetics' in: Grammer, Karl en Eckart Voland (eds.) *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, Berlin: Springer, 2003, pp. 9-35; and Butter, Charles M., *Crossing Cultural Borders. Universals in Art and Their Biological Roots*, Kentucky: CreateSpace, 2012.

Social Capital: Shapes, colours, movements, textures, patterns, sounds and other sensory stimuli and their interaction with one another trigger responses because they are reminiscent of universal (social) behaviour types of humans and other sentient beings, such as certain facial expressions, body postures, and movements that are congruent with intentions or emotions and the way these are physically expressed. There is a set of basic emotions that each contain specific physical characteristics that are panhuman. For instance, anger, happiness, sadness and disgust go hand in hand with typical facial expressions, body postures and actions, and research shows that these emotions and the way they are physically expressed are universally executed and recognized in the same manner. Due to the part of the human brain that processes such emotional and social cues, people can interpret others in their surroundings, which is extremely beneficial for human lives. However, it appears to be the case that this system is so prompted to respond to those cues, that it also leads people to read emotions and social interactions into non-human and inanimate stimuli, even certain shapes or patterns. Thus, when a stimulus in an artwork shows a resemblance to a panhuman behaviour type, it initiates a response in the spectator. It is for this reason that I suggest to call such features performative.¹⁹

Cultural Capital: Shapes, colours, movements, textures, patterns, sounds and other sensory stimuli trigger responses because they are culturally determined signs or symbols. An example is the pattern of a rectangle with three horizontal coloured beams stacked on top of each other, the colours are red, white and blue. Since I come from the Netherlands, seeing this pattern in an artwork would catch my attention due to its resemblance to the Dutch national flag, thereafter initiating a dialogue. By cause of its symbolic nature, this pattern is capable of initiating and manifesting a wide variety of responses and occurrences, leading me to regard such features to be performative.

Operational Capital: Patterns, shapes, colours, movements, textures, sounds and other sensory stimuli trigger responses because they resonate with the viewer's knowledge of and interest for materials and production processes of art.

Intellectual Capital: Patterns, shapes, colours, movements, textures, sounds and other sensory stimuli trigger responses since they resemble personal memories of the viewer, resonate with general knowledge, and because the stimuli together have a balance in complexity. According to multiple studies, artworks that are too simple or complex have a decreased capacity to grasp the viewer compared to artworks that have balance between the two extremes. Since they contain enough variety of elements on the one hand, and a unity between them on the other hand, artworks that are endowed with this characteristic tend to capture the viewer's attention, evoke feelings of pleasure,

¹⁹ For information on this subject, see Cornelius, Randolph R., *The Science of Emotion. Research and Tradition in the Psychology of Emotion*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996, pp. 51; and Silvia, Paul J. 'Emotional Responses to Art: From Collation and Arousal to Cognition and Emotion' *Review of General Psychology* 9.4 (2005) pp. 342–357

as well as facilitate the interpretation process. For this reason, I see balance in complexity as a performative property.²⁰

Innovative Capital: Patterns, shapes, colours, movements, textures, sounds and other sensory stimuli trigger responses due to the fact that their combination forms a metaphor, and because there is a balance in quantity, meaning that, as a unity, there is neither a lack of nor an excess of information, which means that there is enough input for the viewer to work with, but also enough gaps, which trigger the viewer to employ her creativity and come to a personal interpretation.

Art Appreciation as interaction between two agents

After having addressed the role of the viewer in an encounter with an artwork, as well as assessing the contributions of the artwork itself, it becomes more clear how the two parties are agents that interact with one another. Firstly, it can now be concluded that parts of the engagement are the responsibility of the beholder, since she employs a variety of strategies in order to gain an understanding of her responses as well as the artwork, and herewith *chooses* to pay further attention to certain elements. On the other hand, artworks encompass properties that provoke the viewer to process them. It is as if these stimuli demand a response from the viewer, which leads her to pay attention to them, resulting these elements to manifest themselves outside of their material, descriptorial or representational self.

It is in this sense that both the artwork and the viewer are performative. Moreover, they depend on one another. For instance, the reason that the artwork is capable of initiating a conversation with the viewer, exerting agency and thus creating a reality outside of itself, is not only due to its inherent performative properties, but also largely by virtue of the viewer's meta-competences that process these stimuli. To put it differently, the process of art appreciation is a cumulation of the intermingling of both performative parties. In order to exemplify this, a part of my encounter with *Monument to the Dutch* will be discussed.

