MAKING MEANING AND CONNECTIONS: A STUDY OF THE INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION PRACTICES FOR THE MEDIEVAL COLLECTION AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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Introduction

For nearly a century, Ohio’s Cleveland Museum of Art has stood as a world-renowned collector of works of art from all corners of the earth, including ones from the European Middle Ages (ca. 500-1500 AD). Its medieval collection of decorative arts and devotional objects, such as reliquaries and altarpieces, as well as pieces of armor, rivals that of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and upholds the standards of “Cleveland quality” that it so proudly boasts.¹ The CMA has also recently undertaken a massive reinstallation project begun in 2005 with a grant of about $350 million, and the medieval works of art are among the many that it reinstalled.² The grant allowed the museum a rare opportunity to rethink its presentation of its entire collection, to refocus goals of making it more relevant and engaging for visitors, and to implement the use of interpretive technology to provide visitors an opportunity to access more information.³ The basic question the project examines is how the staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art has presented the history and art of the Middle Ages through the new medieval galleries, and their interpretive and educational tools and techniques.

¹ David Franklin, “For All the People Forever,” The Cleveland Museum of Art Members Magazine 51, no. 6 (November/December 2011): 7. It is important to note that the CMA’s Armor Court is not comprised of entirely medieval objects. In fact, many, if not most, of these pieces originate from the Renaissance. However, the Armor Court will be referenced as a “medieval” gallery throughout this paper because it does contain medieval pieces, and because the museum itself uses the gallery to educate the public about life and warfare both in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The museum staff interviewed for this study also referred to the Armor Court as one of the medieval galleries as well. However, since the Armor Court is a combination of medieval and Renaissance, the chapter on interpretive practices will not analyze the ones used in this gallery.


³ Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
In the scholarship for public history and museum studies, there is currently a lack of material on the interpretation of medieval objects in United States public institutions. Several studies scratch the surface of this topic by discussing the history of such places, including the Cleveland Museum of Art, and how they built their collections of medieval art as well as how they interpreted it over the course of the twentieth century. Christina Nielsen’s *To Inspire and Instruct: A History of Medieval Art in Midwestern Museums* (2008), an anthology of essays on medieval art in Midwestern museums, discusses the development of how American museums interpreted medieval art to their audiences over the course of the twentieth century, and argues that Midwestern museums valued medieval art in the twentieth century because individuals believed that the art could inspire and educate American audiences. However, the study barely covers the recent history of Midwestern museums that house medieval artwork, and it lacks an in-depth discussion that would help to clarify the interpretive and educational practices of these museums in the twenty-first century.

Several other works address the CMA and its medieval collection more specifically, but like Nielsen’s work, they do not provide an in-depth analysis of interpretive and educational practices. Carl Wittke’s *The First Fifty Years: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1916-1966* (1966) is a broad history of the CMA’s development in its formative years, and he places the CMA in the social and cultural context of the United

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States at that time. When he discusses the medieval collection at the CMA, he does not examine how it interpreted the art or the history to the public, or even how education programs utilized the Armor Court, but rather what the collection meant to the museum as a whole and how collecting medieval objects like armor fit into a larger trend in the first half of the twentieth century. This is useful for establishing how and why the CMA built up its medieval collection, but it lacks an examination of interpretive and educational practices.

Stephen Fliegel, the current Curator of Medieval Art, published *Arms and Armor: The Cleveland Museum of Art* (2007) and it provides a bit more insight into how the CMA presents medieval objects, especially since the book focuses on a prominent collection that features several medieval works of art. Fliegel writes a wonderfully detailed history of how the Severance Armor Collection came to be part of the CMA, and he discusses the significance of the collection in shaping the first years of the popularity and legitimacy of the museum. The rest of the book examines the history of armor from ancient times through the Renaissance. While it could be used as an example of how CMA staff interpret and teach pieces of the medieval collection to a general audience that wishes to know more about armor, Fliegel does not discuss museum practices for interpreting medieval art in the galleries or education practices that teach the Middle Ages through the objects. So, like Nielsen and Wittke, this book lacks the kind of examination that would make these practices clearer.

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6 Ibid., 45, 61, 82-83.
Finally, Holger Klein’s essay, “Building Cleveland’s Medieval Future: The Origins and History of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Medieval Collection,” examines the history of the CMA’s medieval collection as part of Nielsen’s anthology. His aim is to take a look back at the early days of the museum and its medieval collection to consider the contributions of the most important individuals who had a hand in bringing the pieces to the museum and established its reputation as a world-renowned collector of medieval art. As will be discussed later in this study, several figures such as Frederic Allen Whiting and William M. Milliken did indeed make the establishment and growth of this collection possible. However, most of the essay focuses on the early years of the museum and barely touches on the more recent history of the medieval collection. The closest he comes to discussing how it is interpreted to the public is by mentioning that Fliegel’s Arms and Armor book continues a tradition of esteemed scholarly publications by the museum. Therefore, Klein, Fliegel, Wittke, and Nielsen do address the history of the interpretive and educational practices at the Cleveland Museum of Art, but they fail to address current practices and theories used to make meaning from medieval objects to museum visitors.

The scholarship on the interpretation of medieval objects in American museums is no doubt thus limited because of the small number of institutions that house medieval objects in the first place, let alone a collection as rich as the one the CMA holds. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, CA, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke

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9 Ibid., 69.
University, and the Art Institute of Chicago are among the few that have had the resources to acquire such objects and display them for the American public. Even though there are few museums like these, this topic is still important to consider because it will show how American museums deal with the challenges of presenting complex history from an era that is far removed from their own. This project thus offers a unique contribution to the field of public history and museum studies because it discusses a topic that scholars have not yet extensively explored. The project will expand relevant studies in the field such as Nielsen’s, Klein’s, and Fliegel’s work because it will contribute a perspective on the changes that have occurred in museum interpretive practices over the past decade.

Ivo Maroević’s *Introduction to Museology: The European Approach* (1998), a theoretical background of museology that underlies the interpretive and educational practices at the CMA, will be used as the framework and methodology for this study.\(^\text{10}\) Maroević extensively explores the “language of objects” and what it means for an object to become musealized, or “the process by which an object gradually becomes musealia” (an object within a museum).\(^\text{11}\) This can be applied to the medieval art at the CMA because the objects themselves have become musealized; the objects have taken on a new meaning since being placed in the museum and by being surrounded by other objects.

