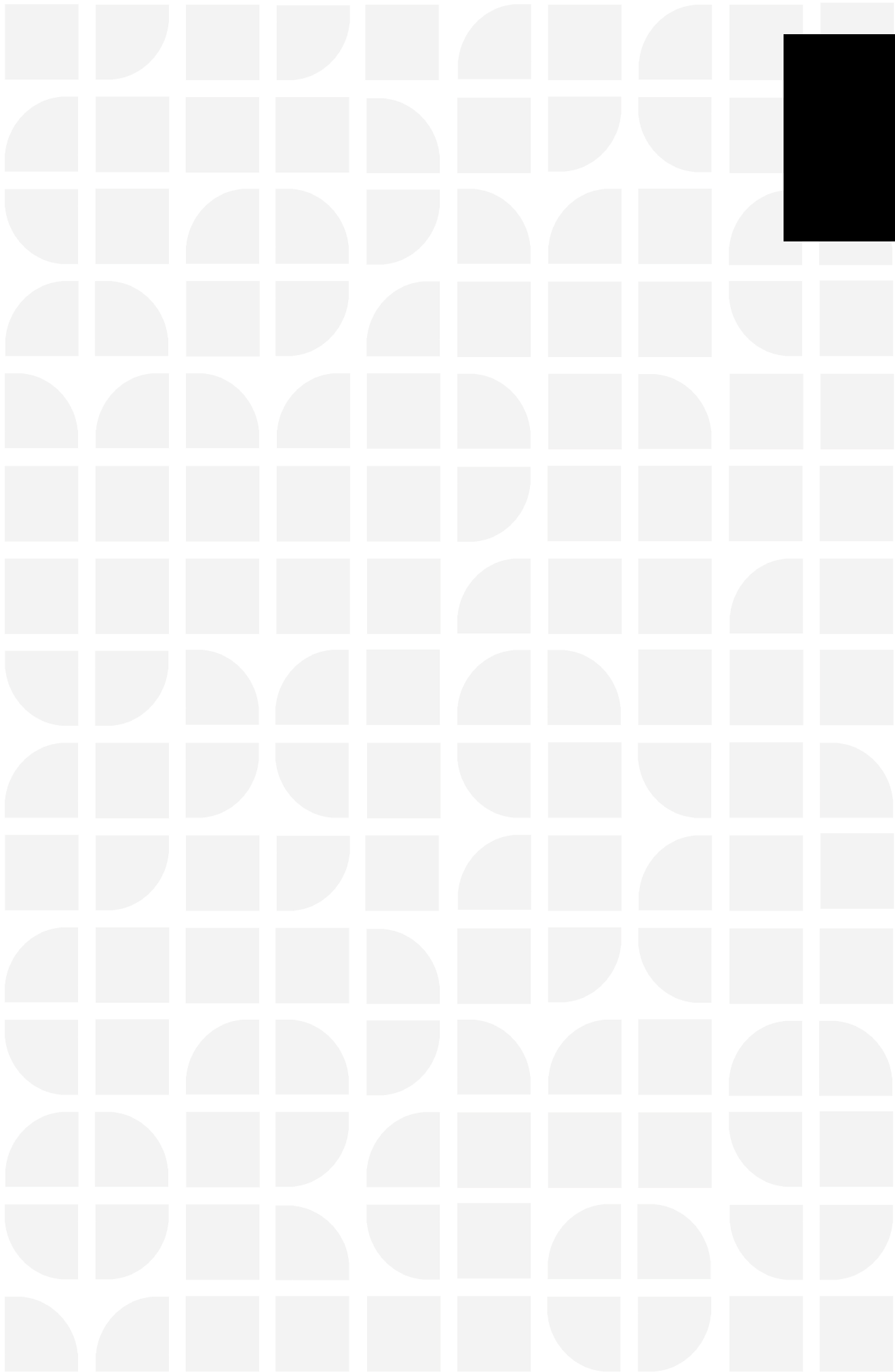




Sounds Off: Silence and Sound Absence in Museums

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Keywords:

Silence, Museums, Interpretation, Perception, Museum Narrative.