The little house that was part of the installation, contained many performative aspects and interacted with different capitals. The combination of the three religious books and the Islamic figurations in Delft blue style, underneath the roof of a typical Dutch house, form a unique combination of (intercultural) elements that one does not encounter in daily life. This combination of stimuli creates a response in the viewer, since she envisions and experiences something that is not actually present at the moment of encounter, namely a unity between those living in the Netherlands, and in extent the whole of humanity. I find this to be a strong example of the agency that an artwork can exercise. Due to the combination of various stimuli, I, the viewer, was triggered to process them in a togetherness, which in effect led my meta-competences to be activated, resulting in a personal creation of a metaphor, a metaphor that prompted me to experience something abstract and profound.

²⁰ For more detailed information on balance in complexity see Butter 2008, pp. 58-62

To further accentuate and illustrate that the research conducted in this thesis supports the idea that art appreciation encompasses similarities to an encounter with an animate being, the following passage will elaborate on this conception.

The interaction as conversation

When entering a social gathering, such as a party, one may find oneself standing beside or in front of somebody that they do not know. Either as a formality or out of interest, one person may begin to ask the other questions, usually commencing with queries in the line of “what brings you here?”, after which the conversation often transgresses into an inquiry of gaining an understanding of who the other is and what it is that they do in life. This is done by asking them questions, interpreting their answers and stories, as well as observing the communication partner’s non-verbal actions and responses. In this process, the other party also answers questions and tells stories. After having analysed the case studies, it becomes evident that during my visit to Global Imaginations a similar social mechanism occurred; When wandering into an exhibition space I repeatedly found myself beside or before a work of art, and, sometimes out of formality and other times due to being intrigued by an artwork, I posed the typical first questions “who are you?”, “what brings you here?” and “what do you do?” The artworks reply not by spoken word, but by communicating to the viewer’s senses and cognitive domains that are besides those linked to verbal language. In this respect, the gate way to receiving an artwork’s responses is actively perceiving. For instance, the longer and deeper one looks at the artwork’s appearance and the details it contains, the more information the piece can channel to the viewer. This further looking then leads the spectator to ask new questions, which in effect results in a growing familiarization with the artwork. During such inquiries concerning the artwork’s identity and intentions. in order to get to know it, the artwork does not only make comments and statements, but it also fires back questions at the viewer, which she then attempts to answer. An example from the case studies is when *Monument to the Dutch* requested me to reveal my opinion on the Dutch multicultural society, which then, after expressing my answer, led to a short dispute, as well as new insights. Similarly, I was prompted to reflect on the oil industry during my interaction with *Fever, Fever*. In kind, the longer the beholder engages in a mode of communication with the artwork, the better she gets to know her conversation partner, because as the dialogue progresses, its content becomes deeper and more specific. Further, since the viewer is constantly assessing and interpreting the behaviour and information that the artwork exerts, she is constructing a personal interpretation of who the artwork is, why it is there, and what it is doing. Here again a similarity with human interactions becomes apparent, for when conversing with a person one is also creating a personal interpretation of the meaning of the other’s responses and actions.

When engaging with another human being, people are constantly creating their own interpretations of the verbal and non-verbal expressions of their conversation partner. To rephrase this, if someone tells me a story, my mind and body will never receive and possess an exact copy of their message, that is, what they meant, felt, experienced and envisaged. Corresponding to the art

viewer, the listener also constructs her own story based on that what the other says and does. The goal in human communication is to come as close as possible to an understanding of what the other means, and this is possible, for there are instances in which the listener attempts to summarize and rephrase what their conversation partner has said by means of checking if they understood them properly. Sometimes in such a situation, the listener will have come very close to understanding the essence of what the other meant, leading the speaker to say “Yes! That is exactly what I mean!” This ‘coming close to the essence by creating a personal interpretation’ also happens in art appreciation. When trying to fathom the meaning of an artwork based on what is presented at that moment, the aim is to recreate it in one’s own mind and body in order to come as close to what the viewer *thinks* was intended, even though the knowledge is present that an exact copy of intended meaning will never be gained. That this exact copy is impossible is irrelevant, since, contrary to a human being, the artwork is not literally going to be affected by whether or not you gained the ‘right’ understanding of its purpose. Furthermore, as with people, some artworks are easier to talk to than others, and in addition, the click you have with something or someone also depends on how one’s own personality relates to the entity that one encounters.