The way that the staff helps users to make meaning is through their interpretive and

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\(^\text{10}\) I chose Maroević through research in the field of museology. His theories of museology seemed most appropriate for this study because of his treatment of objects as the center of museum work. Objects are complex things that are laden with meaning, and this meaning can be brought forth and even change depending on a variety of factors such as setting.

educational practices, which is part of musealization since it is their constructions of meaning that are shown to the public. The application of Maroević’s concept to this study will therefore expand and complement studies in the field by being specifically applied to the CMA’s practices, which has not been done before, most likely due to the previously mentioned lack of scholarship on musealized medieval artifacts.

In addition, brief comparisons will be made throughout my project between the CMA and two other institutions, the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) and Louisville, Kentucky’s Frazier International History Museum. The DIA recently reinstalled its collection from 2002 to 2007, and it was one of the first museums of its kind to use relatively recent theory informed by visitor research in its new interpretive practices.\textsuperscript{12} The main goal of its reinstallation was to make the facility entirely “visitor-oriented” and to make the “public’s expectations, needs, and experiences at the front and center” of the planning process.\textsuperscript{13} While the CMA also took the approach of refreshing interpretation to make the collections more “engaging and relevant” to visitors, it did not necessarily adopt the mantra of creating a “visitor-oriented” space, but rather focused on the use of new interpretive technology.\textsuperscript{14} The context provided by the goals of the DIA allows for a clearer understanding of the interpretive and educational practices used by the CMA.

The Frazier Museum is the only institution outside of the United Kingdom to permanently house pieces from the British Royal Armouries, which it acquired from the

\textsuperscript{14} Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art. ArtLens and Gallery One are the two new technologies and they will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.
private collection of Owsley Brown Frazier of Kentucky. A significant portion of these artifacts originate from medieval England, and one of the museum’s goals with their exhibition is to present the “complete American story.” It is apparent that the CMA did not take such an approach with its reinstallation, most likely because its overall collection is much more extensive; however, there are some similarities in the gallery designs between the two places (such as chronological groupings). The Frazier also has educational programs that are very similar to the ones that the CMA developed for its Armor Court (both allow students to handle the armor), which shows that there is a pattern in American museums in the way that they choose to teach the history of the Middle Ages. A comparison with the way that staff of the Frazier display these objects to the public through interpretive practices and educational programs is helpful for understanding how American museums deal with presenting the history of a time period like the Middle Ages that is not necessarily close to its own.

Further, definitions of the ideas of “interpretation” and “education” as they pertain to the museum field are essential to fully understanding the theory and practices of the CMA. These two terms are often linked very closely due to the nature of their work, which is ultimately to educate the public about works of art on display and to provide resources to access the information the visitors seek. Over the course of the twentieth century, American institutions have given greater focus to these two practices.

17 Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 10.
Education, according to George Hein, can include a very broad range of activities as well as staff. In a recent survey of the tasks of art museum educators, data was collected in seven different areas of programming that all fell under the definition of “education.” These consist of “‘tour programs; informal gallery learning programs; community, adult, and family programs; classes and other public programs; school programs; and online educational programs.’”\(^{18}\)

For instance, one program at the CMA for schoolchildren is “Cool Knights: Armor from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance,” in which students learn about lives of knights and nobles through pieces of the armor collection. The curriculum also engages students with hands-on activities to help them better learn about objects through a multi-sensory experience. For adults, programs such as a Performing Arts Series “Mother and Child” center around one or several pieces in the collection, like the Virgin Eleousa (Crete, ca. 1425-1450), to enhance visitor understanding of the deeper meaning behind it, which in this case would be music that was inspired by devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. During the CMA’s renovation, it was able to greatly enhance their educational and public engagement facilities by building a new 13,000 square foot space dedicated specifically to such programs.\(^{19}\) Historically, the CMA has also dedicated a great deal of resources and attention to them as well.\(^{20}\)

The work of interpretation is also essential to visitors’ knowledge and understanding of the objects in a museum. According to the Mission and Values of the

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\(^{19}\) Franklin, “For All the People Forever,” 5-6.

\(^{20}\) Wittke, *The First Fifty Years*, 61.
National Association for Interpretation, it “forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.” These museum staff work to discover what potential connections between visitors and the artwork are, and then provide resources so that visitors can use them to learn more about the object to which they are attracted. For instance, the Apple iPad application ArtLens allows visitors to access additional content, including text and videos. The ancillary materials for *Saint Lawrence* (German, ca. 1502-1508) has five videos for the application, such as one on the artist and another on the area from which the sculpture originated. These devices appeal to the potential interests of the visitor that lie in the history behind the objects in the museum. These two ideas are central to understanding how the Cleveland Museum of Art researches its medieval objects and develops programs to provide information to the visiting general public, which is why they are the main focus of this study.

The interpretive and educational practices for the medieval galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art demonstrate how opportunities for meaning-making are created for visitors. This is done with various elements of interpretation, which includes grouping and arrangement of objects, aesthetics of the galleries, informational labels and panels, and supplemental technology. These all stress a connection to the people of the Middle Ages to help visitors experience what the world was like for people who saw and used the art in that time, like the aforementioned multimedia content for the sculpture.

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Saint Lawrence. There are also many educational programs that focus on teaching visitors about the Middle Ages specifically, including classroom programs, traditional programs, and programs designed for all ages to make learning fun while also providing context, which can be seen from “Cool Knights,” which allows students to actually handle pieces of armor from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. A study of the educational and interpretive practices at the Cleveland Museum of Art that pertain to the medieval collection demonstrates that they aim to facilitate visitor-object interactions, increase opportunities to make meaning and learn from objects, and to make the art accessible to the public. This has been done through crafting a narrative of the Middle Ages that focused on the stories of the people that lived during that time period, through providing context, and through a variety of classroom and traditional programs.