ABSTRACT:

This essay intends to contribute to this international reflection on silence in museums by focussing holistically on all the meanings of silence in the museum, and the various entangled ways in which it can be interpreted. Silence can be an experience integrated into museum visits. Silence can be political and the connections between silence, remembrance and forgetting give silence the force to influence what we choose to remember. Silence can be inclusive. Silence in museums can be liberating, when offering an escape from the constant sensory stimulation of contemporary life. By transcending a sense of responsibility to constantly engage and entertain, silence in museums can allow deeper thought processing and reflection. Case studies will present practical applications of the theoretical framework and the article will therefore offer an overview of the role of the absence of sound in museums by focussing on display, museum narrative, museum perception, and the visitor experience. The broader aim is, in fact, to help define the role that silence in a museum can play during a visit and in visitors' perception of the heritage on display.

Questo saggio intende contribuire alla riflessione internazionale sul silenzio nei musei concentrandosi in modo olistico su tutti i significati del silenzio nel museo e sui vari modi in cui esso può essere interpretato. Il silenzio può essere un'esperienza integrata nelle visite ai musei. Il silenzio può essere politico e le connessioni tra silenzio, ricordo e oblio conferiscono al silenzio la forza di influenzare ciò che scegliamo di ricordare. Il silenzio può essere inclusivo. Il silenzio nei musei può essere liberatorio, quando offre una via di fuga dalla costante stimolazione sensoriale della vita contemporanea. Trascendendo dal senso di responsabilità di coinvolgimento e intrattenimento costante, il silenzio nei musei può consentire un processo di pensiero e una riflessione più profonda. I casi di studio presenteranno applicazioni pratiche del quadro teorico e l'articolo offrirà quindi una panoramica sul ruolo dell'assenza di suoni nei musei, concentrandosi sull'esposizione, la narrazione museale, la percezione del museo e l'esperienza dei visitatori. Il più ampio obiettivo è infatti quello di servire alla definizione del ruolo che il silenzio in museo può avere nello svolgimento della visita e nella percezione che i visitatori hanno del patrimonio esposto.

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I. Introduction

A reflection on silence in museums is necessary at present, when sensory experience has become central to both the visit and the very concept of museum enjoyment. While there are many case studies on silence as part of the preservation and transmission of knowledge and memory, broader reflections on silence in museums remain limited. However, two notable works will be referred to frequently in this essay: Lucy and Anderson¹ on the impact of silence on visitors' perception, and Mason and Sayner² on the motivations behind the exhibition design and choice of communicative silence as content in a museum. Also mentioned are works on silence as the basis for the behaviour of the "good museum visitor" – both from a historical perspective, as traced by van Kessel,³ and from a contemporary view of the museum as a sacred place, as theorised by Duncan.⁴ This reflection stems from various ideas about the role of silence in museums; it transcends the field of museum studies to touch on the fields of memory studies, politics and cultural philosophy.

In general, reflection on silence as a historical and philosophical field is extremely long-established, spanning from Plato to the great philosophers of the twentieth century.⁵ Silence can be perceived as a neutral absence of sound or a deliber-

ate choice not to speak. Indeed, intentional silence, whatever the reason behind it, is not an absence of speech but rather a hidden way of speaking. It is widely agreed that silence is neither passivity⁶ nor inactivity, but a socially constructed space with multiple purposes.⁷ Similarly, it is recognised that silence is an integral part of the learning and memory process, and has an intrinsic link with the act of storytelling itself.⁸ Furthermore, silence can be a cognitive tool for mediating between past and present, accompanying a specific narrative, and for performative forms of storytelling.⁹

In the museum environment specifically, the relationship between sound, silence and exhibition space influences and is influenced by the perceptions of museum visitors and their role within it. There are various types and forms of silence in the multifaceted complexity of the museum space; their effects are linked to how visitors perceive them, and to the processes of memory and understanding that are activated for each person within the museum. The silent response in a museum or by a museum can be automatic, or difficult to promote or process, in a world where the written or spoken word is the primary and dominant means of transmission and learning.¹⁰ The museum exhibition's use of silence within it becomes a curatorial or political choice (who is silent, who is silenced, who silences, what is silenced?)¹¹ that can completely change the visitor's experience in the museum.

