

Cultural Heritage and Mobility from a Multisensory Perspective

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Chapter 3

Embodying Trauma: A Comparative Analysis of Sensory Narratives in Museums of Historical Trauma

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3 **Embodying Trauma**

A Comparative Analysis of Sensory Narratives in Museums of Historical Trauma

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Introduction

This chapter examines how museums, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in Daegu, utilise interactive and multisensory approaches to represent traumatic histories, emphasising spatial and temporal dimensions. By comparing these institutions, the chapter explores how sensory elements are employed to convey the impact of traumatic events, highlighting the evolving role of museums in preserving and presenting history.

Museums have historically engaged visitors through multiple senses, evolving from hands-on approaches in the 17th and 18th centuries to a shift towards visual observation in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This transition led to the emergence of the “museum of sight” (Classen 2007; Classen and Howes 2006). However, in the late 20th century, the concept of sensory museums emerged, focusing on engaging all human senses for immersive experiences, transforming museums into interactive spaces with innovative designs. This shift allowed for more nuanced and layered storytelling within museums, emphasising a multifaceted approach.

The concept of the sensory museum emerged, offering an immersive and interactive experience by engaging multiple human senses, including sight, sound, touch, smell and sometimes taste. Unlike traditional museums focused on visual and intellectual engagement, sensory museums create holistic, multisensory environments that allow physical interaction with exhibits, often utilising technology and innovative design. This transformation made museums interactive spaces, providing a multifaceted approach to storytelling, resulting in a nuanced and layered narrative experience.

Trauma Museum

A “trauma museum” is not a commonly recognised term but can be understood as a space dedicated to preserving and displaying artifacts, narratives, and historical events related to trauma. These museums focus on themes like war, genocide, human rights abuses and natural disasters, aiming to educate

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visitors about the historical, psychological and social aspects of trauma, promote healing and serve as places for reflection and commemoration. They employ various techniques, including sensory experiences, to convey the emotional and historical significance of traumatic events and safeguard historical artifacts (Gajda 2019).

Academic literature supports the idea that trauma museums effectively communicate historical narratives, serving as educational institutions for comprehending the past, preserving collective memory and transmitting shared experiences (Falk and Dierking 2012; Knell 2003; Landsberg 2004; Winter 1995). These museums play an indispensable role in educating present and future generations and require ongoing innovation in narrative presentation.

Trauma museums are known for their ability to create deep emotional connections between visitors and the historical events they represent. This emotional engagement, as described by Bal (2006) and by Lutz and Malkki (1997), is seen as an effective way to foster empathy and a deeper understanding of the past. Some scholars argue that trauma museums encourage reflection on the lasting impact of past traumatic events on the present and their implications for the future. This reflective dimension, essential for societal progress, is emphasised by Kaplan and Winkler (2006) or Macdonald (2006).

Scholars acknowledge the need for evolving narrative strategies in trauma museums due to the temporal distance from these events. Innovative storytelling and presentation methods are considered essential to maintain the relevance and impact of these narratives, as highlighted by Davis (2011) and Serageldin (2009). Trauma museums face the challenge of adapting to changing audiences, especially younger generations with different expectations and engagement preferences. Scholarly literature underscores the crucial necessity for innovation in reaching and educating diverse audiences (Cameron and Kelly 2019, Lord and Lord 2002).

Trauma museums play a vital role in transmitting historical narratives to help current and future generations understand the past. Their effectiveness relies on their ability to address challenging aspects of cultural heritage and reveal their lasting impact on contemporary society and the future. As the temporal gap between past events and the present increases, these museums require ongoing innovation and adaptation in their narratives.

For instance, when dealing with events like World War II, the pool of eyewitnesses is dwindling, making it difficult for subsequent generations to grasp the experiences of those who lived through those historical events. As a result, museums are driven to explore and implement new narrative techniques to effectively convey the complexities and significance of these events to diverse audiences. Museums, once seen as static repositories of heritage, have transformed into dynamic spaces that actively engage with visitors. This transformation is most evident in trauma museums, where they use multisensory techniques like soundscapes, tactile exhibits and immersive environments to create emotional connections between visitors and the traumatic past, going beyond intellectual comprehension.