In order to show this, the study will be outlined as follows. The first chapter gives the history of the medieval collection at the CMA and how and why it came to be the world-renowned collection it is today. The origins and development of the medieval collection across the twentieth century is necessary for understanding the current practices of the museum. The second chapter focuses on museology and related concepts that form the framework for this project. Chapter three discusses the interpretive practices involved with presenting medieval history and the medieval objects at the CMA, including an examination of labels and panels, gallery space, and technology. Finally, chapter four discusses the educational practices and programs at the CMA that involve the medieval collection, which include children’s programs, lectures intended for adult audiences, and special programs for all ages. A conclusion follows, outlining the larger
significance of the project and how it is relevant in the field today.
Chapter 1

The Origins and Development of the Medieval Collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art

The process of collecting works of art from the European Middle Ages since the museum’s opening in 1916 allowed it to establish itself as one of the great art museums of the United States, and to create a foundation that would allow it to develop the stellar medieval collection that it holds today. The CMA had within its early staff two members dedicated to acquiring rare works of art that would place it on a level with other great institutions in the United States, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA), and the collections they acquired that brought it to such prominence featured objects from the European Middle Ages. The rise to prominence of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s medieval collection over the course of the twentieth century was due to the artistic interests of Frederic Allen Whiting and William M. Milliken, who, under their respective directorships, acquired the Severance Armor Collection in 1916 and pieces from the Guelph Treasure in 1930. The visions these two men had of the Cleveland Museum of Art as a reputable and prestigious museum led them to acquire these significant collections, which allowed the museum to prioritize the collection of medieval artwork and develop the collection into what it is today.

The Directors

Two significant individuals in the early formative years of the Cleveland Museum of Art were Frederic Allen Whiting and William M. Milliken. They envisioned a museum with a
reputation of fine works of art to rival that of museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Whiting and Milliken believed that building up a collection of rare and fine objects would solidify this reputation, and because of their interests in medieval art in particular, the CMA’s collection of medieval artwork would be substantially and qualitatively increased during their respective times as director of the museum. Whiting served as the first director of the Cleveland Museum of Art from 1913 until 1930, and it was during these critical formative years that his visions for a prestigious museum for the people of Cleveland led to the acquisition of the Severance Armor Collection. His motivation came from his desire to equate the CMA in the same esteem as museums like the MMA. Milliken served as the curator of decorative arts underneath Whiting and became the director of the museum itself from 1930 to 1958. His substantial interest in medieval decorative artwork, in conjunction with Whiting’s visions for the CMA, allowed the museum to establish itself as one of the leading museums in the U.S. to boast a high-quality collection of medieval art, especially through his acquisition of pieces from the Guelph Treasure in 1930.

Frederic Allen Whiting

Whiting accepted the offer to become the first director of the Cleveland Museum of Art at the foundation of the museum trust in May 1913. He had very specific visions

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1 Holger Klein, “Building Cleveland’s Medieval Future, 55.” The Severance Armor Collection is the original armor collection that the CMA acquired in 1916, purchased through a donation made by John L. Severance. It included both medieval and Renaissance pieces of armor and weapons.
2 Ibid., 61.
3 The Guelph Treasure is a collection of medieval ecclesiastical art originating from Brunswick, Germany in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, auctioned off by the House of Guelph in 1930.
4 Wittke, The First Fifty Years, 23.
in mind for what he wanted the museum to become and what he wanted it to stand for; in
his mind, the CMA needed to be a place for people from all walks of life to come and
visit, and to be inspired by the artwork that they saw there.\(^5\) His vision can be seen in his
speech at the museum’s inauguration, in which he thanks “the most active and energetic
cooperation of the people of Cleveland” for their tireless support of the museum and
working to make it open.\(^6\) Whiting also states that the CMA was meant to be an
institution “for the people, by the people” and he wanted them to be inspired by the
works of art that they came to see there.\(^7\) From these words, it is apparent that Whiting
believed very strongly that the purpose of the CMA was to give the people a place where
they could come and view priceless works of art. He had very passionate ideals about
inspiring the people of Cleveland, and a very particular idea of the kind of artwork that
would serve as this inspiration.

The kind of art in particular that Whiting believed would inspire Cleveland’s
inhabitants was actually art made of steel. He had a romantic notion to inspire
Cleveland’s steelworkers with decorative art that involved metalworking.\(^8\) This was so
important to Whiting because he believed the CMA should reflect the heritage of the
workers of Cleveland, part of the industrialization that had sprung up in the city in the
nineteenth century. So, from the very beginning of his directorship (and perhaps even
before), Whiting became immensely preoccupied with bringing in a collection of armor

\(^5\) Ibid., 46.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Stephen N. Fliegel, Arms and Armor: The Cleveland Museum of Art (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of
Art, 2007), 11.
to create an “Armor Court” to fulfill this vision.\textsuperscript{9} Even after his acquisition of the Severance Armor Collection in 1916, he expressed his visions and romanticisms of industrialization with an article in the \textit{Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art} in 1918. Here, he writes that “Cleveland is one of the great iron and steel centers, and should own the most useful collection of fine examples of wrought iron and steel, cast bronzes, etc., as an inspiration to workers and designers in these [industrial] fields.”\textsuperscript{10} He then thanked the Severance family of Cleveland for their generous donation of an armor collection the year of the opening, as it fit his goal of collecting artwork related to the metal industry. Clearly, Whiting had an inspired vision for works of art that were to come into the museum, and he highly appreciated the donors who helped to make this vision turn into a reality.

Before Whiting’s vision became a reality in 1916, his desire to obtain an armor collection seemed to preoccupy a great deal of his thoughts. In a letter to a colleague from 1914, he expressed his overwhelming desire to acquire a collection of armor for the museum. He wrote, “I already have our former court of casts arranged in my mind’s eye as a court of armor, and wish to make \textit{every possible effort} [emphasis added] to carry out this scheme which I am sure will work out beautifully.”\textsuperscript{11} From this letter, it seems that Whiting had imagined his precious armor court dozens of times, and it was a simple and undisputable fact that the CMA needed to have a court of armor. His vision must be fulfilled at any possible cost.