An important work that can guide us theoretically in considering silence in the museum is Jay Winter's 2010 essay. Since his first formula-

tion of the aspects of silence, Winter has been a useful compass for navigating the theme of silence in museums. He sees three types of silence in the game of memory: liturgical silence, political silence, and essentialist silence.¹² Since silence is that space beyond words, it should not be simply equated with oblivion. When it touches on universal and eternal themes (as proposed by Winter: loss, pain, sacrifice, and redemption), it is a matter of liturgical silence – a concept certainly borrowed from religious traditions, where what must be processed and remembered is contemplated as if in a sacred place.¹³ This is accompanied by political or strategic silence, which is intended to address social conflict by silencing that conflict of rupture, as a gesture of healing or cooling.¹⁴ This is a largely circumstantial use of silence, which can be quickly transformed according to circumstances. The third type, essentialist silence, arises from a consideration of the privilege of being able to “speak or remain silent” about an event as a directly interested party, given that a visceral connection with personal experience is sometimes difficult to convey.¹⁵

This multifaceted view of the concept of silence certainly helps to overcome the assumption that silence is an absence of speech; it becomes the basis for reflecting on the silence of museums precisely because it presents its three main aspects. In a sense, Winter’s work goes beyond the concept of silence as a tool for transmitting the past as a sign of “ethnicity, healing, acknowledgement, recognition and forgiveness” – this is a religious and moralising approach that remains very much present in theme

parks, museums and historical sites around the world.¹⁶ For Winter, silence is a wide-ranging socio-cultural practice,¹⁷ and some of its various aspects that he identifies are highly relevant to a broader discussion of silence in museums: he emphasises its commemorative aspect (as a collective representation of a shared event, often simplified in its transmission, which can happen in any museum)¹⁸ and its aspect of political protest or omission (such as the exclusion of problematic aspects, or the inclusion of what was silenced in the past).¹⁹ Accordingly, the museum can become one of the various “memory agents”, by communicating selected events and themes in myriad ways.

II. Silence in the museum: theory and practice

From the theoretical basis presented so far, develops a more practical analysis of how silence can become central to the museum discourse. Given the above premises, this essay will analyse, with some illustrative examples, the various expressions of silence in museums through its four main manifestations: Silence as a formal and behavioural choice in the layout and development of the visit; Silence as a choice of content; Silence as a tool to help visitors; and Silence as the subject of the layout.

The first way in which the concept of silence enters (and thrives in) the museum environment is undoubtedly formal and behavioural, in terms of both the layout and the practical aspects of the visit. This perspective, which could apparently be reduced to a simple analysis of behaviour and conventions, instead intertwines very profound themes

that have been central to museums for at least two centuries: it concerns the concept of the museum perceived as a secular sacred place, the separation of objects from their context in the museum selection process, and the classism inherent in the concept of museum visits in the Western world. A decisive issue is the desire to bring the museum closer to a sacred place – or rather, the tendency to interpret the museum as the only sacred place in the secular world.

This theme has been extensively explored in the past,²⁰ and touches on every aspect of the museum as an institution. To start with the museum architecture of the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe: most of the museums built at that time, at least until the innovations of the twentieth century, were shaped by the concept of the classical temple. The architectural aesthetics of large façades, with pediments and columns, fitted into the urban landscape like neoclassical photographs of a new secular centre for worshipping the arts. What happened inside reflected this declaration of intent: visitors were expected to behave as they would in a sacred place. In this almost liturgical code of conduct – to refer back to Winter's terminology – silence is at the centre. The exhibits must be contemplated in silence, and visitors must walk in silence through the rooms. This silence aligns very well with a romantic and late-romantic vision of the museum as a place of re-semanticisation of objects and of social distinction; however, it clashes decisively with the contemporary view, which wants the museum to be a living place, for communities, for education and enjoyment. The role of

museums has expanded socio-culturally, as was clearly expressed by the International Council of Museums in 2022.²¹ Their definition of museum follows the framework of accessibility and inclusion, rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948; it was supplemented by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, who must not be excluded from cultural participation opportunities.