Trauma museums exemplify a shift in museology towards balancing emotional engagement and respect for the traumatic past. This article highlights the importance of careful curation, emphasising historical accuracy and honouring lived experiences as advocated by experts such as Langer (2010, 76). Museums have transformed from passive observation spaces into active, emotionally engaging hubs, with trauma museums leading this change through multisensory elements that establish emotional connections. The challenge for such museums is to maintain historical accuracy and sensitivity while delivering emotionally resonant experiences.

Museums remain significant in shaping our understanding of heritage and history, especially trauma museums, which have developed a balanced and meticulously planned process for conveying difficult histories through visual storytelling and immersive environments. This involves a multidisciplinary approach, including architecture, interior design, graphic design, multimedia, technology and more, to create multi-layered narratives that explore complex topics.

A multisensory experience in the museum actively engages the visitor's body and mind by appealing to various senses, such as touch, sight and sometimes hearing and smell. This approach seeks to mimic the human perception of the world, which involves the integration of sensory inputs from vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell (Fetsch, Deangelis and Angelaki 2013), further influenced by an individual's knowledge, understanding and value systems. Research indicates that experiencing things through multiple senses enhances the effectiveness of the encounter and fosters improved interaction between diverse categories of visitors, including individuals with disabilities, the elderly, the youth and others, in relation to the exhibited artifacts. Additionally, cognitive processes are embodied (McGinnis 2014), implying that they do not solely occur within the confines of our brains and minds but extend to involve our entire bodies, moved through movement, considering "the corporeal body as an affective vehicle through which we sense place and movement" (Sheller and Urry 2006, 216).

Incorporating a multisensory storytelling approach in museums amplifies their impact and influence. This approach transforms museums from passive information consumption spaces to venues for contemplation, understanding of emotions and motivations (McGinnis 2014, 320). Museums in the 21st century have become places for shared experiences, where visitors collectively explore and discuss history and engage in social activities. They employ a multi-modal narrational approach, utilising various semiotic tools, including language, visuals, gestures and sounds (Kress 2003) to create more captivating and impactful narratives.

The central aim of a museum narrative is to resurrect historical facts, places and events, making the past resonate with the present. Multisensory tools play a crucial role in achieving this goal, empowering history to profoundly influence the present and shape the future, moving beyond the passive consumption of mere facts and names. This is particularly significant in trauma museums, where sensory tools immerse visitors in stories of the past, often related to inaccessible events and people who have vanished.

The deployment of multisensory experiences in museums, whether physical or virtual, inherently involves ethical considerations. This ethical dimension is especially important when dealing with narratives related to traumatic memories that require remembrance. Museums bear the responsibility of addressing visitors' needs ethically and designing appropriate interpretive tools to connect with their heritage while safeguarding visitors' emotional well-being.

Heritage is an emotionally charged experience, actively engaged with rather than passively possessed (Smith 2021). Museums and heritage sites are places where people choose to experience emotions, making ethical implications important when dealing with trauma narratives. Ethical responsibility is paramount in interpretation, linking heritage and visitors and ascribing meaning to it (Sharpley and Stone 2009). Multisensory experiences can evoke powerful emotions, so museums must ensure that visitors are not subjected to distress or harm by providing content warnings, emotional support and a safe and respectful environment.

The use of multisensory elements in museums carries ethical responsibilities, especially when dealing with sensitive and traumatic heritage. Museums must prioritise visitors' emotional well-being and foster a meaningful connection with the past. Ethical considerations encompass the design of multisensory experiences and the support and guidance provided to visitors, ensuring that heritage is engaged with respect, sensitivity and emotional care.

The Sensory Embodiment of Trauma in a Museum

The communication of trauma, which resists easy categorisation and description, poses a significant challenge due to its unassimilated nature. As Caruth (1995, 4) notes, trauma is not confined to the violent event itself but haunts survivors in ways not initially known. To effectively convey traumatic pasts, narratives must immerse readers or listeners in the experiences of witnesses to the trauma, emphasising the embodiment of these experiences.