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\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, quoted in Stephen N. Fliegel, \textit{Arms and Armor: The Cleveland Museum of Art} (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2007), 11.
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Whiting’s visions and ideas cannot be seen more clearly than they are in the Armor Court still present at the Cleveland Museum of Art (Gallery 210), which is in a way the lasting reward for his efforts undertaken almost one hundred years ago. Although several of the main pieces were discovered to be frauds in 1959, the Armor Court has rivaled the Metropolitan Museum of Art in its time at the CMA, especially after the accession of more non-fraudulent pieces in the later 1960s. From an image of the gallery holding the armor in 1916 to the picture of the gallery today, it is very clear that Whiting’s visions still stand. In Figure 2, one can imagine walking into the large stone room. In the center are the three suits of armor mounted on horseback. Surrounding the full suits are additional pieces of armor including weapons and helmets, as if the knights were about to head into battle or a tournament. The majestic display clearly suggests the significance of the armor to the museum’s collection. The armor collection resides in one of the most spacious and impressive galleries in the building, and has since 1916, demonstrating the desire to show off the collection and draw visitors’ attention as much as possible. Also, in this space, the skylight brings out the natural shine of the metals of the suits of armor to further showcase the impressiveness of the pieces. This display would not mean much, though, if the armor did not remain a popular item in the museum for almost a century. A photograph of the renovated Armor Court in 1998 (see Figure 3), which is how the court still looks today, truly shows the extent of Whiting’s vision. Even with the deaccessioning of the fraudulent pieces in the 1960s, the representation of the armor in the museum bears a remarkable similarity to the display in 1916. Therefore,

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Frederic Allen Whiting’s vision of acquiring a collection of armor at the beginning of the Cleveland Museum of Art largely defined the kind of art the museum displayed and defined its dedication to collecting quality works of art from the Middle Ages.

William M. Milliken

Once Frederic Allen Whiting served a remarkable term of seventeen years as the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, he stepped down in 1930 and William M. Milliken assumed the position of his former colleague. Milliken had also worked closely with Whiting since 1919 as the Curator of Decorative Arts, during which time the CMA acquired quite a few medieval objects of notable importance.\(^{13}\) His fascination with decorative arts of the Middle Ages helped to build the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art to a level of prominence and establish it as one of the few American museums to boast a wide collection of medieval objects that can still be seen today.

Milliken added a number of “astounding masterpieces” during his time at the CMA.\(^{14}\) In fact, Stephen Fliegel believes that Milliken’s arrival in 1919 would fundamentally direct the future of the museum because of the many significant works of medieval art that he acquired.\(^{15}\) This collection did appear to undergo its most intensive growth during the 1920s and the 1930s when Milliken was the Curator of Decorative Arts and the Director, most likely because of his prior interest and knowledge of artwork from

\[^{13}\] Fliegel, *Arms and Armor*, 22.
\[^{15}\] Fliegel, *Arms and Armor*, 22.
the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{16} This interest can be seen in Milliken’s first contribution the \textit{Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art}, which was titled, “French Gothic Sculpture.” In this article he emphasizes that French Gothic art came from an age of cathedrals, and he also emphasizes the quality and value of such new pieces recently acquired by the museum.\textsuperscript{17} From his reference to the great cathedrals of Europe, it seems that Milliken wanted to highlight the monumental structures and the craftsmanship that went into building them. His point to place the pieces of art recently acquired in their larger context is a technique that actually still appears in the CMA today, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. His interest in medieval art thus clearly lasted throughout the twentieth century and helped the CMA build up its collection to the high quality in which it stands today.

This can also be seen in the pieces of art that Milliken acquired during his time at the CMA. One of his particular foci was on developing the medieval German art collection, and an opportunity arose in 1930 on which he simply had to act. The Guelph Treasure became available in 1928 in the aftermath of World War I when the German aristocratic house of Braunschweig-Lüneburg found itself in a difficult financial situation and began selling parts of the collection to raise money.\textsuperscript{18} Milliken traveled to Germany to see the objects when rumors leaked of the treasure being sold. His excitement at the possibility of acquiring these objects for the CMA seemed to overwhelm him; he wrote, “The thrill of seeing such objects, the knowledge that it was possible for Cleveland to

\textsuperscript{18} Klein, “Building Cleveland’s Medieval Future,” 59.
acquire some of them was tremendous.” He was indeed able to obtain several significant pieces from the collection, most notably *The Portable Altar of the Countess Gertrude* and *The Arm Reliquary of the Apostles*. As will be explained later in this chapter, the exhibition of these objects drew in thousands of visitors and gave the CMA a boost in status in the United States and around the world. Without Milliken’s keen interest in medieval decorative objects, it is possible that the CMA would not have been able to acquire objects of such high importance and value.

Milliken’s acquisitions during the later 1940s also particularly reflect his interest in broadening the existing medieval collection, as well as his desire to strengthen sub-fields within medieval art, such as objects from Germany. One such piece that demonstrates this is a twelfth-century bronze altar cross with stand from Hildesheim (see Figure 4). It is extremely valuable as well as significant for the time period and the culture of its origin because of its representation of devotional metalworking from the twelfth century. In addition, Milliken acquired a fourteenth-century French ivory mirror case (see Figure 5), which helped the museum to further develop its collection of French Gothic artwork. It significance stemmed from the value of its medium, ivory, and its representation of French noble culture. According to the label, the two characters playing chess might be two people from a popular contemporary epic poem about the

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21 Ibid.
22 It can be reasonably assumed that the mirror case belonged to a member of the nobility or upper classes because members of lower classes, such as peasants, would not have had the means to purchase such an object.
adventures of Huon of Bordeaux. If this is the case, the object would show that household items of the nobility were decorated with characters from popular stories of the time period, which would be an important part of their culture. As this example shows, the significant and valuable nature of artworks acquired by Milliken added greatly to the quality of the CMA’s medieval collection.

Many more acquisitions of medieval works of art followed over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Milliken’s interest and commitment to collecting objects from the Middle Ages helped to mature and develop the collection, especially through the pieces of the Guelph Treasure added in 1930. With his interest in medieval art, Milliken continued to broaden the CMA’s holdings, and Milliken made an invaluable contribution to the Cleveland Museum of Art: the vision and objects the museum needed to become a leading collector of medieval art in the United States.