With regard to this first point, the concept of the museum as a place of violent rupture between the object and its context in the past is now widely accepted. Since Napoleonic times, there has been heated debate in Europe about museum exhibitions as a destructive act for a work of art, which is detached from its context of production and reference and transported to a new environment. In this new environment, the object must be re-semanticised, but in this process it becomes ethereal and detached. The break with context that takes place in the museum has also been seen as a “silencing” of objects – a loss of meaning and function that affects their communicative power, thus reducing them to silence.²² This static quality led great thinkers of the nineteenth century to conceive and define the museum as a church or a cemetery (two places, incidentally, intimately devoted to silence).²³ In this sense, the silent response of observation and contemplation in museums is historically rooted in the concept of the museum as a sacred place and a decontextualised collection: in the Enlightenment and then in the nineteenth century, the contemplation of art could not be described by words.

It is greater than words, and therefore requires silence and a certain purely visual romantic sublimation. This ideal intellectual involvement has over time come to permeate the entire imagery of the “duties” of the perfect visitor; of how a visit to the museum “should” be properly enjoyed.

II.1 Silence and Visitors

This notion of how to visit and what to enjoy in a museum thus introduces the silent contemplation (which therefore excludes any request for vocal commentary) as the foundation of the painful and still unresolved issue of classism in museum visits. Only those who know how to behave properly, enjoying what they see in silence, are fit to visit museums. This is an ancient social convention, but one that is not relegated to the past: since the late eighteenth century, when the Louvre opened to the public, groups of visitors have lamented the lost pleasure of the elitist visit;²⁴ and even today, noisier visitors are stigmatised by those who share the rooms with them. A small addition: it has been pointed out that, in the contemporary period, a further variation on this liturgical aspect of silence has been added – namely, the nostalgic value of the past as an authentic time,²⁵ a golden age to be looked upon with respect and regret, and which is intimately accessible only to a select few intellectuals.

The first interpretation of silence and museums is therefore linked to formal expectations and visitor behaviour: silence is a central part of the museum experience, which is almost required of visitors; they expect to have to perform it, and per-

ceive it as almost obligatory.

Such a conception of art as a sacred and ennobling experience, which elevates the visitor above the chaos of contemporary life, has become the basis for some contemporary exhibitions. An interesting example is the Museum der Stille in Berlin, which was founded in 1994 by Russian painter Nicolai Makarov, and is located in an apartment in a central and busy area of the city. Makarov was inspired by other art venues that aim to reconnect paintings with the concept of the sacred, prayer, and spiritual elevation – such as Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel or Mark Rothko’s Houston Chapel. The museum is spread over a few rooms, all painted in shades of red, with soft lighting and, above all, a prevailing silence – the common thread that links the exhibition and the museum’s aims. The first room is dedicated to the exhibition of white architectural models of spaces designed for silence, created by various international architects since 2014. The central room, known as the “Silence Room”, houses three large works by Makarov; in particular, a smoky grit landscape in front of which visitors can sit on a wooden bench, where even the low light contributes to the work of art. Beyond the exhibition itself, it is the motivations behind this museum experiment that make it an interesting case study for analysing silence in a museum. These reasons are explained by Makarov himself on the museum’s website, where one can also take a virtual guided tour of the rooms.²⁶ Here he states that art has a duty to attract the gaze of visitors in order to elevate their souls through contemplation: viewing the work in silence reconnects the viewer with their most

spiritual side. This yearning for calm, reflection and tranquillity is what humanity aspires to and seeks in the viewing of art. It is therefore a contemplative view of the work – and consequently of the museum, which becomes a “secular meditation room”,²⁷ and makes silence the protagonist of the museum experience.