Bearing in mind that the manner in which humans communicate with one another is extremely intricate, and therefore considered to be highly distinguished in comparison to modes of communication of other species, and the fact that art appreciation shares various key aspects with it, indicates the extent to which consciously encountering art is a convoluted activity.

Conclusion

Many people are under the impression that perceiving an artwork, for instance in a museum, consists of no more than a brief moment of looking at the artwork, deciding whether or not it appeals to their aesthetic taste, and in some instances a short assessment of its meaning based on their (art historical) knowledge is included, after which one proceeds to the next artwork. Some believe such a museum visit to solely take place on a rational level, others focus on whether or not an artwork made an affective impact on them, and within both of these common understandings of art appreciation, the artwork is often regarded as a passive container of referents that are absorbed by the beholder. For those who hold suchlike notions of art appreciation the idea that it may be an intricate, dynamic, embodied, interactive process rarely occurs. Especially pertaining to contemporary art this is an issue for many, leading them to dismiss it as being uninteresting and valueless.

Based on a combination of a personal conviction that art appreciation is a profound activity, the knowledge of theories on agency and performativity, and the hypothesis that art appreciation, especially of contemporary art, very likely involves the employment of a variety of valuable human competences and perhaps may even facilitate the development of certain abilities, I became prompted to assess these beliefs. Therefore, this thesis set out to make the process of encountering contemporary artworks explicit, and the result is that the aforementioned common ideas concerning art appreciation oversee or underestimate how elaborate looking at (contemporary) art actually is, or can be.

By virtue of attempting to answer the research question ‘which meta-competences does the viewer use for conscious art appreciation’ it has become apparent how many levels of the human psyche are involved in art appreciation. Though it may vary per artwork and per viewer to which extent they are active, each meta-competence appeared to be involved in all the case studies, as was shown in chapter 5.

Employing the meta-competence model facilitates a structuring of the encounter with an artwork, rather than it being a blurry concatenation of thoughts and feelings. Such an organization makes it possible to analyse the different components of the process as well as detect links between them, which in effect led to a demonstration of how truly intricate and elaborate consciously viewing art is. Moreover, it became apparent that art appreciation is an embodied as well as intellectual engagement. Sensorial, emotional and cognitive domains each are involved by encompassing and facilitating a vast variety of skills, knowledge and attitudes.

Also, by virtue of the meta-competence model, the beholder may gain a more substantial understanding of their own encounter, which in effect can result in a sharper understanding of the art work, since the model heightens one’s awareness of that what is seen, thought, and felt. In addition, the possibilities for talking about or contemplating one’s encounter become enhanced. Shortly put, practicing art appreciation through the lens of the meta-competence may lead to an enriched

experience and understanding of an artwork.

In an extension of this enriching capacity of the model, it provided insight into the personal strategies and preferences that I execute when meeting an artwork, which evoked an awareness of the fact that it is necessary for me to further develop my operational capital when engaging with an artwork. Thus, deliberating meta-competences may also aid other spectators besides myself to heighten their experiences with art, by showing them which meta-competences need to be further refined in order to undergo a more abundant encounter. For instance, by deliberately approaching an artwork from a certain capital, rather than analysing one's encounter after the viewing has already taken place. Additionally, if this reversed approach were executed for each capital, one will most likely gain even more access into the artwork.

In this respect, the meta-competence model also has the potential to aid people in viewing art who claim not to know how to do so. Often when people assume that they do not enjoy art appreciation, it is by reason of their belief of their lack of art historical knowledge or the fact that they do not find a piece to be aesthetically pleasing, leading them to become either confused or disinterested. The meta-competence model can function as a guide for the beholder to engage with an artwork, consequently helping them to overcome responses such as confusion and avoidance.

Due to this summary of aspects of the accomplishments and potentialities of the meta-competence model, I would like to argue that it is a beneficial and promising research tool for the field of art appreciation. It has provided starting points for further research on art appreciation as an interactive process, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the act of appreciating art, from different perspectives and disciplines. For, as noted in chapter 1, research in this area is still very rare and requires more attention. Examples of possible further research, would be other scholars conducting a self-investigation through the lens of the meta-competence similar to how I have done in this thesis. I solely approached the meta-competences that played a role in my initial encounter with the artworks in the exhibition space. However, often art appreciation is extended to an analysis after the initial viewing by searching for contextual information concerning the maker, making comparisons with other artworks and artists, just to name a few possibilities. This type of art appreciation will probably involve competences that I did not come across in this thesis, which thus calls for further research by aid of the meta-competence model. Then, the results can be assessed and compared with one another, which may largen the list of competences presented in table 4, and lead to further insights pertaining to how the capitals relate to each other. Furthermore, research may be executed to assess the differences and similarities for the appreciation of artworks from different artistic periods and styles, or distinctions between novices and art experts. Another approach for further research, is to gain deeper understanding of the workings of form, content, and function. I suggest that each of these dimensions of an artwork can be scrutinized by aid of the meta-competence model, similarly to how by virtue of the model, and my self-observation, the theories on