**Acquisitions that Established Prominence**

Two acquisitions of collections that included valuable works of art from the Middle Ages were the Severance Armor Collection (1916) and pieces from the Guelph Treasure (1930). The Severance Armor Collection set the precedent for the CMA to acquire rare and fine works of art from the Middle Ages by drawing much praise and attention at the grand opening of the museum in 1916. The acquisition of pieces of the Guelph Treasure solidified the CMA’s prominence as a museum that collected medieval art by bringing splendid world-renowned pieces to the museum.

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The Severance Armor Collection

From the opening of the museum, the Severance Armor Collection has proved to be one of the largest draws for visitors. Its display at the Cleveland Museum of Art allowed it to rival other large museums at the beginning of the twentieth century, most notably the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The history of the Severance Armor Collection is a fascinating one, and Stephen Fliegel’s 2007 book *Arms And Armor* describes how it came to reside at the CMA. He writes that the Armor Court has represented the “heart and soul” of the Cleveland Museum of Art for three generations, which clearly demonstrates the significance of the Severance Armor Collection. Indeed, over the years, visitors have shown a particular interest in the Armor Court and recalled fond memories of visiting the gallery space. The collection has even procured substantial donations in its honor for a speedier reinstallation in 2012. The Mandel Foundation, operated by three native Cleveland brothers Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel, donated $7.5 million to the CMA specifically for the Armor Court in August 2012; according to a *Cleveland Plain Dealer* article, the impact the gallery left on Morton Mandel in his youth motivated him to give back to the museum. He visited the CMA for the first time during a school trip in the 1930s, and he said that he had “always been dazzled by [the Armor Court].” Being able to sponsor the Armor Court later in life for him “is a literal dream come true,” and he “personally identif[i]es with the Armor Court in a way [he doesn’t] identify with anything of that nature anywhere else.”

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24 Ibid.
Armor Court demonstrates how it is well-remembered in the minds of those who visited because of its rich display of arms and armor from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The inaugural exhibition of the CMA also demonstrates how the Armor Court helped the CMA establish itself as a prominent museum that collected medieval art in the United States. The inaugural exhibition in 1916 prominently featured the Severance Armor Collection. In the *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, an article describes the inauguration ceremony and speeches. The chairman thanked a number of donors whose gifts made the acquisitions of many fine works of art possible, and among those he thanked were Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance. He said their generosity “at once gives our museum high rank among the few possessors in this country of great collections of armor.”

He also said that the collection was “if not yet equal in importance, is second only to the famous collection at the Metropolitan Museum” in New York City. His remarks show that the acquisition of the arms and armor gave the CMA a boost in prominence and that it was recognized for the collection of medieval art from the very beginning. The reception after the inaugural speeches was also held in the Armor Court that evening. This suggests that the staff considered the armor collection its most-highly-prized collection, since they had many other gallery spaces from which to choose. The staff desired to show off what the museum was capable of collecting and displaying, and this included works of art from the Middle Ages.

The Armor Court immediately defined itself as the CMA’s signature space at its


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 24.
opening, and over the years, the collection proved to be an “island of stability and consistency.”\textsuperscript{29} The frequent use of the Armor Court for events like education programs and the May Show\textsuperscript{30} demonstrates that the CMA used the armor collection to define its prominence among other American museums. Photographs of students visiting the Armor Court and of visitors at the CMA for a May Show display the interest of the public and the centrality of the collection to the museum’s operation. Figure 6 shows a class from Murray Hill School sketching in the Armor Court in 1920. By 1919, the CMA offered drawing classes for gifted children, so this is likely what was captured in the photograph.\textsuperscript{31} Wittke goes into great detail about the development of the CMA’s education programs in the first fifty years, and the only image he included in his book from those education programs is one that featured the Armor Court. Figure 7 displays the 1956 May Show that depicts the Armor Court full of prospective purchasers.\textsuperscript{32} It also demonstrates the centrality of the Armor Court to the CMA in defining its identity because the room was used for large events like the annual May Show. Perhaps Milliken, the director at the time, wanted to inspire the prospective buyers with what he considered the most iconic gallery at the museum and what he felt represented the ideals of the museum best. The Severance Armor Collection and the Armor Court brought the spotlight to the CMA through its exhibition of medieval and Renaissance art, and the collection also established the CMA as a high-status collector of rare and fine objects from the Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{29} Fliegel, Arms and Armor, 21.  
\textsuperscript{30} The May Show is an annual juried exhibition of works of art by artists from Northeast Ohio, sponsored by the Cleveland Museum of Art.  
\textsuperscript{31} Wittke, The First Fifty Years, 34.  
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 99.
The Guelph Treasure

While the Armor Court was essential in establishing the Cleveland Museum of Art as a serious contender in acquiring objects from the Middle Ages, the acquisition of the Guelph Treasure in 1930 by Milliken solidified it. The acquisition of this collection “immediately” raised the museum’s reputation to the point where it ranked with leading museums of Germany, France, and England in medieval art. In the first fifty years of the CMA’s existence, no single acquisition had done more for its recognition by the museum community in the United States and abroad. The acquisition of pieces from the Guelph Treasure proved to be a hugely important for the focus of the Cleveland Museum of Art on collecting medieval artwork because the acquisition gave the museum the necessary step up from its smaller medieval collection to be considered a serious national and international collector of artwork from the Middle Ages.