In narratives dealing with traumatic histories, understanding and recounting these events necessitate embodiment in the present, as the survivor's body is both a witness and the entity witnessing (Kaplan 2003, 37). The body and its experiences are central to trauma narratives, making embodiment a crucial concept in the discourse on trauma and its representation. These narratives require engagement beyond intellectual comprehension, delving into the physical and emotional dimensions of the traumatic events.

Scholarly discussions on trauma and representation emphasise the intricate relationship between language, experience and embodiment when dealing with trauma narratives. Communicating trauma effectively necessitates a nuanced approach that acknowledges the profound impact of trauma on the body and psyche. Cultural texts, whether fictional, personal or academic, that delve into trauma, consistently emphasise corporeality. Corporeal experience has long served as the foundation for discussions on trauma (Wolski 2017, 182). The bodily experience of trauma can evoke empathy and understanding

but may also lead to excessive identification with the victim's position or an oversimplification of trauma (LaCapra 1998, 2001).

Despite these potential challenges, some trauma museums choose to embrace the embodiment of trauma, aligning with the sensuous theory. This framework highlights the importance of engaging the senses when experiencing historical narratives, including trauma, to foster a deeper and more empathetic connection with the past, seeking to bridge the gap between intellectual understanding and an emotionally resonant connection with history.

Incorporating sensuous experiences in trauma museums involves overcoming challenges and ethical considerations. It demonstrates a commitment to creating a deeper and more empathetic connection between visitors and the traumatic events of history. This approach goes beyond aesthetics and sensory engagement to provide a more profound understanding of the past, especially in the context of sensitive historical events. The interplay between aesthetics, sensory engagement and accessibility in trauma museums is an ongoing topic in museology and museum studies.

This sensory bodily experience allows individuals to connect with the work, as the truths conveyed through sensual impressions permeate human perception and linger within them. This sensation becomes a catalyst for critical thinking, profound reflection, and, above all, an attempt to comprehend traumatic events and the perspectives of those involved. "The encountered sign" is closely linked to the experience of moving through space, engaging with it in motion. From the perspective of mobility, museums are places shaped by various types of movements, entwining "connection", "distance", "presence" and "absence" through diverse societal processes. Physical movement, or lack of it, involves bodies and bodily motion, and encounters the physical world in a multisensory manner as it progresses. Objects and technologies extend the body's kinesthetic sense of movement, enhancing the human capacity to connect with the external world (Urry 2007, 48).

Research Description

The contemporary museum utilises various mobilities to sensually embody trauma, thereby facilitating the delivery of heritage interpretation. In this context, we examine two museums that focus on trauma: The Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in Deagu.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin stands as a prominent exemplar within the European museum milieu. Functioning as a vibrant locus for interlocution and contemplation, it fosters a profound engagement with Jewish history and contemporary affairs in Germany. Foremost among its narratives, the museum diligently recounts the poignant chronicle of the Holocaust.

The Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan recounts the history of comfort women, who suffered sexual slavery at the hands of the Japanese Imperial army during the Asia-Pacific War and the occupation period in the Korean Peninsula (Soh 2009). This dark chapter in history, while well-known in East Asia, receives

limited recognition elsewhere. Survivors, primarily from Korea and other occupied territories, remained silent for decades due to shame and fear. In 1992, the testimony of Korean survivor Kim Hak Soon broke the silence, leading to a resurgence of the case and a broader movement against sexual violence during conflicts and for women's and human rights that continues today.

Both museums share the objective of enabling their audiences to comprehend and interpret the traumatic past by immersing them in multisensory experiences; however, their approaches differ. Notably, in both cases, emotions play a prominent role, exerting a strong influence, and in some instances, exerting control over emotional experiences, thereby potentially constraining the freedom of interpretation and experiential autonomy.

