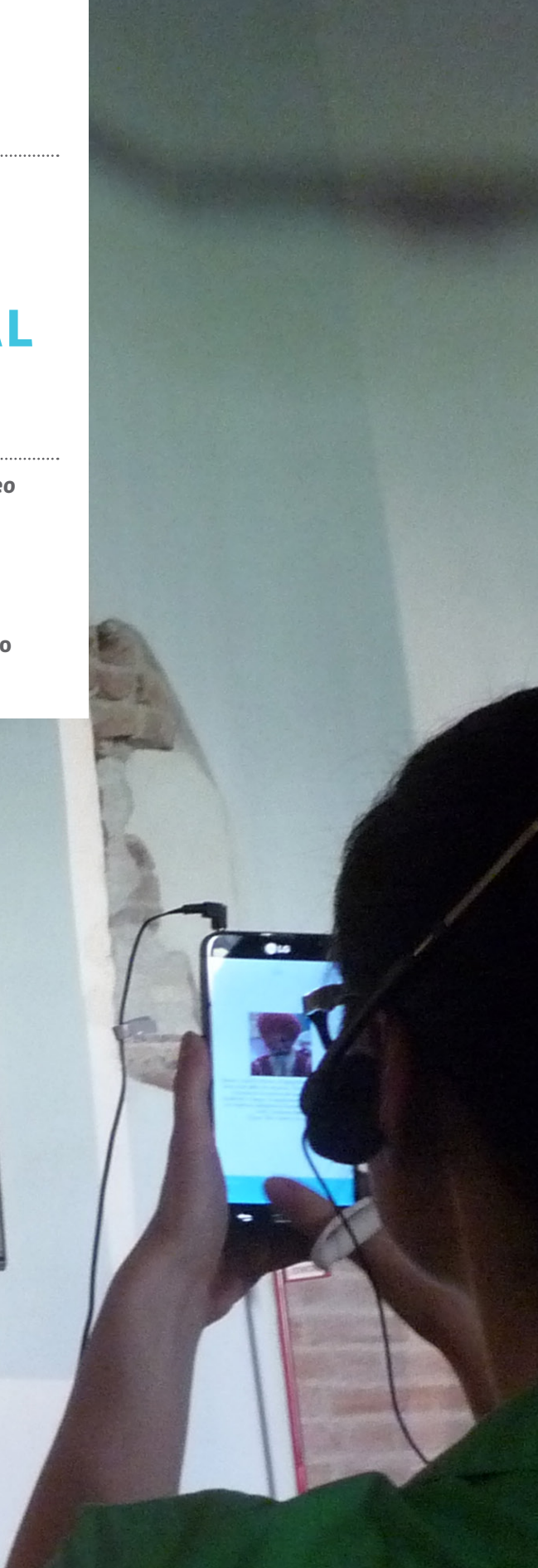
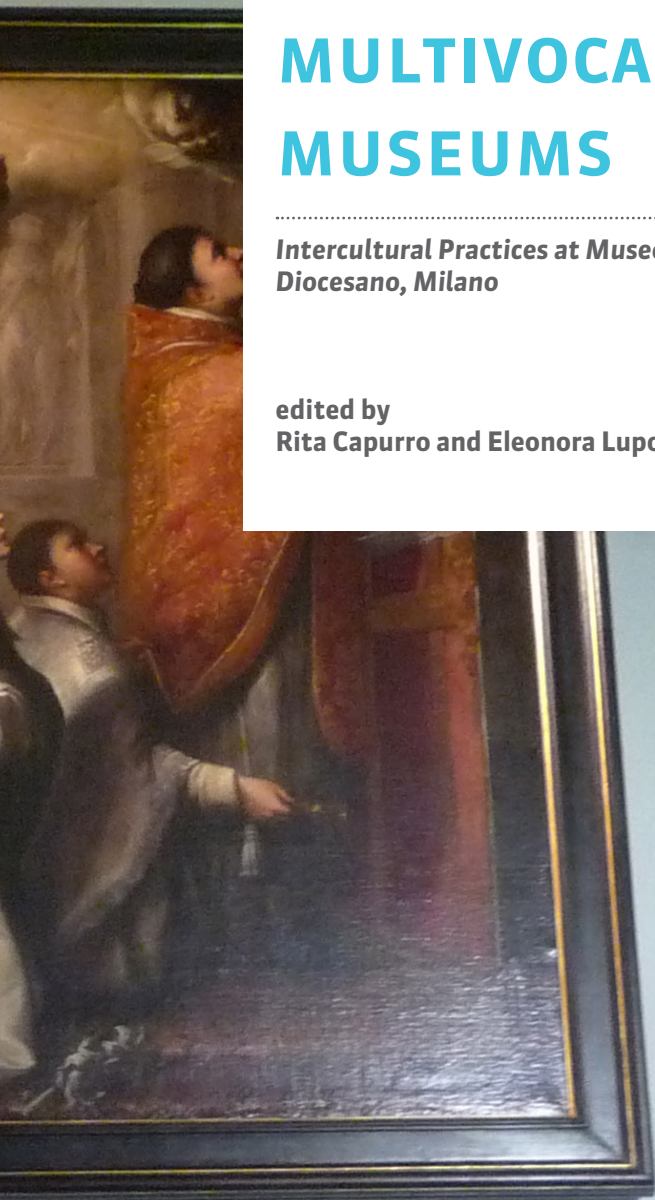


MELA*Books

DESIGNING MULTIVOCAL MUSEUMS

*Intercultural Practices at Museo
Diocesano, Milano*

edited by
Rita Capurro and Eleonora Lupo



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME

Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

*Designing Multivocal Museums:
Intercultural Practices at Museo Diocesano, Milano*

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MELA BOOK 12 – DESIGNING MULTIVOCAL MUSEUMS INTERCULTURAL PRACTICES AT MUSEO DIOCESANO, MILANO.

