

I want to start this report by expressing my gratitude for the consideration shown to me by Serlachius Museums' staff during the period of my residency. I have at all times felt welcome and supported, and also leave with a strong sense of the value that the residency program is held in by the institution. I particularly want to thank Kati and Anita for the personable and responsive way they administer the program, which facilitated me in taking an adaptive approach to the development and delivery of my project. It is really important for residency projects to be given room to find their own shape and not be straightjacketed by the initial proposal. Here the approach has allowed me scope to develop the project, while offering a structure to facilitate each stage as it emerged.

In the case of the project I undertook, it was the form of the final output that diverged quite radically from the original proposal. The method of gathering content also underwent some alterations for practical reasons, although the focus of the content itself remained close to that proposed at the outset. The discoveries that emerged from the switch in output and the adaptation of the methodology were, for me, among the major gains I am taking away from this residency and they point a way for future development and research.

The project nevertheless remained true to its original aim of sampling and measuring expressions of engagement with the Serlachius collection across the range of the museums' associate communities: from visitors and staff to civic and creative partners. It utilised the method proposed at the outset, of asking participants from these groups to nominate an everyday object that encapsulated what the Serlachius collection means to them; in effect, forming a parallel collection of objects that combine to 'map-out' a territory of responses to the project question.

The opportunity to get to know the collection in greater depth before embarking on the public engagement side of the project was of great assistance in fine-tuning this approach. In this respect I am greatly indebted to Helena Hanninen, who provided me with a complete illustrated list of the artworks held in the collection in 1943, after the final bequest from the estate of Gösta Serlachius. I requested this list particularly, as I understood it to give the best indication of the main character of the collection by most fully representing the founders' selection. While some notable non-Finnish artworks were purchased, apparently to introduce wider international and art historical aspects to the collection, these do not (for me at any rate) appear to hold the key to its main character. This abides in the large number of works by Finnish artists of the period, many of whom Gustaf and Gösta Serlachius had built up a relationship with as patrons and sometimes friends. Typically (though not exclusively) these artworks represent Finnish everyday life and landscapes, mainly in a naturalist or realist style, although some move towards expressionism and symbolism. Meanwhile, the museums also take pains to relate the history of the development of the collection and the role the collectors' beliefs played in shaping it. We are encouraged then, as museum visitors, to draw a direct line between the collectors and the collection.

In developing the project, it has been my aim to identify characteristics of the collection emerging from its presentation by the museums, and employ these characteristics in collating participant responses; asking to what extent the experience of today's project participants adhere to the objectives of the collection's founders. Distinct motivational themes within the core collection can be identified. A mission to nurture a visual culture that expresses the identity of Finnish people predominates. The approach taken in this respect would appear to have been through an art that focusses on everyday lives, lived out against the backdrop of the Finnish landscape and climate. This recurrent theme is underscored by some of the set-piece displays, such as the Segerstråle (1937) mural in the lobby of Museum Gustaf, or the video in the new Gösta Pavilion, documenting its construction. Indeed, the siting of both museums, one in the former Serlachius family home and the other its company offices, would seem to further emphasise this dialogue between life and work as a creative spur. Standing in counterpoint is the relationship, through patronage, of Gustaf and Gösta to the Finnish artists of their era. We learn that their engagement is more than just as purchasers, they have an in-depth involvement and interest in the lives and careers of many of these artists, well documented in the displays and integral to the nature of the collection.

The project seeks to reflect these contrapuntal narratives within the collection, which sometimes are harmonious and sometimes throw up interesting dissonances (e.g. Autere's carving of patron and artist, or von Swetlik's nude study). It asks where, within the resulting dialogue between these narratives, the experiences of those who currently engage with the museums and collections sit. The decision to ask project participants to select an object from *their* lives to represent this experience resonates with the subject matter of many of the artworks in the collection, which, as discussed, reflect the everyday lives of Finns of an earlier generation. This compatibility in subject matter (more fortunate than intended) assisted greatly in drawing visually readable comparisons linking present day reactions to the narratives of the past.

In addition to being subjected to this process of comparison, participant responses were also collated according to the constituent group of the respondent; whether museum visitors, staff, civic partners, or artists and other creative collaborators. The original intention was to make an exhibition of the responses in this respect, but this did not prove practical and ultimately it was felt that a more effective outcome would be to represent them in a diagram, where they are placed in conjunction with the associated research material on the collection. This could be printed and distributed as a poster as well as displayed on a screen to visitors as an interactive digital map.

The impracticality of the exhibition format was, in part, down to the fact that many of the images submitted by participants were not of a resolution that would allow them to be printed at any suitable scale. This had been anticipated in the initial planning, which factored-in visits to participants, both for interviews and to photograph the objects; however, a number of the most interesting contributions came from too far afield for such visits to be a realistic option. It would have meant excluding these. In addition, there was a spontaneity and individuality to many of the contributions that may have been lost by a more formal approach.

The method of gathering contributions had, in any case, to be adapted from the original proposal mainly due to the availability of staff to support the process. Preselecting participants and arranging visits as outlined above, including (in some cases) providing transport and translation at interview, would demand too much staff time. Alternative methods to generate participation were developed in consultation with museum staff. A brochure was printed to engage museum visitors, while internal and external media channels were used to encourage staff and visitors to participate. Some people were approached directly, and an interview was arranged with the local paper towards an article about the project which also included details of how to take part. As these approaches did not guarantee participation, it was necessary to be quite persistent. Residency and museum staff were very helpful in this respect. Eventually each of these channels was effective in generating responses from at least one of the target constituencies, and combined to deliver a representative range of 25 responses overall. It was particularly gratifying that, in contrast to what was proposed originally, most of the final project responses were self-selecting and many of these came from respondents we may not have thought to approach.