II.2 Silence as a Content

The second approach to interpreting the concept of silence in museums is that of content, which is mainly created by curators, reference communities, stakeholders and political authorities. We have already mentioned the severing of the links between object and context as one of the aspects that makes the museum a sacred place, and therefore a perfect example of the liturgical silence, as defined by Winter. However, the following discussion deals with the aspects of political and essentialist silence, and integrates well with the most recent studies on memory processes.

In a very simplistic way, silence has often been presented in the past as the result of forgetting (more or less voluntary), and speech as the main symptom of remembering (also more or less voluntary). Thus, silence and speech have been perceived as two almost antithetical elements in the transmission of the past, and memory (both collective and personal) is often regarded as a passive act, consequential to the act of remembering. However, as recent studies remind us,²⁸ remembering and forgetting are two processes mediated by the way the past is transmitted, and they often end up transcending it. This mnemonic

process in contemporary times is a dynamic act, which can change meaning over time,²⁹ depending on its context, precisely because it is a collective act. Indeed, it is now clear that silence is an integral part of the processes of memory, since, as we shall see, it takes various forms and serves various purposes. This makes it a central theme today, both in memory studies and in the philosophy of culture.³⁰ How this silence enters the museum is a very complex but decidedly clear issue, which starts precisely from a series of deliberate curatorial choices that make silence a choice of content (or non-content) that is to be read in a socio-political and essentialist mode, according to Winter's classifications.

The ways in which museums use silence in a political and social context were recently analysed by Mason and Sayner in 2019.³¹ The authors start from the correct assumption³² that silence is a social construct and a non-verbal act of discourse that also becomes a performative act within the discourse itself. On this basis, they identify a series of ways in which silence is produced in the museum space. The first is a museum silence that follows on from the silence of the sources and material in the collection; it is linked both to the concept of the museum as an expression of nation states and elites, and to the endemic exclusion of sections of the population from historical recording and narration. These two factors are reflected in the intentionality of recording and collecting stories, and translate into a partiality of museum discourse as a mirror of the partiality of historical production. This is therefore a structural silence, which comes

from the past and then becomes part of the second type of silence in a museum identified by Mason and Sayner: deliberate silence. This is the result of external pressures that may be linked to the museum's public or private funding, and to current politics – whether liberal and democratic or not – which are more or less explicit or very subtle.

II.3 Silence and Society

Closely related to this are the third and fourth points, namely the museum's deliberate adherence to "society's silences" (i.e. active choices not to remember specific events or people), and the use of ambiguous and/or ambivalent language to address uncomfortable or complex issues.³³ In this regard, a reflection on the political role of silence in museums is extremely apt. This silence has also been defined as strategic in the context of political and historical persuasion. In the socio-political sphere, the boundary between the transmission of historical memory and the choice of silence is often arbitrary and immutable, due to various conflicting narratives. It may be³⁴ a silent community that aims to avoid dissent, or to encourage processes of revision or reconstruction of the past and present; or an "adversarial" silence that follows the current political agenda by removing historical issues perceived as unfavourable; or silence as a formal tool of reconciliation between groups; or silence as a form of political and social prohibition or taboo. In any of these uses, however, a type of silence can be clearly identified that favours a particular social order or political group, and thus appears as a tool for limiting democracy. This

latter concept is expressed in all its gravity precisely in the museum, one of the places par excellence for practising democracy. But if this process seems unnatural in the museum setting, it is not particularly rare. Consider how museum exhibitions remain silent on political and social issues that have not yet been metabolised or addressed in historical and archival discourse (e.g., periods of dictatorship or more recent catastrophes), and especially all those "colonial and post-colonial silences"³⁵ that remain scarcely resolved by European museums.³⁶ Museum silence can therefore also reflect a broader social and political denial, or a "discourse" of omissions supported by groups currently in power.

Following Mason and Sayner's line of thought, a fifth aspect is that of silence due to a presumed lack of materials (in collections or archives) and knowledge to address a specific theme in museums. The danger of this tendency is that by not looking at sources and objects beyond their canonical narratives, museums may be perpetuating convenient or simplistic silences. The sixth point, which will be addressed more fully in the last part of this essay, concerns silence as a museographic choice and exhibition content. This is a performative, aesthetic silence, but one that is an integral part of the exhibition and an important element of the visitor's experience. This is the case, for example, with memorials,³⁷ where silence creates a physical and aesthetic experience of memory, in which remembrance, emotion and historical narrative are very closely connected.