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MeLa is a four-year interdisciplinary research project funded in 2011 by the European Commission under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities Programme (Seventh Framework Programme). The main objective of the MeLa project is to define innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges of the contemporary processes of globalisation, mobility and migration.

This book is meant to report the findings of the experimental action promoted at Museo Diocesano di Milano by the research team at Design department of Politecnico di Milano in collaboration with the ITIA Department of the Italian National Research Council. The experimental action was intended to test the potentialities of digital and mobile technologies in supporting the disclosure of multicultural perspective on religious asset.

The editors would like to thank the staff of Museo Diocesano, in particular Paolo Biscottini, Nadia Righi, Maria Elena Colombo and Cinzia Picozzi, but above all, the invited scholars and researchers expert in religion, cultural mediation and museum interpretation, involved as “super-users” in the co-design process. We are profoundly grateful to: Alessandra Azimonti, Simona Bodo, Anna Chiara Cimoli, Andrea Dall’Asta SJ, Lucie Decker, Lara Fornasini, Rosana Gornati, Daniela Granaci, Goksu Kacaroglu, Dudu Kouate, Corina Macnovit, Silvia Mascheroni, Maria Grazia Panigada, Lucia Parrino, Roberta Passerini, Simone Pedrini, don Ambrogio Pisoni, Andrea Posnar, Golboo Pour Abdollahian Tehran, Sara Radice, Danial Ramin, Paola Rampoldi, Claudia Redaelli, Mons. Giancarlo Santi, Alexandra Sojic, Alessandra Spagnoli, Bogdan Stojanovic, Marco Torcolacci, Fatoumata Traoré, Maria Tsurkan, Kerolos Youssef.



Design Envisioning for Museums: the experience at Museo Diocesano

→ ELEONORA LUPO, RAFFAELLA TROCCHIANESI

→ METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

For several years now the museum has been changing: from a place that preserves cultural assets to a dynamic place where people can interact with content and dialogue with each other. This shifting vocation of the museum should be particularly explored in institutions such as those focused on historical memory, cultural traditions, and religious belief. In the age of migration it is imperative that the content of these institutions be communicated in a multi-directional and multi-vocal way in order to improve an inter-cultural experience. Through a design driven approach, it is possible to elaborate some possible scenarios and models that could envision new ways of museum visitation and engagement, thanks to an interactive and participatory methodology.

In this context, the goal would be to represent the collection through several interpretative keys, and above all to include in the exhibit multiple pathways and interaction points that allow just as many moments for dialogue.

A multi-vocal fruition can be created both through analogical tools (integrated in the exhibit space or “overlapped” thanks to a temporary added system) and through new technologies (also integrated in the exhibit space, or via mobile technology and the web). In this sense the visitor experience pre-visit, during the visit, and post-visit are all equally important. In the pre-visit phase one can focus on some topics the museum wants to aim for and around which it wants to activate dialogue and debate. During the visit one can focus on interactive touch points that facilitate the visitor’s participation and organizes content. In the post-visit

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG.01—
“Italian Limes” by Folder,
Venice Biennial 2014. Photo
by Eleonora Lupo.

one can focus on the continuation of the visitor relationship, furthering dialogue out of the museum.

The experiment presented in this book is one of the activities included in MeLa Project's research. MeLa Project is a four-year research project funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme. Its main objective is to define innovative museum practices that address the challenges of the contemporary processes of globalization, mobility, and migration. As people, objects, knowledge, and information move at increasingly higher rates, a greater awareness of an inclusive approach is needed to facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion (Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012).

Among the other project partners, the Design department has the task to develop experimental design proposals for museum exhibitions, in particular those connected with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) role in museums. The aim of this cross-disciplinary research is to develop possible scenarios that can be translated into the production of various experimental exhibition designs as test verification of the theoretical investigations (Capurro et al. 2013).

In the "age of migration" scenario, novel practices that continuously re-discuss, re-create and re-negotiate intercultural heritage need to be designed and enabled, in order to face the varied expectations from people with different cultural values. In this frame, digital technologies are tools both for increasing the opportunity for different cultures to connect and for deconstructing the mediated experience of heritage, allowing the users to play a more active rather than passive role (via their participation and co-creation of content). Both these factors impact the nature of heritage itself, whose meaning is always more related to practice and appropriation, than to a tangible form, with the result of assuming as heritage the diverse cultural representations of people.

In this intersection of cultural frictions, evolving heritage, and touch-screen devices, we used a design discourse to explore the combination of technological tools and multi-vocal content to enable diverse dynamics of cultural representation. The resulting aim of this work is to create multicultural narratives, foster intercultural dialogue and stimulate transcultural practices.

Various issues have been explored and questioned with the aim of improving, through design strategies and digital technologies, the models of valorisation of heritage. This models range from a conservative musealisation to more active reproduction and re-negotiation practices aimed at enabling open dynamics of representation of culture, and promoting multiple and plural representations, rather than monolithic perspectives.