The overwhelming majority of project contributions came from women, including all of the unsolicited responses resulting from the brochure and newspaper article. The few male participants were either staff at the museum or had been approached directly for a contribution. The content of each of the responses was such that they could successfully be placed in dialogue with themes of the collection as set out in the diagram, thereby demonstrating the ongoing conversation that the collection is at the heart of. This is explored in greater depth in the diagram notes, but it is worth giving account here of some of the decision making behind the form the diagram took.

A grid was utilised to build a diagrammatic model which related thematic aspects of the collection to the information emerging from the project returns. This method was not part of the original proposal, but I had resolved to experiment with this approach after visiting an exhibition of grid-based drawings by Emma Kunz (Serpentine Gallery 23/3–19/5/19) prior to the residency and sensing that a grid may have application to collating information gathered for the project in Mänttä. Entering information into a grid immediately forms spatial relationships between those entries, encouraging a mapping process through which connections are made and inferences drawn. The problem then becomes to arrange the material so that the relationships expressed are supported by the data and that this is effectively communicated through graphic means. Among the advantages of this system was that the relationships drawn could either be geographic, time-based, or thematic. That is to say, the organisation of the information is not restricted to one dimension. Also, the reading of the grid is not subject to linearity of other methods of analysis. There is no beginning or end to this story. It presents a living system, the examination of which can be entered into at any point.

As the project developed, the diagram emerging on the grid moved from being a way of thinking about outcomes, to becoming the outcome itself. In the early stages the diagram was hand drawn, first as a series of small-scale responses to findings in the collection and museum displays. As the participant information started to come in, I adopted a much larger scale. My aim here was to enact a physical relationship with the information and inhabit the process of drawing it out. It seemed appropriate to acknowledge the presence of my body, which in the case of this project was a factor heightened by the conditions of the residency, as I lived and worked over a prolonged period in close proximity to the museums, and made a daily 3km forest walk between the accommodation and studio. The final iteration of the diagram was a digital version, designed to be printed at 600 x 1000 mm, so scaled at 40% of the full-size drawing. The physical transformation from the expanded space of the drawing to the cramped interaction with my laptop to undertake this work was a strange experience and the digital outcome was greatly assisted by having the physical memory of making the larger drawing.

The collected participant narratives were introduced at this final stage. To facilitate the overall reading when making the diagram, I resolved to use the images contributed by participants as a proxy for their associated texts. The links between images and their texts would be achieved through additional means. In the case of the poster, this was effected by a table on the reverse. In turn, this suggested a possibly more user-friendly, screen-based digital version of the diagram, where the texts could be made to appear through roll-over links on the images. Both outcomes were produced and presented.

An unforeseen difficulty arose with the translation of the participants' texts. Some were longer than anticipated, and once translated into English it was clear that they could be trimmed. However, editing them in English led to knock-on complexities when applying that edit back to the Finnish version. In some cases, the time and resources required was too great for this to be achieved. On top of this, the decision to have the texts in both languages meant that space was limited in any case. The font size on the poster is, as a result, smaller than is optimal.

The explanatory text included on the reverse of the poster is in English only. This is primarily due to the space available, but a secondary consideration was the resource implication of making a translation. It was agreed to present this text in its original language alone, as the intended audience would, in the main, be used to reading English in such situations. Similarly, the limited amount of text on the diagram itself is English. In case of a public presentation of the screen-based version, translations of both texts could be supplied as part of the display.

In addition to the project marketing activities covered earlier in this report, the residency provides a platform for public presentation: "Friday Coffee", held in the second week of each month. This event is attended by a mixture of regulars (on a mailing list) and visitors at the museum that day. The audience typically numbered 30-40 people. The monthly scheduling of this event offers the potential for it to be a milestone for project stages and I was pleased to be able to use it as such. On the first of three sessions coinciding with my residency period, I outlined my plans; on the second, presented work in progress; and at the last, gave a short talk about the project and demonstrated final outcomes. A particularly useful feature of these events was that regular attenders had developed a familiarity with the project as it progressed and offered useful and supportive feedback on that basis. The residency building "Aleksanterin linna" also has public exhibition facilities, which I availed of during the final week of my residency period, putting the project on display and talking and meeting with visitors.

The screen-based version of the diagram tested well in the open sessions and demonstrated its efficacy as a public engagement display. It also served as an indicator of future development opportunities for this or a similar project. The current version is an interactive PDF, allowing the viewer to call up the texts associated with images on the diagram, all of the material having been gathered in advance. This version does not, however, enable the viewer to add their own image and text to the diagram and this would be an obvious next step, thereby increasing the interactivity of the media and the public engagement potential of the project. This can be achieved through building the visualization in an HTML file, with a content management system that allows an administrator to replace earlier image-text contributions with new ones, submitted by visitors in response to the display. A development like this would be suitable for a presentation that seeks to explore ongoing dialogues around a collection and/or display over an extended period.

It's always good to leave the table wanting more, and this project is a case in point. It resulted in the development of a public engagement tool that facilitates and evaluates dialogues between an institution and its partner constituencies. The outcome visualised these dialogues in the case of the Serlachius collection, showing that they can be meaningfully explored through the methods the project proposes. However, while the outcome offers a snapshot at a particular point in time, it also demonstrates the potential for a longer-termed approach to investigating the dialogues around museum collections through a static interactive display of the type proposed in the paragraph above.

In addition to facilitating these steps forward in my research, the residency has also given me an in-depth introduction to a chapter in art history that I only had a sketchy knowledge of previously. I leave Mänttä having developed a strong attachment to the work of the generation of Finnish artists that are featured in the core collection and an ongoing fascination with the activities of Gustaf and Gösta Serlachius as collectors.