agency and performativity were illustrated in a more specific manner. Although in this thesis, all aspects and dimensions were touched in a general manner. Therefore, it would be insightful for other studies to delve in to the aspects separately, ultimately in order to increase and deepen current knowledge of the process of art appreciation in its entirety.

Fundamentally, the meta-competence model thus creates a new domain within which art historians, art theorists, as well as other types of scholars, can conduct a vast array of studies.

Besides deciphering what the process of consciously viewing art encompasses, and how the meta-competence model may be employed as a tool to do so, the aim of this thesis was also to assess what one can learn from art appreciation, more specifically, which meta-competences one can develop through art appreciation.

Forasmuch as this thesis shows the extent of which skills and abilities of a beholder play a role when consciously viewing contemporary artworks, I can now hypothesise that if one were to partake in the act of art appreciation, analogous to the manner in which I did so during my visit of the exhibition *Global Imaginations*, that the skills, attitudes and knowledges that I listed in the table 4 are likely to develop and strengthen, especially if it is executed with the awareness of the different meta-competences. I have, however, not been able to research this hypothesis in this thesis. Firstly, due to the fact that, since it is such an untouched subject, I could not find useful existing studies to bring into a dialogue with my findings from the case studies. Also, I believe profitable answers are more likely to be found by the aid of methods from disciplines other than art and cultural studies, such as perhaps developmental and cognitive psychologists, or neuro-scientists, for instance by testing the hypothesis on test persons. Such research is of great importance in this day in age where governments are scrapping art funds due to the so called shallow ‘amusement’ status of art, since it can prove that, besides being an amusing pass-time for those interested in art, art appreciation is also a suitable practice tool for developing oneself in other domains of life, which in effect may benefit aspects of one’s personal life as well as academically or career wise. The insights gained in this practice-based and art theoretical thesis may function as a platform on which other disciplines can base further studies pertaining to what one can learn from art appreciation, since the case studies and their comparison leads a variety of aspects to surface that are likely to be developed through art appreciation:

Firstly, it became apparent how extensively the uppercurrent of the meta-competence is involved during my encounters, in the sense that different levels of ‘thinking’ occurred, including high cognitive functions such as analytical thinking, recognizing patterns in data, connecting information, critical thinking, and abstract thinking. These are all competences that are widely valued in areas of life outside of the world of art.

Another pertinent element from the case studies is self-awareness. Since it entails paying attention to one’s feelings, emotions, and preferences, the development of this competence will

probably benefit one's psychological well-being. Also communication skills may be further cultivated, since for art appreciation it is of importance to translate impressions into words.

These mentioned competences, as well as other aspects listed in table 4, are not fully established in each individual, yet they are highly important for an individual's success in life, on a personal level as well as on the labour market. In this regard, I envisage, for instance, art appreciation to be a good practice for those whose job is to observe and interpret people, such as psychologists. Also, it may be a tool to help people who have a relatively low sense of self-awareness, a difficulty to verbalise their experiences, or lesser observational and contemplational skills, to flourish these competences by the aid of art appreciation. With regards to this potentiality of art appreciation in combination with the meta-competence model, their combination also lends itself for teaching children these crucial competences in school, or veritabily any person who wants to enhance themselves. Besides the benefits that individuals may enjoy from art appreciation, the development of certain meta-competences, can also benefit society.

In my opinion, it is extremely plausible that these divergent competences can indeed be trained through art appreciation. Especially when bearing in mind that many of the competences pertain to tacit knowledge, and that tacit knowledge is learned through experience. Future research will have to determine in how far these assumptions are indeed true.

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Image Sources

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Image 1 - 3: Darila van der Linden

Graph 1: Darila van der Linden (a self-created copy of Van de Waal's model)

Graph 2: Frits Meijering