The design team focused on an agenda including research tracks such as:

- Narrative frameworks and performative processes in the design of intercultural practices and experiences in museums;
- The role of museums and cultural institutions in addressing ethnic diversity in (multi)ethnic neighbourhoods;

- Audience engagement and visitors' participation through digital technology as a means to foster intercultural experiences;
- Mechanics and models of interaction enabled by digital and mobile technologies, as well as by design strategies;
- Forms and types of the “heritage/museum continuum”: from tangible to intangible collections, open archives, outreach museums, etc.

This provided the general research framework in which the experimental action was conceived and developed, with a specific focus on some of the aforementioned issues. The experimental action is grounded principally on the theoretical reflection about the opportunities of intercultural exchange among people and between people and content within a museum context.

The Museo Diocesano di Milano was a suitable context for the experimental action mainly for two reasons. First, the museum is rich in various and interesting works of art that do not clearly express their content and thus could benefit from museological and interpretive strategies (especially for a general audience). Second, the religious topics in these works include archetypes and symbols that could become interesting subjects of discussion and interpretation.

“The Museo Diocesano [is] an appropriate setting for religious narratives portraying religion as a controversial component of culture, stimulating debate and fostering equality and dialogue among diverse communities” (Capurro 2014, 27).

We envisioned three possible approaches through which museums and cultural institutions could invite—and in fact are already inviting—audiences to deal with cultural diversity (Lupo et al. 2013):

- **Multicultural storytelling.** This approach conceives and represents different cultures alongside one another but separately.
- **Intercultural dialogue.** This approach identifies and highlights the interconnections between cultures while representing them. It represents dialogue and hybridisation among cultures, but the audience is not asked to name his/her identity or cultural background. In this respect, the term ‘intercultural’ is used here differently from how it is used in heritage education in an intercultural perspective described above (Bodo and Mascheroni 2012).
- **Transcultural practice.** This approach allows and encourages further readings enabled by the ‘practice’ of cultural diversity. The practice of ‘passing through’ cultures is stressed: the audience is called to identify with other cultures.

These three approaches are recognisable in four models¹ used within museums to create representation and experience of cultural diversity. From

¹ The information related to these four models is extracted from: Eleonora Lupo, Lucia Parrino, Sara Radice, Davide Spallazzo and Raffaella Trocchianesi. 2014. “Migrations and multiculturalism: a design approach for cultural institutions.” in *Migrating Heritage. Experiences of Cultural networks and Cultural Dialogue in Europe*, edited by Perla Innocenti, 65-77. London: Ashgate.

the following four models one can also recognise and derive some significant features of the development of the experimental action.

1-The Amplified Heritage Model

The first model encompasses all those experiences in which the cultural institution and its collections are augmented and amplified through digital technologies. Multimedia booths and digital and interactive devices amplify the relationship between visitors and cultural content, allowing a diversified and customised access for the visitor. The experience is extended in terms of time (pre- and post-visit) and place (on-site and online).

This model does not automatically imply a confrontation between cultures, but the visitor experience is enhanced. In this model the design dimensions are characterised by different levels of enhancement. Examples of such enhancements include: the use of mixed languages and media narrative settings, and spatial re-organization, in which ICT amplifies the physical environment, creating immersive (simulated or virtual) spaces and connecting cultural assets with their place of origin. Some design elements can therefore address the key issue of 'situativity' - creating localisation, delocalisation and re-localisation in terms of bodily interactions.

In the MeLa-Museo Diocesano experimental action one can recognise part of this model because the content is augmented via the use of new technologies (in particular the use of mobile phones) in order to amplify the space of representation of the works of art and the interpretation of meaning.

2-The Multifaceted Heritage Model

The second model encompasses experiences in which digital technologies are able to offer a plural and multifaceted view of heritage. Using digital technologies, such as interactive screens or displays, the users can choose a specifically designed point of view, and compare different viewpoints alongside one another, or even add their personal one. In terms of cultural dynamics, this confrontation can allow for both the recognition of cultural contact points and frictions. In so doing, it can stimulate discussion on heritage, its renegotiation and, eventually, its transformation. In this scenario, the dynamic of auto-/hetero-representation becomes relevant: who represents who and for whom? The topic of authorship is also relevant because it raises the issue of individual or collective curatorship of content, which in turn impacts the diversity of points of view available to the visitor. In this model, cultural content is characterised by a 'plurality of layered meanings', that can be represented by creating parallels and juxtapositions or highlighting dissonances or similarities.

In the MeLa-Museo Diocesano experimental action the visitor can intervene in the various layers and levels of content via new technologies and in the process creates interesting intercultural paths.

3-The Connective Heritage Model

The third model, called ‘connective’, refers to those cases in which digital technologies are employed as enablers of social relations. This model can incorporate the methods of the multifaceted model examined above but it goes a step further, towards the building of new social ties (connections between people and cultures) around a common heritage. These ties enrich and amplify the experience of heritage thanks to a continuous and bidirectional interaction. The model is characterised by the presence of digital devices, systems, or applications that allow social and collaborative processes and exchange, acting as enablers of social engagement in both direct and indirect ways. Through systems of social relations people’s awareness and knowledge of heritage increases, and the value of cultural assets is in turn increased by the recognition of these visitors’ backgrounds.

Sociality and space—the most relevant design dimensions of this model—are characterised by forms of relations that allow specific people and cultures to connect in a particular spatial setting and context. Exchange, participation, and collaboration are therefore the key elements to be addressed in terms of design in order to create these interactions between visitors.





This model has been a reference in the MeLa-Museo Diocesano project because one of the crucial components of the project has been the intercultural dialogue mediated through new technologies. For example, the visitor can discover connections of meanings and activate connections with people (of different religious belief) starting from an object of the museum collection.