Space

The museum space emerges as a particularly crucial tool in stimulating emotional experiences and assumes a role as a mediator in the perceptual encounter between the subject of trauma, the objects on display, and the viewers, cultivating a sense of intimacy. By activating and sensitising the senses of visitors, the museum space facilitates a profound dialogue between the narrative, the exhibited artifacts and the audience. This activation of various senses engenders an immersive experience of tragedy and traumatic sensations. Consequently, the design of the museum and its exhibitions is executed with sensitivity, encompassing diverse means of extension and embodied non-verbal communication to enrich the overall encounter.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin employs architecture to create a sensory experience addressing trauma. It utilises a concept called “galleria progressive”, originating from the French Revolution, which sequentially shapes the visitor's experience. Originally, this 19th-century approach sought to recreate the past chronologically, emphasising rationality and scholarship, and predominantly sequential presentation (Newhouse 2005, 14; Bennett, 1995, 75). Sutton (2000, 20) suggests that this framework evolved with unrestricted geometry and shape, enabling visitors to gradually navigate through the artifacts. In museums where architecture plays a significant role, the design of the building significantly influences visitors' emotions and experiences, aiming to balance inner and outer perception, create a meaningful encounter and respond to site-specific conditions (Holl, Pallasmaa and Pérez-Gómez 1994). The museum immerses visitors in zones of death and emptiness through its architectural layout and artifacts, isolating them from the external world. Architect Daniel Libeskind's design, known as “between the lines”, features fragmented straight and tortuous lines. These lines form a labyrinth, inducing disorientation and emotionally involving the visitor. Passing through the museum's entrance marks a transition from the contemporary world to a new experiential realm.

At the museum, visitors begin in the Kellegienhaus, a 17th-century building that once served as a courthouse. This historic structure stands in stark

contrast to the new addition designed by Daniel Libeskind. The new section, connected by heavy concrete-glass stairs, evokes uncertainty and disorientation. An underground passage explores the intertwined histories of Germany and Jewish people, creating a deliberately disorienting environment. The historical narrative is organised around three intersecting axes: the Holocaust, Exile and Continuity. This spatial arrangement offers a sensory and emotional journey that enhances the understanding and meaning of the traumatic experiences of exile, death and survival. The Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, despite the limited focus on the architectural dimension operating within the constrained space, effectively demonstrates the innovative utilisation of the new technologies while according to notable significance to the physical spatial environment in its endeavour to engage its visitors. Although the place is not directly associated with the history of comfort women or the victims themselves, it holds historical relevance, functioning as a political and economic centre during the colonial period and serving as a site utilised by the Japanese occupying forces. Consequently, the physical space assumes a crucial role in conveying the museum's overarching message. On the museum's website, curators emphasise the importance of confronting the traces of the colonial era rather than concealing the painful past through space reconstruction "by engaging with this historical legacy and drawing lessons from the past, the museum strives to create a better future through remembrance".¹ The museum journey begins with the painful history of sexual abuse, suffering, death and shame through short films, photographs and recorded survivor interviews. This gradual immersion fosters compassion. The serene garden, hidden from the street's noise, showcases survivors' words and poems, with a prominent lilac tree symbolising "blooming hope". Further on, visitors deepen their connection with survivors through pictures, seeing their rooms and personal belongings. The experience culminates in virtual reality and "Eternal Testimony", where firsthand survivor accounts are shared. This seamless blend of prior knowledge and experiential engagement creates a deep resonance with the visitor and sensitises them to the survivors' traumatic narrative.

"The experience of space" and multisensory experiences in museums intensify the exposure of the message. Visitors often follow the shape of the interior as a landmark of the space, facilitated by fixed architectural divisions. Another crucial aspect of the museum experience pertains to movement within space. Gawlikowski (1992) highlights architectural features that either intensify social interactions or promote isolation. The design may involve determining distances between environmental elements, encouraging varied speeds of movement or providing areas for pauses. The arrangement of interiors can influence perceptions of social relations, affecting whether spaces facilitate co-user interactions or isolate individuals from one another. Urry (2000, 2007) advocates for mobilities as a paradigmatic approach to understanding social relations. In museum spaces, especially those narrating trauma, narrow, uncomfortable and gravely unsettling environments may be

deliberately designed. Other visitors can become perceived obstacles or intruders. The composition of such spaces may challenge visitors' sense of safety, as conventional structures with walls that resist gravity are subverted by curvatures, creating a sense of instability. This often results in unwanted proximity to others. The movement through geometric solids, disrupted symmetries and colourless spaces influences the emotional interpretation of the trauma's history.