The last two points are also linked to

this horizon of spaces of silence that is deliberately set up in museums. First, there are cases in which silence is deliberately chosen as a means of remembrance, respect and commemoration.³⁸ This way of directing thought, especially in museums dealing with sensitive issues, is also close to Winter's liturgical concept, and that of the museum as a church. At the same time, silence perpetuates certain behavioural norms that are considered appropriate synonymous with personal involvement in certain circumstances – an empathy required of the individual, which is to be expressed through silence. Finally, there is the case of museum silences caused by communities or groups choosing to remain silent about their history, and this choice is respected by the museum. This is a matter of respecting specific sensitivities and sacredness, or painful breaks with the past, which the communities in question are reluctant to talk about and share.³⁹ In these circumstances, it is not only necessary to take into account the weight of the museum's communicative intention in respecting the wishes of individuals and communities (how much, and how, can or should one share with a wider audience? – as Mason and Sayner rightly ask).⁴⁰ In addition, we must remember that some strong beliefs about words as a therapeutic, emancipatory and conflict-resolving gesture are particularly Western phenomena, and are not accepted by all human groups.⁴¹

The multifaceted aspects of silence as a choice of content therefore find their most complex and rich expression in museums, and have a great impact on the private experience and public "usefulness" of the museum. Equally impactful, howev-

er, is what could be defined as the use of silence in the museum as an aid to the visitor. This refers not so much to the attention paid to sound overstimulation in the museum, or the volume of any background noise in the rooms, but above all to the creation of "quiet spaces" in many museums around the world. These are given different names, but have the common goal of offering visitors a quiet space for sensory decompression after and during their visit.⁴² The crucial shift from collection-centred to visitor-centred museums and exhibitions has led in recent years to greater attention to the holistic well-being of visitors, as well as their education. This new focus has not only allowed for new theoretical reflections on how visitors move through museum spaces and what they get out of them; it has also become an opportunity to experiment with new and good practices to improve the physical and spatial experience in museums.⁴³ Among these, quiet rooms are becoming increasingly common. They are generally designed for visitors with sensory issues and sensory processing disorders, but are accessible to all. They are particularly useful for certain categories of visitors who, for valid reasons (permanent or temporary), find themselves in need of a place sheltered from the rest of the museum.

A very recent comprehensive study of quiet spaces in museums⁴⁴ has conducted a preliminary analysis of the methodologies and types of spaces, and how visitors and museum educators respond to the existence and use of these spaces. The study analyses this perception⁴⁵ without focusing on the layout of the spaces themselves (usually enclosed spaces with

comfortable seating, low lighting, light-coloured walls, and no background noise, games or leisure objects). The emphasis is on how people perceive the experience of these places, which – despite normal variations and discrepancies recorded in the analysis – are essentially very similar, and help us to identify the role of the museum in these spaces of silence. This perception is divided into five categories, linked to five different needs that drive the use of these quiet spaces. First, restoration perception is linked to the need for calm and silence during the visit; then, of course, there is the factor of inclusion, which affects a wide range of visitors and needs, and makes these spaces of quiet and silence truly inclusive and accessible to all. This is followed by the need for processing of emotions (emotions present before the visit, or even triggered by the museum experience, depending on the background and sensitivity of the individual visitor); there is also the need for situatedness, which makes visitors feel part of the museum experience without uprooting them from the present. Finally, it is necessary to incorporate variation in the quiet spaces themselves: there is no single solution for everyone, but these spaces must be designed according to the needs and availability of the museum. In any of these experiences, however, silence is transformed into an inclusive tool in museum quiet spaces, for people to process their emotions and reflect as part of the phenomena of learning and engagement. Silence thus becomes an effective tool to help the museum successfully fulfil its tasks within contemporary society.⁴⁶