4-The Performing Heritage Model

The last model encompasses those experiences in which heritage can be interculturally performed, allowing visitors to literally practise or act another culture in a controlled context. In this model the cultural content is activated not by digital interactions (e.g. a touch screen), but by actions similar to or coherent with those that normally make the culture alive in its original contexts, such as particular dances, rituals, or gestures. This model is particularly suitable for dealing with intangible heritage, experienced by the user in the first person, playing and performing cultural practices, alone or in a shared situation. The culture of the ‘other’ is not therefore represented, described, or testified, but practised, thus affording a deeper comprehension.

This model is not yet present in the MeLa-Museo Diocesano experimental action both because the resources of the MeLa project do not allow for this kind of development, and because the performance script requires additional elements and cohesion between the content, staging, and the technology included. One of the goals of the project is to finalise this script so that it would be available for visitor participation.

IMG. 02 — How the models of heritage experience can foster the understanding of cultural diversity.

EXPERIENCE MODEL	APPROACHES TOWARDS CULTURAL DIVERSITY		
	Multicultural Storytelling (representing cultures alongside)	Intercultural Dialogue (highlighting interconnections among cultures)	Transcultural Practice (identifying with other cultures)
Amplified Heritage  <p>A confrontation between cultures is not automatically implied, but the visitor experience is enhanced</p>	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Multifaceted Heritage  <p>Plurality of layered meanings creating parallels and juxtapositions or highlighting dissonances or similarities</p>	✓✓✓	✓✓✓ Stimulating the reflection on contact points or frictions	✓✓✓
Connective Heritage 	✓✓✓	✓✓✓ Enabling social relations, exchange, participation, and collaboration among visitors	✓✓✓
Performative Heritage 	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓ Activating other cultures contents with culturally consistent gestures and actions

→ EXPERIMENTAL ACTION: FRAMEWORK, PROCESS AND PHASES²

The methodology adopted is based on a close collaboration between design and the human sciences; in particular between designers that deal with the valorisation of cultural heritage and critics specialising in sacred cultural assets.

The work was developed in an iterative “research-by-design” process, going back and forth between theory and practice in a progression of design, testing, and reflection, and involving several actors at different phases of the project.

This research has been structured in two categories of activities: research actions and field-based experimental actions. The research actions define a theoretical framework for the project, combining design potential with artistic and religious content, and choosing languages and communication registers (also through new technologies) in order to allow the multi/inter/transcultural experience and to evaluate the test sessions. The field-based experiments aim to gather information through the participation of expert users. They also aim to verify the theoretical requirements of the practical process and to create a circle of content acquisition, content exchange, and content generation.

Such a framework was created in order to define a process that could be tested by real users in a real context, and to verify the hypotheses through an empirical methodology, able to be repeated in the future. Thus, this

² The contents of this paragraph and of the following one have been debated also in the essay: Capurro, Rita, Sara Chiesa, Eleonora Lupo, Davide Spallazzo, and Raffaella Trocchianesi. 2014. “Rethinking religion representation as transcultural experience in museums: the on-field experimental action at Museo Diocesano di Milano”. In *Museum Multiplicities: Field Actions and research by Design*, edited by Luca Basso Peressut, Cristina Colombo, and Gennaro Postiglione, 66-93. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

model could be applied to different contexts, but also customised according to the specific features of the cultural asset(s) involved. This process presents two different directions of work:

- a museological approach focused on the relationship between works of art and the knowledge of the works' content;
- a museographical approach focused on the relationship between exhibition devices and the visitor.

Six main phases defined the general structure of the project:

Phase 1. Institutional interpretation (research)

The first phase consisted of defining the curatorial framework of the project and in the preparation of the first user test. In this phase the collaboration among designers, art critics and museum curators is very important because it establishes the basis of the whole theoretical process aimed at developing an actual visitor experience for augmented and intercultural knowledge.

Phase 2. Authoritative and multicultural contents gathering (first test)

The second phase was focused on the set up of a prototype to conduct a test with experts and specialists in the field of intercultural dialogue, religion, art history and interpretation. It is important that the experts themselves come from different cultural backgrounds, as the aim of the test is to get feedback about the prototype, and to gather content as well as interpretation on the part of experts.

Phase 3. Data analysis and content selection (research/reflections)

The third phase was comprised of the evaluation of the prototype in light of the expert users' feedback, and the selection and re-arrangement of these contributions in order to create a multi-vocal interpretation of the artworks.

The following phases are an iteration of the previous ones:

Phase 4. Design of a multi-vocal interpretation/narration (research/envisioning)

In this phase the content created in the first phase was discussed and implemented on the basis of the expert user-generated feedback (phase 2). At this point the role of museum curators is highly relevant in order to build up a coherent multifaceted interpretation of the artworks. A model of interpretation and intervention was then developed and elaborated, specifically through the use of new technologies. In this phase, the theoretical framework, the structure of the content and the register and method for visitor engagement are brought together.

Phase 5. Performance and social-oriented intercultural experience (second test)

The fifth phase was based on a second field-based experimental action involving non-expert users (e.g. second generation immigrants and foreign

IMG. 03 — How the activities of research and experimentations are mixed and actors are involved during the phases of the project.