Multisensory Design

An intriguing question arises when considering whether the deployment of multisensorial tools as a storytelling element can be universally applicable or if it inadvertently reflects Western hegemony in shaping sensory experiences within museum spaces. To focus on this matter, we can turn to the scholarship of Howes, who delves into the cultural dimensions of sensory experiences. He emphasises the profound diversity of sensory perceptions across different societies, highlighting that those sensory experiences are deeply embedded in cultural contexts. This perspective suggests that sensory markers, including the use of light to symbolise concepts like good and evil, can be culture-specific and context-dependent (Howes 2003).

The issue of mobility within the museum space, particularly concerning visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds, further accentuates the complexity of creating museum narratives that are inclusive, emotionally resonant and culturally sensitive. The challenge lies in developing a nuanced approach to the deployment of multisensory elements, such as lighting, that acknowledges and respects cultural diversity while still fostering emotional engagement and understanding. This challenge, while demanding, presents an opportunity for innovative strategies that can promote cross-cultural empathy and shared experiences within museum design (Hooper-Greenhill 2000).

The use of sensorial means such as lighting as a storytelling tool in museums is a powerful and versatile technique for crafting emotionally resonant narratives. However, it is essential to critically examine the extent to which such techniques are culturally specific or universally applicable, given the diverse backgrounds of museum visitors. This underscores the need for a thoughtful and culturally sensitive approach to multisensory elements within museum exhibitions, with the potential to bridge cultural differences and foster deeper cross-cultural understanding and empathy. The museum, as a space for storytelling and engagement, must continually evolve to embrace the diversity of its audience while providing an emotionally engaging and inclusive experience.

In the Jewish Museum, lighting plays a multifaceted role in shaping the visitor's experience. It goes beyond illumination, serving as a tool for directing attention, establishing rhythm and creating a sense of scale and hierarchy within the museum's storytelling. Lighting is strategically used to accentuate exhibits, create focal points and set the mood in different sections. The

interplay between well-lit and shadowed areas guides visitors through the narrative, drawing attention to specific artifacts. This deliberate use of lighting evokes emotions and engages visitors by highlighting the significance of certain elements, contributing to creating a multisensory and emotionally resonant museum experience.

As visitors navigate the museum, they experience an inhospitable, often dark and disorienting space that evokes feelings of disorientation and emotional weight. The Holocaust axis, marked by black cabinets and photographs, culminates in The Tower of Holocaust, a claustrophobic space resembling a crematorium. The axis of exile leads to the Garden of Exile, featuring inclined columns and olive trees symbolising resilience and rebirth. The garden's unconventional angles create an unsteady balance. Both axes convey a sense of grayness reminiscent of concentration camps. In contrast, the axis of continuity presents a long corridor leading outside, narrating the history of Jews over two thousand years. Libeskind's deliberate architectural choices accentuate the tragic event and emphasise a gateway to both the past and the future. The architecture features empty spaces symbolising the void left by the Holocaust, an idea expressed by Libeskind as building "the museum around a void that is to be experienced by the public".

Technology

The Jewish Museum effectively employs mobility and bodily movement to engage multiple senses of its visitors to deliver the heritage interpretation. The Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in Daegu adopts a distinct approach to the multisensorial experience of the exhibition by incorporating new technologies. As a consequence, traditional bodily movement is substituted with non-movement to access a virtual space. The virtual walk alters sensory perception by converting the kinesthetic experience of physical movement into a visual encounter, wherein actual walking is performed through the use of a joystick button.

The museums are increasingly beginning to transcend their physical premises to offer cultural experiences online, on location or to-go. ... the notion of museum mobility reflects a new way of thinking of museums not in terms of bricks and mortar buildings or even as collections of objects and art- works, but as an inclusive practice.

(Baggesen 2019, 119–121)

They engage the body and mind of a visitor.