Therefore, although the quiet space

addresses a common need for silence and shelter, it can be interpreted in various ways – as demonstrated by the numerous examples that have now emerged in museums around the world. However, it is interesting to present a case which is unique in its simplicity, and represents the first experiment of its kind in Maltese museology. This is the inclusive visit project for visitors with autism at the Cathedral Museum in Mdina (Malta), launched in 2019 with a range of dedicated activities.⁴⁷ These include specific activities related to silence, such as special opening dates to ensure a calm and quiet visit, as well as the provision of noise-cancelling headphones. In addition, a “safe room” has been set up between the entrance and the central courtyard, especially for visitors looking for a quiet space to calm down. It is a small room with natural but soft lighting, equipped with comfortable seating and games, available to anyone who requests it. This space is the first and only example of its kind in Maltese museums;⁴⁸ over the years it has become a point of reference for certain types of visitors, as an effective bridge between Maltese museum culture and society.

II.4 Exhibition of Silence

This brings us to the last type of application of silence in museums: namely, silence as an object of exhibition. This is not a widespread type: for example, I am not aware of any museums specifically dedicated to the history and current affairs of deaf individuals, whereas there are museums for blind and visually impaired people⁴⁹ that are entirely based on the concept of darkness (in

this regard, it would be very interesting to carry out a global survey and census of institutions for the deaf in Europe, in order to identify any museums or collections within these institutions). However, there is one small but very interesting museum that focuses on the experience of silence as a lifestyle choice.

In the upper part of the village of Fara Sabina in Lazio (central Italy) stands the monastery of Santa Maria in Castello, belonging to the Order of the Poor Clares. It is one of five cloistered convents for women that were conceived by the Venerable Francesca Farnese, following the example of St Clare's teachings. The Fara monastery's foundation dates back to 1672 and is attributed to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, who also contributed to the definition of the Constitutions.⁵⁰ These historic constitutions, in force until 1963, placed silence at the centre of the monastic experience from the very beginning: they clarify that in the "Monastery of the Solitude of Santa Maria di Fara", silence is total and fundamental, and helps to keep the world out. In fact, the constitutions stipulated that it was forbidden to speak or write to the outside world, or even to communicate with fellow sisters except through tablets and conventional signs, while almost all the life and work of the individual nuns took place within their cells. Silence is therefore fundamental to the identity of the order. It is an ascetic exercise that characterises its history, and must be "communicated" and passed on to visitors as a reflection of cloistered life. To this end, the Museum of Silence of the Order of the Poor Clares was set up and opened, and now forms an integral part of the visit to the open part

of the monastic enclosure. This visit includes the kitchen and the ancient refectory from the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the choir and some incorrupt bodies of nuns: in general, all areas characterised by the practice of silence.

The museum is located in a large rectangular room dating back to the fifteenth century, which was originally part of the church of Santa Maria in Castello and was later incorporated into the seventeenth-century building as a parlour. Accessible from the outside, this was therefore the threshold between the world and the cloister, the last point before silence. This room features a beautiful fresco on one short side depicting a Madonna della Misericordia (Our Lady of Mercy) from the fifteenth century. The layout and location of the museum exploits this threshold position between inside and outside:⁵¹ when you enter, you go directly from light into darkness and silence. The visitor experience therefore unfolds in a game of light and silence. The room remains in darkness, except for beams of light that occasionally illuminate the 21 individual objects displayed in wall-mounted showcases around the room's perimeter. These lights are turned on to show visitors, step by step, the path of cloistered life according to the main themes of the monastic community: prayer, silence, discipline, sewing, pharmacy, cooking, and work. Each theme is illustrated with very common objects that are unique in bearing witness to the life of the Poor Clares in silence.⁵²

An extraordinary example that truly embodies this extreme vow of total silence is a wooden tablet with a

list of commands, from the simplest to the most mortifying, used by the sisters for non-verbal communication. After each object has been illuminated, a series of projections is activated on the vaulted ceiling, with scenes of hands using that particular object. This shows visitors – without speech, or only with small sounds made naturally by the actions – how to use objects that are very simple, but which belong to a world so distant that they too have become mute.