PHASE	ACTIVITY		ACTORS
	Research & envisioning	On field- experimentation	
1. Institutional interpretation & design	Defining the curatorial structure of the project (contents curation, narration) 1st prototype design (video narration, questionnaire)		Museum curators Design team
2. test#1 (experts)		Authoritative and multicultural contents gathering for multivocal interpretation	Expert users Design team
3. Data analysis and content selection	Evaluation of the prototype and selection of expert users consistent contents		Design team
4. Multivocal interpretation design	Envisioning multivocal contents and narration 2nd prototype design (app)		Design team Museum curators
5. test#2 (general public)		Performing a social oriented intercultural experience	Intercultural public Design team
6. Critical evaluation and implementation	Evaluation of interreligious mutual understanding and envisioning new development and applications		Design team

communities residing in Milan). The second test was meant to evaluate the ability of the designed interpretive model to encourage intercultural dialogue and direct social engagement. This activity entailed an actual involvement of the users that were then also asked to express feedback including comments, opinions, frictions and so on.

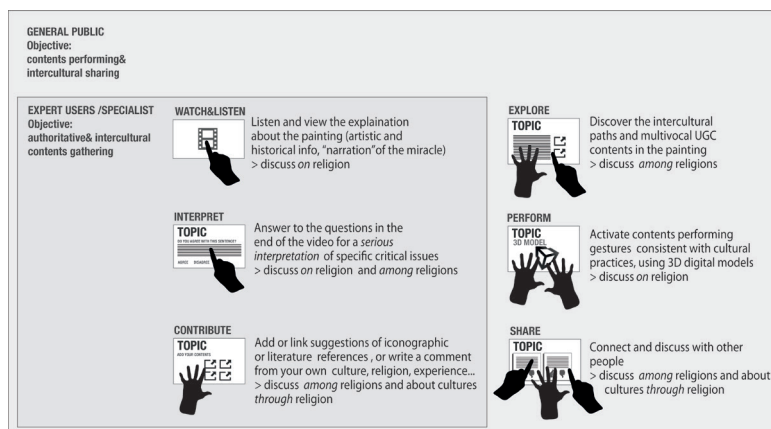
Phase 6. Data analysis and envisioning (research/envisioning)

The last phase comprised a critical evaluation of the project in light of the second user test. The evaluation aimed at determining if the proposed model was successful in actually stimulating and enhancing intercultural dialogue and confrontation.

The two tests were very important phases of this co-curation process. They were conducted, conceptualised, and tailored for different visitor targets, such that expert users and the general audience were provided with different appropriate visitor paths.

Both the specialist and non-specialist paths mixed some of the six dynamics of interaction envisioned in the general framework; these interaction dynamics included: contemplative, interpretative, contributive, explorative, performative and connective.

Contemplative: in this modality visitors were invited to look closely at one of the five paintings showing different aspects of the miracle in the Sala della Confraternita. A digital tablet was given to them and then this device was pointed at the painting in order to reproduce the image on the screen, triggering a video. Visitors would then watch the video on the tablet highlighting specific elements of the painting useful in understanding the composition, the symbolic meaning of the objects, the gestures, and the sacral clothing and accessories. The idea of this intervention was to increase the viewing experience through digital technologies, amplifying and enriching temporal and spatial horizons of vision, and also to show some of the less obvious links among the works.



IMG. 04 — Interaction dynamics and users.

Interpretative: at the end of the video-narrative a questionnaire appeared on the device, encouraging visitors to relate information they had received through the aforementioned video, together with their own previous knowledge. The questionnaire proposed some topics about the subject of the painting, but also about crucial topics emerging from the painting. Technology itself acted as a facilitator, providing the user with different interpretations of the subject and stimulating critical reflection.

Contributive: visitors could add a personal contribution directly to the tablet's folders (i.e. a literary, historical, philosophical or artistic reference; links to other topics or objects and their meanings; or an imaginative representation of their religious view or expression of their culture). This kind of dynamic contribution involved the direct participation of the user to provide a personal interpretation of the work. Further, the visiting experience thus embraced the visitor's previous knowledge, cultural references or relevant quotations. In this way, a sort of 'basket of religious references' is enriched by the contribution-to-contribution approach—thereby enhancing future visits.

Explorative: visitors explored intersecting paths and intercultural meanings through the use of technological devices and/or the intervention of cultural mediators. Each painting offered visitors several levels of reading and interpretation. In addition, they could discover several links between sacred objects represented in the featured paintings, as well as in other works within the museum collection, or works in collections from around the region. This intervention creates a model of cultural experience consisting of a visit in situ and also featuring external references, beyond the museum site.

Performative: one of the aims of the project was to introduce performative (or gestural) action through digital technologies. The general user (non-specialist path) should be able to activate some content on the tablet with gestures and actions consistent with numerous cultural practices, avoiding standard interactions with the technological tools and stereo-

types of interaction (i.e. touch, click, move and drag). This methodology then aims to create the memory of the visit through a memory of the body. The theme of the featured paintings has a strong ritual content; therefore the introduction of the gesture in the visit is coherent with the framework of the expected cultural experience.

Connective: digital technologies connecting people to cultural heritage should act as a facilitator for social relations. Community-building processes should be fostered as a result of direct social involvement, or through a consistent presence of technology, allowing a better knowledge of other cultures. The museum should have this aim: to increase intercultural dialogue through a transcultural practice. In this way this “connective” dialogue can continue beyond the museum visit and outside the museum walls, implementing intercultural knowledge through works of art.

As a result of this research, the visitor experience was conceived as a mix of different possible activities corresponding to the six interaction dynamics mentioned above. Also it is important to note here that these activities were not meant to be performed in a chronological order or necessarily all together. While for the experts we hypothesized a path composed mainly of listening/watching/interpreting/contributing, for the public the path was composed mainly of listening/exploring/performing/sharing. As described later, not all of these activities were fully developed in the design development phase.