The pieces from the Guelph Treasure that Milliken acquired on his voyage to Germany were some of the more significant pieces of the original treasure. Among these pieces were the Cumberland Medallion, the Paten of Saint Bernward, the Arm Reliquary of the Apostles, the Horn of St. Blaise, and later, the Portable Altar of the Countess Gertrude. The reason these pieces were (and still are) considered so significant was because of the materials they were made out of (many like the Arm Reliquary and the Portable Altar were made of gold and decorated with a number of precious and semi-precious stones) and because they exemplified early medieval craftsmanship (see Figures

31 Ibid., 86.
34 Ibid.
In addition, they represented part of the history of the medieval church, particularly the cult of relics, and the “devotional spirit” of the Middle Ages. The rarity of being able to acquire such objects en masse as Milliken did made the treasure’s journey to Cleveland even more infamous, and as such the acquisition received much attention, even from other major newspapers outside the Cleveland area, like the nationally-read and acclaimed *New York Times*. It printed several articles about pieces of the Guelph Treasure coming to Cleveland, and these articles show how the acquisition of the pieces gave the CMA the boost it needed to be considered a high-ranking museum that collected medieval artwork. In August 1930, the paper announced the news that pieces of the Guelph Treasure would be coming to Cleveland, and it also emphasized the high value and quality of the artworks by discussing the historical significance and their valuable media. Another article in January 1931 announced the purchase of three more objects, the pieces of the portable altar that belonged to the Countess Gertrude of Brunswick in the eleventh century. It states that the pieces were “considered among the most important objects in the famous Guelph treasure of medieval ecclesiastical art.” This shows the tremendous amount of significance the purchase of these pieces had to the status of the CMA.

The significance of the acquisition can also be seen from the record number of people who came to see the special exhibition of the Guelph Treasure in 1931. The exhibit ran from January 10 to February 1, and the amount of visitors that came made the

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36 Ibid., 61.
37 Wittke, *The First Fifty Years*, 86.
exhibit the most “successful and dramatic event in the museum’s history to date.”⁴⁰ On the first day alone, nearly 8,200 people stood in line, and in the first week, the number was up to 30,000 visitors (see Figure 13 for photograph); in sum, 97,000 individuals came to see the Guelph Treasure Exhibit, a staggering number of people even by twenty-first century standards.⁴¹ In addition, the education department at the time held a total of 182 talks to about 15,000 people over the duration of the exhibit.⁴² From this high number of visitors that came to see the Guelph Treasure when it came to the CMA in the 1930s, it is clear that the acquisition of those pieces held a tremendous amount of significance for the museum because of the attention and reputation it drew as a collector of rare and fine artifacts from the European Middle Ages.

Several articles on the Guelph Treasure also appeared in the *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* that display the great pride the CMA took in its acquisition. There was a large feature of the treasure in November of 1930 written by the man who had acquired the pieces himself, William Milliken. In this article, Milliken describes the historical and artistic significance of each newly acquired piece, and for each, he makes sure to note the inherent value and quality.⁴³ Milliken also wrote that the objects were “unique,…as works of art [were] outstanding, and which [had] an unquestioned and distinguished provenance.”⁴⁴ While Milliken clearly had a bias in promoting his own museum, this still shows the tremendous honor he derived from the pieces and his desire
to convey to readers of the magazine that this new addition to the medieval collection added a high level of quality to the museum. Milliken also states that “objects of rarest aesthetic beauty have been acquired, completely in accord with the general Museum policy of quality.” Here, it is clear that Milliken knew that the objects acquired from the Guelph Treasure had solidified the CMA’s place in the art museum world of collectors of great art. In a later book published in 1958, he writes that the altar of the Countess Gertrude with the two accompanying crosses was “the single greatest acquisition” the CMA ever made. Indeed, if nothing else, the thousands of visitors that flocked to the Cleveland Museum of Art for the special exhibition of the Guelph Treasure support Milliken’s claims. The acquisition of the Guelph Treasure truly made the Cleveland Museum of Art known for its medieval collection and set a strong foundation for visions of future acquisitions to build on the splendid medieval objects already in place.

Conclusion

Due to the visions of two men and the acquisition of two highly valuable and significant collections, the Cleveland Museum of Art was able to establish itself in the American and international art museum world as a collector of rare and fine objects from the time period of the European Middle Ages. As the first director, Frederic Allen Whiting provided the drive the CMA needed to acquire its first significant collection featuring medieval artwork, the Severance Armor Collection. After him, William M. Milliken solidified the CMA as a world-renowned collector of medieval artwork with his

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45 Ibid., 177.
primary focus on collecting medieval decorative artwork and through his monumental acquisition of the Guelph Treasure in 1930. Without the efforts of these two men who provided direction for the CMA in collecting medieval artwork, the museum would not have had a foundation upon which to build up its medieval collection. Since the early twentieth century, medieval art has been a primary focus, and still is today, for the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the development of the collection over the rest of the century resulted in the devotion of three entire galleries to medieval artwork today (not including Byzantine art or the Armor Court) and the creation of a number of education programs focused on medieval artwork. The visions of Milliken and Whiting to bring prestige to the museum have thus been realized today through the collection of medieval artwork.
Chapter 2

The Framework: Constructing Interpretation, Visitor-Object Interactions, and Visitor Learning

Museum objects and visitor interactions with them are widely discussed topics in museum studies scholarship. The various theories discussed in this chapter will be divided into three sections. The first is that of learning in the museum, especially the idea of free-choice learning. Free-choice learning can be defined as learning primarily driven by the needs and interests of the learner, and he or she can choose to learn more about what interests them specifically. The connections museum professionals try to create between objects and visitors are enhanced by free-choice learning principles, as outlined by scholars John H. Falk, Lynn D. Dierking, and George E. Hein. These scholars write that visitors do learn from museums, that learning is a constructed experience, and that free-choice learning is how many museum visitors take away information from the exhibits and galleries that they see. The second section is that of the interpretation of objects. The scholars Ivo Maročić, Charles Saumarez Smith, Peter Vergo, and Christopher Whitehead all discuss how interpretation allows messages to be created by museum professionals so that information from objects can be communicated to the public. Museum professionals create and control the environment in which objects are displayed, and they offer the objects up to people who can make meaning from them. The third and final section goes another step further in examining interpretive and educational
practices, centered around visitor-object interactions. Several scholars who discuss this are Cheryl Meszaros et al., Sandra H. Dudley, and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. These authors argue that through the construction of meaning in museum displays, objects present information to the visiting public that can elicit interactions with them.

All of the scholars from these three categories come together in this chapter to explain the framework for this study to better understand the inner-workings of the Cleveland Museum of Art. The construction of meaning from objects, the information conveyed to visitors in visitor-object interactions, and visitors learning from objects especially through free-choice learning all demonstrate how information is constructed for visitors to make meaning from the medieval objects at the CMA through educational and interpretive practices.