The Museum in Daegu, operating within a physically constrained setting, adeptly leverages new technologies to transcend its material limitations, establishing a virtual extension of the physical space through immersive digital devices. This approach directs the focus towards emotive experiences through multisensorial engagement. As aptly characterised by Cioffi (2021), the museum embodies a hybrid experience wherein interactivity harmoniously intertwines the

virtual and physical realms, facilitated by the integration of digital tools, such as virtual reality (VR) glasses and AI-based testimonies that facilitate “in-person” conversations with the comfort women themselves. The implementation of VR technology within the museal space has been described as a means to fulfil the tourism industry’s objective of providing visitors with distinctive and enriched experiences. According to Lee and colleagues (2020), VR offers users an educational, entertaining, escapist and aesthetic experience, enabling complete immersion within a virtual environment. In the Museum in Daegu, curators crafted a space that augments the material exhibition, showcasing actual objects and personal belongings encased behind museum glass. By donning VR glasses and headphones, visitors engage in an interactive journey, utilising joysticks to access the living space of a chosen survivor and experiencing an intimate connection with the past. The experience is supposed to provide visitors with the opportunity to virtually walk inside the survivor’s apartments and explore their neighbourhoods, enabling a deeper immersion into their lives. This unique encounter stands in stark contrast to the conventional, structured museal exhibition. Through the use of the VR glasses, the visitors are disconnected from their immediate surroundings, in order to heightened sense of intimacy with the testimonies and narratives being presented. Despite physically remaining within the confines of the museal space amidst other visitors, the utilisation of technology effectively muffles the immediate environment, imparting a sense of solitude as the visitor becomes immersed in the digital reality. While the aim is to foster an intimate connection with the survivors’ stories, the manipulation of sensory perceptions confines the visitors within the virtual space, rendering them immobilised in a seated position – a stark departure from the natural bodily movement typically associated with walking. This detachment from the physical surroundings, instead of facilitating a sense of connection, engenders a sense of distance and disorientation. Despite the occurrence of dissonance, the robust and emotionally charged narrative, progressively developed throughout the exhibition, fosters a sense of intimacy and a feeling of becoming personally entwined with the unfolding story. This gradual construction of emotional involvement aims to cultivate the desired connection between the visitor and the heritage being presented.

The museum also served as a testing ground for an AI-based exhibition, subsequently adapted for travel and featured in various museums both within and beyond Korea. The “Eternal testimony” constitutes an AI-powered interactive content showcased through life-size, ultra-high-resolution screens and employs Automatic Speech Recognition technology to match posed questions with a database of pre-recorded testimonies of two comfort women: Lee Yong-soo and Lee Ok-sun. This interactive setup invites visitors to engage in a simulated conversation with one of these characters, akin to a genuine, face-to-face encounter. Equipped with a microphone and a list of questions, the visitors can conduct a “conversation” with the survivors.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that this technology, like the VR glasses, brings forth several obstacles. Among these challenges, a significant limitation arises from the technology itself. As Bae noted in her review of the

exhibition, “it is virtually impossible to prepare all possible question-and-answer videos” (Bae, 2022). The interlocutor must adhere to the pre-prepared questions and provide precise responses for the technology to accurately react. Consequently, the responses align with the museum’s interpretation of the heritage and fall within the boundaries of the Authorized Heritage Discourse, allowing little room for a critical approach to the narrated story. Instead, the focus predominantly revolves around the traumatic events and the experience of comfort stations. Despite the overall impression of artificiality, synthetic elements and the sense of being contrived, the immersive experience still carries a significant emotional load. The gradual preparation provided by the museal exhibition, introducing the visitor to the narrative and the figures of the survivors, effectively sustains the visitor’s engagement and focus on the story. Despite the presence of screens, microphones and their inherent limitations, the creators of the installation skillfully crafted an intimate atmosphere.

The two museums, despite presenting distinct narratives and adopting diverse approaches to heritage interpretation, can be analysed through the lens of fixity and fluidity as conceptualised by Adey (2017). In both cases, a multisensorial experience is utilised to convey the exhibitions on trauma. The Jewish Museum though embodying fixity through its architectural design, spatial layout and deliberate manipulation of sensory experiences to create an emotionally charged encounter with the history of Holocaust victims. The design of the museum serves as a pivotal interpretative thread, leading visitors through the tragic narrative and engendering profound spatial understanding and meaning. On the other hand, the museum experience manifests a sense of fluidity and dynamism by actively involving visitors in bodily movement and corporeal kinesthetic experiences as they traverse through the museal space. The strategic use of lighting, angles and symbolic elements within the museum contributes to the creation of various emotions, such as disorientation, confinement and immersion in the historical events. The Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan showcases fluidity by employing new technologies such as VR glasses and AI-based testimonies to transcend physical limitations and create a virtual extension of the space. Simultaneously, the museum also demonstrates fixity by restricting the bodily mobility of visitors to an unnatural sitting position, replacing the usual kinesthetic experiences and physical movement, and shuffling with the sensory encounters. The applied technology offers visitors an intimate encounter with the survivors’ stories and fosters a connection with the heritage, although at the same time creating feelings of detachment and disorientation.