→ EXPERIMENTAL ACTION: CRITICAL ASPECTS

The research-by-design approach adopted by the design team, the four models of visitor experience and the six dynamics of interaction needed to be tested in practice. Therefore the experimental action was planned in order to test some of the design assumptions and directions. In particular the experimental action was meant to investigate the possibilities provided by technologies for the following: (1) enriching and amplifying the cultural contents of a heritage experience (i.e. the augmented heritage/museum model), (2) offering a multi-vocal perspective to create a multicultural experience related to contentious issues (multifaceted heritage model), (3) transforming the visitor experience from a contemplative to an interactive one, possibly activating social relations (connective heritage model), as well as gestures, actions and behaviours to explore the institution’s content (performing heritage model).

This experimental action is meant to balance the double nature of the research-by-design process: a process composed of “meta-design” (Deserti 2003; Collina 2005; Celaschi 2007; De Moraes 2010), an activity that is theory and research driven, characterized by problem setting, modeling and envisioning, and complemented by a design activity, practice led, focused on concept generation, prototyping, testing and evaluation and possibly further development. The research-by-design process is described in Chapter 4 of this book.

While the meta-design is usually open to different possibilities, the design phase is context-based and site/problem specific. Because of this, some aspects of the design needed to be defined before commencing with the operative structure of the experimental action.

1. First, the selection of a relevant topic as cultural content of the experience became a priority. It was important that the chosen topic was suitable to be explored in a meaningful multicultural dimension, not avoiding dissonant or controversial issues. After exploring various possibilities (art museums, material culture, and local museums) a religious museum was chosen. Religious heritage has been considered a stimulating cultural content to challenge the visitors understanding, to empower the sense of belonging or detachment of identities, and most importantly, to stimulate debate and dialogue exploring the intercultural potential of religion. The topic of religious heritage and its implication in the museographical discourse in supporting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding is framed in Chapter 2 of this book. In particular, here we want to underline how the experimental action had the aim of reclaiming the original function of religious art in a contemporary multicultural and multi-religious society. For this reason the content of the experimental action is not just religion, but religious heritage, that is the result of a process of “heritagization of the sacred” (Meyer and De Vitte 2013, 277). While some religious topics (like dogmas) seem sometimes too far from daily life, others (like beliefs and rituals) very often represent contested terrains where religious identities (and the related cultural identities in the background) are questioned or undermined. Museum exhibitions and educational activities, as well as artists are exploring and interrogating such contentious issues.

In the Museo Diocesano di Milano, five paintings from the eighteenth century, of the so-called “Sala della Confraternita del SS. Sacramento e S. Caterina”, representing various miracles about the Eucharist, were chosen because of the exclusively Christian topics they address (miracles and the Eucharist) and because their figurative, as well as iconographic language can be difficult to understand, not only for non-Christian or non-Catholic people, but also for contemporary Italians with a religious background. Because of this interpretive challenge associated with the paintings, they have become associated with a much wider range of themes belonging to the everyday cultural sphere: pilgrimage, disease, faith, pain, safety, intercession, etc. To make it easier for the public to access, the content presented has been divided in the final prototype into groupings of artistic and historical info, and based on the elements represented in the painting (divided into characters, gestures and objects). With each of these groupings possible related intercultural issues and links to other works of art of the museum are also presented alongside the primary material.

It is necessary here to underline that the curators as well as the director of Museo Diocesano could not be directly involved in the design activities, but were available to act as dialoguing partners in the evaluation of the project and its results. The process of the curation of the project is reported in Chapter 3 of this book.

2. The second aspect considered in developing the project was how best to exploit the visitor experience as a real occasion for active engagement in a multi-cultural environment, that goes beyond mere entertainment. This engagement was therefore conceived as an interactive participation and contribution, ideally distributed throughout the entire design and implementation process. Many dynamics of interaction mediated by technologies (listen & watch, explore, contribute, share...) have been envisioned in order to strengthen the project's content and increase the potential multi-vocality of the interpretation. This multi-vocality is aided by including user generated content (UGC) and by continually adding to this content, allowing the visitors' contributions to interact with each other in a discursive and dialogic exhibition design strategy, in a seemingly endless multi-layering process intertwining museological and museographical aspects.

Operatively, this work led to two different co-design phases (called tests), in which users of different experience levels (experts and generic public) and backgrounds (religious) have been involved both for testing and evaluating the content curated by the researchers (a video-narration and, in the next stage of development, an app) and for providing relevant cultural references—according to their perspective and cultural and religious background—associated to the content narration and architecture designed by the research team. The two tests are described in detail in Chapter 4 of this book, which further describes both the added value of involving the users in a research-by-design project and also the difficulties and risks involved, including the danger of over-simplification and the potential to offend and disrespect.

The activation of a user engagement strategy, such as this one involving a highly open and multi-vocal co-curatorial design process raises many critical dimensions. Historical and artistic knowledge are aesthetic, intuitive, and subjective (Huizinga 1971), and due to this subjectivity, the interaction dynamics may vary depending on the target. If the experience is intended for use by experts (scholars in museum studies, experts of religious issues), it should assist the process of interpretation. If it addresses the general public it should offer a consistent and comprehensible representations for educational purposes. The first test was dedicated to experts and was used to gather and structure the multicultural content through a formal questionnaire, following the initial video-narration (contemplative, interpretative and contributive interaction). The second test (for the general public) was conceived as a means to experiment with performative and socially-oriented intercultural experiences, and to capture visitors' interests, empathy and imagination (Schell 2003). The app and the content architecture have been designed to show cohesion and coherence between institutional knowledge and relevant user generated multi-cultural content. It also provides a narrative-based multi-sensorial and expanded experience, enabling the three-tiered interaction model of Pares and Pares (2001): explorative (content navigation), manipulative (gestures required for the content's activation, like pointing at the paintings or at specific details) and contributive interaction (user comments and reference additions).