*Learning in Museums*

In order to more fully understand the meaning that museum objects can have for visitors, it is also important to consider how visitors learn from the objects that have been musealized. Understanding this makes the motivations of the museum staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art clearer for how they framed the objects and history of the Middle Ages with the newly reinstalled medieval galleries. A significant aspect of this is free-choice learning, which John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking discuss in their book, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (2000). This book seems to tie together well the themes of making meaning from museum objects, visitor-object interactions, and learning from museums. Falk and Dierking argue that people do learn from museums and that they come to museums to learn, make meaning,
and find connection, even if documenting this learning is a challenge for professionals.  

This idea is very important for the purpose of the study of the interpretive and educational practices involving the medieval galleries at the CMA because it encompasses how the works of art in these galleries draw in visitors and make connections with them, but also that connections visitors make with these pieces of art are not random or arbitrary but driven by each visitor’s personal history, previous knowledge, and personality. A visitor finding a connection with an object allows the musealized information constructed by the museum professional to reach the visitor, and the visitor is able to choose what he or she wants to know more about, thus facilitating the process of free-choice learning.

   Free-choice learning is also central to Falk and Dierking’s book; in fact, they argue that “much of what people know is constructed through free-choice learning experiences.” They also state that learning is not an abstract but an organic, integrated experience that happens in the real world. This means that there are many factors that can influence the acquisition of knowledge when a visitor is in a museum, and this can range from the environment that it provides, the visitor’s attitude, the visitor’s past experiences, and even the group of people (or lack thereof) that accompany the visitor. Museum professionals understand this when they plan exhibits and galleries, and they know that every element must be carefully planned in order for the visitor to have the “ideal” museum experience.

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69 Ibid., xiv-xv.
70 Ibid., 10.
At the CMA, the staff appears to utilize these ideas of free-choice learning in both their interpretive and educational designs and programs for the medieval galleries and artwork. The galleries are set up so that a visitor can pick and choose what he or she is most interested in seeing, and then the visitor can use a variety of resources to learn more about what most interests them. They are able to use the iPad application, where they might find a tour connecting the object to a theme in the galleries, the label next to the object, and the guards walking around the galleries. Similarly in the education programs, children are encouraged to explore the galleries on their own and to recreate what they think would be a piece of artwork that would fit in the galleries. Free-choice learning is a large force that influences the musealization of the medieval works of art in the galleries of the CMA, and it has an influence on how visitors construct meaning from the objects as well. Also, visitors who choose to learn more about the medieval works of art there now find themselves in an environment where more information is accessible to them as they please in galleries dedicated solely to medieval art. This experience can also be combined with other things that the visitor learned that day or even in school years ago and with any personal interests, as previously discussed. Therefore, Falk and Dierking’s ideas on free-choice learning provide a framework for analyzing the choices that museum professionals made when creating interpretive and educational practices for the medieval objects at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

George E. Hein’s *Learning in the Museum* (1998), also contributes a perspective on how visitors learn from museum objects. This book’s purpose is to address the issues

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71 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
of the increasing educational role of museums and the way that visitors learn from them.\textsuperscript{72} Hein calls this model the “Constructivist Museum,” which he uses to explain the complex interaction between visitors and museums.\textsuperscript{73} Essentially, the constructivist museum is where knowledge is constructed in the mind of the visitor, learning is active in the museum setting, and learning situations are also made accessible to the visitor. While scholars like Falk and Dierking argue that the process of learning for museum visitors is affected by previous knowledge and experiences, Hein’s theory adds another layer of intricacy and states that this process of learning in the visitor’s mind is constructed itself, much like the way that museum professionals construct the interpretation that they present to the public. Hein writes that “Visitors make meaning in the museum, [and] they learn by constructing their own understandings.”\textsuperscript{74} Visitors do not simply take in the information they see in a vacuum, but associate the objects and information that they see in museums with existing thoughts and ideas.

If we understand this to be a factor in how visitors learn, how does this affect museum professionals and how they plan exhibits? According to Hein, they should “acknowledge that exhibition-making is not displaying truth, but interpretation” and “pursue aggressively the study of how visitors make meaning in the museum.”\textsuperscript{75} Hein believes that because visitors learn by making their own meanings from the objects and information that they see in the museum, museum professionals should acknowledge that the information that they present in the museum is just one perspective out of many. If

\textsuperscript{72} George E. Hein, \textit{Learning in the Museum} (New York: Routledge, 1998), i.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., x.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 179.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 177.
they understand that this perspective is their own personal interpretation and study how visitors learn and make meaning, museum professionals will be better prepared to provide access points for visitors to construct their own meaning and interpretation and to learn from what they see in the museum.

Hein’s ideas can be applied to the medieval collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art because it appears that the museum professionals there have an understanding of the possibility that visitors may take away different interpretations for what they observe in the galleries, and that they will pick and choose what they want to learn more about based on their own interests. CMA staff understand and respond to the needs of visitors in this way. Museums like the CMA that also recognize user necessities demonstrate the larger significance of the change over the past several decades to make visitors and visitor learning a larger focus. Therefore, the ideas of visitors learning from museums have demonstrated that users indeed do learn from museums and that past experiences and knowledge allow them to construct their own interpretation of information presented in the museum. Hein, Falk, and Dierking, provide a deeper understanding of the theories behind the process of how museum professionals acknowledge the needs of visitors and guide them in the learning process in the medieval galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

_The Construction of Meaning through Interpretation of Objects_

Ivo Maroević’s _Introduction to Museology: The European Approach_ (published

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76 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013; Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
in its native Croatian language in 1993) is an extensive work that deals with many topics in museum theory. In his introduction, it is clear that Maročević appreciates the value of objects in the museum: “the language of objects and contexts can be more direct, more complete, and more meaningful than the verbal language of written documents.”\textsuperscript{77} The “language” of an object in a museum is so distinct and significant, in fact, that it, according to Maročević, can be considered a science because it is inherently systematic in nature. Maročević also explores what it means for an object to become musealized, or “the process in which an object gradually becomes musealia.”\textsuperscript{78} Musealia are objects within a museum that have been “relocated” from their “authentic” or original environments into “museum reality.”\textsuperscript{79} This idea of musealization is central to this study because it examines how medieval artworks are presented and interpreted to the public at the Cleveland Museum of Art. The artworks are not merely placed in the galleries with little thought, but rather the exhibition of these objects is carefully thought out by museum professionals, who present their own ideas about medieval art and culture in the exhibition. The museum professionals are responsible for constructing objects and for an environment with the potential for connections between all of the objects in the gallery.