Silence is therefore the common thread that links the place to the lives of the women who lived there and the objects they used, in a cycle of repetition that is always the same and always silent, reflecting the cloistered life over the centuries. In this unique museum space, everything revolves around experience: by transcending the typical visitor aids (captions, panels, etc.), the focus is entirely on the intellectual and, above all, emotional perceptions of a cloistered life devoted to silence. The aim is therefore to arrange a place and a series of objects to convey the physical experience of silence, and make it as much as possible the centrepiece of a museum exhibition.

III. Concluding thoughts

At the end of this essay, we have gained a clearer picture of the role of silence in the contemporary museum. This overview, within a volume dedicated to its exact opposite (i.e. sound and noise), can help us to untangle the various sensory and performative aspects of the visitor's experience in museums. Whether the silence is liturgical, political, inclusive or content-related, understanding the reasons for using it, and its impact, can greatly help professionals to create museums that are increasingly aware of its risks and potential. The overview provided here may well prove useful in guiding future discussions, particularly in exploring in greater depth the museum experiences of both specific social groups and visitors with specific disabilities.

Endnotes:

- 1 Lucy, Anderson 2025.
- 2 Mason, Sayner 2019.
- 3 van Kessel 2015.
- 4 See the seminal work of Duncan 1995.
- 5 Arnold-de Simine 2016, Kattago 2016.
- 6 Branden 1997.
- 7 Hobuß 2016, p. 95.
- 8 Munroe 2016.
- 9 Munroe 2016.
- 10 Bonshek 2016.
- 11 Munroe 2016.
- 12 Winter 2010, pp. 3-7.
- 13 Winter 2010, p. 4.
- 14 Winter 2010, p. 5.
- 15 Winter 2010, p. 8.
- 16 Winter 2010, pp. 9-10.
- 17 Winter 2010, p. 13.
- 18 Winter 2010, p. 20.
- 19 Winter 2010, pp. 22-28.
- 20 Among the others Duncan 1995; Duncan, Wallach 2004; Buggeln 2012.
- 21 <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/> (last access: 04.01.2026).
- 22 van Kessel 2015, pp. 170-171.
- 23 van Kessel 2015, pp. 175-176.
- 24 van Kessel 2015, pp. 171-172.
- 25 Thorpe 2016.
- 26 <http://museum-der-stille.de/en/> (last access 04.01.2026).
- 27 “säkularisierten Andachtsraum” (Peter Raue).
- 28 Dessingué, Winter 2016.
- 29 Bijl 2016.
- 30 Hobuß 2016, p. 95.
- 31 Mason, Sayner 2019.
- 32 After Jensen 1973 and Winter 2010.
- 33 Mason, Sayner 2019, pp. 9-11.
- 34 Knutsen 2016.
- 35 Bijl 2016.
- 36 Among the others see Appadurai 2025, Grechi 2023, and von Oswald, Tinius 2020.
- 37 Munroe 2016.
- 38 Vinitzky-Seroussi, Teege 2010.

- 39 Colwell 2015.
- 40 Mason, Sayner 2019, p. 16.
- 41 Bonshek 2016, p. 33.
- 42 Famà et al. 2024, p. 221, and in general Collettivo Architutti 2023.
- 43 Shettel 2008; Forrest 2013.
- 44 Lucy, Anderson 2025.
- 45 Lucy, Anderson 2025, pp. 6-16.
- 46 Lucy, Anderson 2025, pp. 15-17.
- 47 <https://metropolitanchapter.com/mdina-cathedral-museum/tourist-information/autism-friendly-museum/> (last access: 04.01.2026).
- 48 Although quiet rooms are not uncommon at major national cultural events such as the Malta Book Festival.
- 49 Like Museo Omero in Ancona or Museo Tolomeo in Bologna, just to name two seminal examples in Italy.
- 50 <https://www.clarisseremite.com/monastero.html> (last access: 04.01.2026).
- 51 As described by the authors of the exhibition: <https://www.spaziconsonanti.com/museo-del-silenzio> (last access: 04.01.2026).
- 52 Redazione Thema 2017.

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