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- Concerning content authorship and authoritativeness, comments and contributions can vary drastically depending on the competence of who is curating, or rather “producing” new content: this asks for a careful consideration whether these new contents can be considered relevant or not. Crucial factors in this work are the creation of trust in UGC, and also dealing with negative feedback and managing Intellectual Property Right (IPR). Authoritativeness can be developed by avoiding “random voices from an undifferentiated mass of users” and instead selecting well-profiled users. Another method is to clearly differentiate content, via labelling or by a moderation model, thus delineating the museum-authored content from the UGC. Therefore in the co-curation process and in the two tests of the experimental action we deliberately searched out the UGC of a group of experts in the field (called super-users). Further, in the final content architecture of the mobile application the UGC can be clearly distinguished from the museum authored content. Comments and content produced by the super-users during the test phase of the project are included in the curation process illustrated in Chapter 3, while the questions raised around shared authorship are analysed in Chapter 4. Of course more open models of end-user collaboration and co-creation are already used in the digital environment and a similar approach has been tested in the second field test, but with a controlled panel of museum visitors. Hopefully in a further stage of development of this experimental action, we will be able to manage and design for the participation of the general public in real time.
 - It has been challenging, during the two tests, to stimulate and enable visitors confrontation and intercultural exchange in real time during the visit by the use of the technologies and devices. Digital and mobile technologies provide variable opportunities for interactivity, but not necessarily for social interaction, co-participation and collaboration, because they are mostly concerned with providing individual users with the ability to operate or manipulate the cultural content (Heath and Von Lehn 2003). To activate a real connective dynamic among visitors requires a shift from content juxtaposition to dialogue, through the establishment of social relations. But while the adoption of a discursive interpretation strategy (Affleck 2008) is possible through the use of digital devices supporting a dialogic process (Kester 2004; Kuo Wei Tchen 2011, 83), the social exchange is relatively unpredictable and not always well suited to topics that for instance ask for intimacy and reflection. In addition, even if peoples’ interaction and collaboration can be initiated via ICT, this does not necessarily imply a mutual understanding being established among cultures. During the second test for this project (with the general public), sensitive topics have been selected and proposed in the app as subjects for knowledge and “virtual” conversation, with the aim of establishing, through the content interlinking process, at least indirect relations between the authors of the comments. This process could not be implemented in real time because the comments were not im-

mediately published by the app due to limitations put in place at the museum's request. Instead a collective face-to-face discussion was organized to address this gap, which ultimately revealed that a discussion of the topics at a general level was more possible and inspiring for the visitors than the feasibility of adding relevant and significant comments in the already so-detailed content structure of the app. The participation of an intercultural mediator also showed that providing good stimuli is important for opening up intercultural potentialities. The categories of objects and gestures for instance, proved to be very effective in stimulating and eliciting parallelism among diverse religions. At the stage of final prototyping, the system should be open to the users comments at the more general thematic level, and well-focused questions should be added to the app to simulate the important role of intercultural mediation and eventually enable, via technological mediation, intercultural dialogue on the proposed content.

- With this project, it has been particularly difficult to join the narrative model with spatial narratives, i.e. integrating gestures and performances in the space in order to activate the cultural content with culturally consistent actions by the visitors. Active visitor experiences (such as performing and practicing the heritage itself) seems to be the most suitable to support the understanding of a heritage made of rituals, liturgies and living behaviours. Digital technologies could be designed to make such intangible concepts more approachable through a performative mode. In addition, according to Schechner (1984), the concept of performance belongs to the intercultural tradition, through a process of continuous re-interpretation where rites are events that can be actualised and restored from the past to the present time, capable of an intercultural purpose. In this project, the possibility of testing the performative heritage model has been affected by the specific topic of the experimental action. Due to the religious nature of the chosen work there was a high risk of showing disrespect. Even if the topics of the paintings have a strong ritual content associated with peculiar religious gestures (elevation of the Eucharist, kneeling), which could have been offered as an activity to the visitors, according to the museum curators, their performances could have been perceived as a spectacularisation or misunderstood as blasphemy and couldn't be ensured to have followed a proper process of knowledge and educative learning. Thus the project's initial interest in visitors' behaviours and performances has been re-focused to instead ask visitors about meaningful gestures and actions that impact his or her consciousness and reinforce memory. This is surely one of the main aspects where the final prototyping differs from the open-ended meta-design.

3. The last aspect to discuss here is related to the selection of effective technologies and media formats that, fulfilling all the hypotheses and requirements of the experimentation, would have better augmented the contents, initiated the dialogue and connected the visitors. Through a more

ideal choice and mix of technologies, visitors should have been able to: access and explore parallel interpretative paths along the same work of art and details linked to different cultures or religions; browse content and media related to other religious heritage, such as objects and works of art within the Museo Diocesano or other religious museums; enjoy additional virtual content like 3D models; activate this content by performing and simulating gestures and actions that may be consistent with the religious content to better understand rituals and beliefs (e.g. using ritual or liturgical objects, etc); and finally, to share opinions and connections in real time with other visitors.