Both museums effectively utilise space, design, and technology to create immersive, emotional experiences, influencing or even determining the visitor’s experience and understanding of traumatic historical events. The pertinent inquiry emerges as to whether the deliberate control over the visitor’s reception, facilitated through movement and sensory engagement beyond conscious awareness, serves as an amplification of the intended message or rather constitutes a form of manipulation. It becomes essential to discern

whether such an approach imposes predetermined interpretations by the exhibition creators or, instead, enriches the museum visitor's experience with crucial non-verbal spatial elements that enhance the storytelling process.

Discussion and Conclusion

Merleau-Ponty (1962) brought to the forefront a significant observation, challenging the prevalent Western dualistic thinking. He asserted that every mental experience is fundamentally rooted in the body and the senses. This implies that our engagement with the world is a holistic process where the body and the senses are integral. Storytelling, as a means of conveying experiences and narratives, extends beyond mere intellectual engagement; it taps into the body and the senses, enriching the comprehension and internalisation of stories from the past. This holistic approach to storytelling opens doors to a deeper understanding and awareness of historical events. By connecting through sensory perception and emotional resonance, individuals can empathise and connect with the experiences of previous generations, particularly when it comes to traumatic events.

In the context of a multisensory museum, the concept that "feeling means understanding" becomes evident (Deleuze 1999; van Alphen 2008). The multi-modal approach to storytelling provides museum visitors with a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in narratives where individuals and objects collaboratively construct meaning and understanding. This sensory mode of narration effectively bridges the gap between the visitor and the subject of trauma, creating a profound connection with both the historical objects and the emotional impact of the traumatic events.

This approach can be seen as a way to engage visitors, especially those representing the post-generation of trauma, who may lack direct access to survivors or oral history. The multi-modal narrative serves as a substitute for direct contact with survivors, offering visitors valuable insights into their experiences. However, this sensory storytelling approach also raises concerns about potential emotional manipulation and curatorial influence on visitors' understanding. Curators have the power to shape both the intellectual and emotional experiences of visitors, potentially affecting their perception of the historical narrative. Representing trauma as a sensory experience makes it susceptible to appropriation, oversimplification and imitation, potentially distorting and misusing the traumatic narrative.

As we noted, multisensory storytelling has particular significance in the education of young individuals. Its primary goal is to evoke compassion and foster understanding among participants, especially in the youth demographic. By engaging multiple senses simultaneously through visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile stimuli, this approach allows for experiential immersion into the past. Implementing a multisensory approach in education provides student learners with an alternative means of receiving information, offering a valuable opportunity for their cultural development. In the context of young learners, multisensory interaction is of great importance. Furthermore, this

mode of presenting trauma allows students to engage actively, drawing upon elements such as emotional involvement, interest and attention, which are particularly pertinent when addressing traumatic topics with young learners.

Considering the diminishing perception of historical places as witnesses, it is imperative to underscore the paramount importance of emotional, analytical and cognitive engagement for museum visitors. How a story is conveyed becomes a focal point, determining whether it stimulates analytical and interpretative efforts from the audience. The utilisation of a multisensory narrative and embodied mobility not only facilitates the recognition of facts but also enables a holistic understanding and experience of the trauma being recounted. The narrative unfolds through space, eliciting sensations of isolation and disorientation. Sound elements contribute to feelings of anxiety and discomfort, while tactile sensations supplement the overall experience. This multisensory approach allows young individuals to immerse themselves in the past, enabling a bodily, emotional and intellectual connection with historical events. In this way, multisensory storytelling not only enriches the understanding of history but also creates a deeper, more meaningful engagement with the past.

Note

- 1 Translated by Maria Jukna.

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