At the conceptual stage, different possibilities such as portable tablets, interactive tables, mixed reality environments, projections and kinect sensors were considered and synergistically combined to address each one of the different project requirements and briefs. For instance, projections, screens and VR were considered as means to augment and amplify the museum's existing content. Meanwhile interactive screens or tables and personal devices would be well suited for users to contribute and share content. Due to budget and time constraints, and above all, with the intention to intervene in such a way to make the lowest physical impact to the museum exhibition setting, the final choice were portable tablets. This further aligned with the ongoing trend of using personalizable portable devices in museum visits. The tablets were offered to visitors for the tests, but if the app would have been available for download, visitors could have also used their own devices.

Because of this technological necessity not all the aspects envisioned in the project's framework had the chance to be explored through the experimental action. In particular, the performative heritage model was the area most affected, as visitors were more or less restricted to the use of standard gestures when using the interface device. Nevertheless, even not culturally connoted gestures can serve for reinforcing experience and memory. Therefore, taking into account the risks of oversimplification or disrespect, more common gestures like pointing at the painting and zooming in on details have been included in the interaction dynamics to mark the user's active role in the process of discovery.

The other planned design aspects have been pursued (fully or partially) simply by the use of tablets thanks to an approach mixing interactivity with engagement and learning (Roussou 2004). The cultural experience has been augmented through the use of video narrations that actively involve the visitors physically, intellectually and emotionally. The narrative has been made multi-vocal by the multilayered interpretation and multicultural User Generated Content (UGC) provided in the app, and it has been made social by allowing visitors to connect with one another via the comments sharing system within the same app.

According to Roussou, designing experience is about creating a psychological space (Roussou 2008, 232). During the experimental action, through the use of quite simple digital and mobile technologies, an "ecology" of cultural contents (according to Dziekan, "a dynamic and interconnected system of forms, spaces and relationship") has been designed, that worked as a virtual

“exhibition complex” creating an expanded sense of spatialisation, temporality, and sequencing of interactions.

The technological development and mock-up of the two apps is described in Chapter 5, while the aspect of user sociability and its relationship to technology is discussed in Chapter 6.

→ FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This experimental action has originated from the wider research framework of the MeLa project. Alongside a critical reflection on the use of design and digital technologies for envisioning the future of museums, this framework aims to address many considerations on multicultural issues that stem from the fields of museum studies, cultural studies, curatorial and artistic research, and cultural policies. It seems therefore useful to dedicate some space to zoom-out from the experimental action scale to the one of critical observation and insights drawn from the overall research process. This wider view allows us to frame this single experimental action with broader recommendations and implications, especially in relation to interpretation, representation, and technology within the realm of museography, while also allowing us to better examine the cyclical relationship between research and practice.

One of the main concerns of the museum in an age of mobility and migration of people and ideas, is how to discuss and dismantle the politics of display. Heritage itself is migrating, magnifying dislocations, exchanges, and contact points among cultures. Museum and archival strategies should address this complexity: envisioning new and multidimensional modalities for cultural heritage preservation, interpretation, representation, and exhibition. Among the insights developed in the museography theme, the entwining layers approach (see MeLa Critical Archive on line, <http://www.mela-archive.polimi.it>) allows for the possibility of upgrading the museum content on a temporary basis, with exhibition, installation, performances, and programming that are overlapping within a permanent space setting. The experimental action at Museo Diocesano di Milano consisted of a prototype layer of digital content added to the works of art: this content changed the visitor’s approach to the collection without making any changes to the exhibit itself. The narrative museum approach is a content-oriented approach of narrative construction that transforms the museum to a stage where the visitor can physically and emotionally interact with the exhibit in an engaging experience. The experimental action, even though it wasn’t realized as its own physical exhibit, tried to develop a narrative approach: using story telling as the methodology for the video-narration and to stimulate visitors to perform actions to activate content.

The outreach museum approach is concerned with museum practices and programming developed outside the museum walls to potentiate the social role of contemporary museums and involve the local communities in participatory processes fostering a bi-vocal relationship. The experimen-

tal action has produced an app for museum content that at this time is only accessible within the museum space. However, the experience can be extended outside and after the museum visit by consulting the app, adding new references and comments, and sharing them within one's social networks. In addition the user contribution to the app content succeeded in fostering a participatory process for engaging the community outside the museum. Finally the new (im)material approach deals with exhibition and archival strategies allowing the re-enactment and actualisation of the intangible dimension of the heritage as a living asset. Through the experimental action and the app produced, we have been exploring opportunities to update and actualise the understanding of religious heritage and its evolution in meaning for contemporary society.

This essay is the result of a joint work of the two authors. In particular, Raffaella Trocchianesi wrote sections 1 and 2, and Eleonora Lupo wrote sections 3 and 4.

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DESIGNING MULTIVOCAL MUSEUMS INTERCULTURAL PRACTICES AT MUSEO DIOCESANO, MILANO.

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DESIGNING MULTIVOCAL MUSEUMS

INTERCULTURAL PRACTICES AT MUSEO DIOCESANO, MILANO

This book presents the process of designing of a museum experience, included in MeLa Project's research, and accomplished at the Museo Diocesano di Milano.

The museum experience put together many relevant issues for the renewal of museum interpretation, using a design discourse to explore the combination of technological tools and multi-vocal content to enable diverse dynamics of cultural representation.

The volume maps the entire process of a cross-disciplinary research to develop possible scenarios that can be translated not only as test verification of the theoretical investigations but also into the production of various experimental exhibition designs.

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COVER IMAGE — Test with users at Museo Diocesano, Milan, Raffaella Trocchianesi, 2014.

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