Maročević also writes that the museum context gives an object new meaning and that “objects live in contexts.”\textsuperscript{80} When the context (or setting) of an object changes, the meaning of the object changes. Therefore, the process of musealization of objects leads to changes in their meaning because their social role has changed from use to

\textsuperscript{77} Maročević, \textit{Introduction to Museology}, 14.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 184-185.
representation, and that the object in a museum makes new connections with other gallery items once it is placed in a museum.\(^{81}\) The objects in the medieval galleries at the CMA have changed context and meaning at least several times in the course of their stay at the CMA. They remain musealized but the way they are represented and interpreted has changed. This is not to say that the meaning of objects changes entirely, but rather subtle changes in meaning occur to suit the purposes of exhibition and gallery designers in museums. The CMA’s pieces of the Guelph Treasure will serve as an example supporting this concept. When the pieces were originally made in the eleventh century, they resided in the Cathedral of Brunswick for about five hundred years and were owned by the Brunon and Guelph families.\(^{82}\) While the pieces like the altar of the Countess Gertrude and the arm reliquary of the apostles remained in this cathedral setting, they held chiefly a spiritual significance and they most likely also signified the Guelph family’s wealth to other worshippers at that cathedral. Their spiritual meaning was also enhanced by their presence within the cathedral itself and their proximity to the other religious decorations in the building.

However, once the objects were put in new contexts, their role changed, and subsequently so did their meaning. Over the course of the three hundred years following the sixteenth century, the treasure changed hands several times, mostly through the possession of ruling families of Germany.\(^{83}\) But in the 1930s, the CMA acquired its pieces, as discussed in the previous chapter, and these pieces became musealia. With the

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 209, 211.
\(^{82}\) Milliken, “The Acquisition of Six Objects from the Guelph Treasure for the Cleveland Museum of Art,” 163-164.
\(^{83}\) Ibid., 163-165
newly reinstalled medieval galleries, the pieces of the treasure now have new connections with the other objects in the galleries. These connections, as well as the interpretation that the CMA provides today, emphasize the devotional quality of these objects, but they are also presented as fine examples of German metalworking and craftsmanship of the time period. Thus, the meanings of the objects have been changed from the original context, from spiritual use objects to objects that those represent that the artwork of the Middle Ages.

In addition to Maroević’s ideas on musealization, Charles Saumarez Smith’s essay provides interesting theories about the interpretation of objects that are relevant to this study. In his essay, “Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings” (1989), he writes that museum artifacts “can be transformed through their history within a museum,” and he uses three examples of objects being moved around the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to illustrate his main point. This situation is not unlike the medieval objects at the CMA, which had been moved within the museum several times and which had not been placed in galleries set aside for medieval objects until the 2012 reinstallation, instead being spread throughout galleries. Smith’s idea clearly relates to Maroević’s writing because he also argues that context can change the meaning of objects, but Smith’s article deals more with the object shifting within the museum space as opposed to the transition from original location to the museum itself. As Maroević similarly

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84 The CMA presented the objects differently before the reinstallation because they were not all in a designated “medieval” section as they are today. This will be further discussed in Chapter 3.
87 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
discussed, a museum object is defined and given meaning by the context in which it is placed. It logically follows, then, that the object can change meaning if surrounded by other objects within a different gallery because of the changed context. So, with the reinstallation of the medieval collection at the CMA, the pieces took on new meaning from being surrounded by new objects. Today, instead of the medieval objects being surrounded by other non-medieval objects, it is now surrounded by other medieval artwork. This gives the pieces a different kind of meaning because of alternate context, from that of a lone example of medieval artwork to that of one of many pieces of medieval artwork that represents the devotional aspect of artwork at the time period.

Smith also writes that objects in a museum “are susceptible to a multiform construction of meaning which is dependent on the design, the context of other objects, the visual and historical representation, [and] the whole environment.” Here, he brings up another important point: that the meaning of objects (which is itself a construction) can also change depending on the design of an exhibit or gallery and their visual and historical representation. This is central to our understanding of current interpretive and educational practices at the CMA because it shows that the CMA has a large role in potential meaning-making for visitors who view the objects and who encounter them through education programs. In other words, if the CMA did not provide the current surrounding environment for its medieval objects, they might be understood differently by visitors.

As an example, if a visitor at the CMA were to view the sculpture *Enthroned*

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Virgin with the Writing Christ Child (see Figure 14), he or she (depending on his or her previous knowledge) might initially see that the figure is a mother holding a child in her lap, and the child writing; the mother might be the Virgin Mary and the child might be the Christ Child. However, without a background in medieval history, the visitor might not necessarily be able grasp the full significance of the sculpture or make as much of a connection with intended meaning (such as the meaning of the infant writing on his mother’s lap). With the context that the CMA provides through its labels and panels, the visitor discovers that the reason Christ is writing is because it represents “the educating and nurturing role of the mother in teaching the child,” a common theme in medieval artwork. Mothers might then be able to make a deeper connection because they understand that they are the caretakers of their children and pass on their wisdom to them. Women today in general might see that in the Middle Ages Mary was considered to have been a powerful force in Jesus’ life and she was revered as such. Using Smith’s ideas, the context that a museum such as the CMA provides allows the visitor a myriad of opportunities to make connections with the artwork that they experience.

In the same collection of essays is Peter Vergo’s chapter, “The Reticent Object.” Here, Vergo writes that his primary focus is to discuss the “display of objects, artefacts, and works of art both within and outside the museum context, their public presentation” and exhibit processes. While my study focuses on permanent exhibits unlike Vergo’s temporary exhibits, the process he describes is similar to the CMA’s process when it

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reinstalled its medieval artwork over the past several years. Vergo writes about many aspects of planning exhibits, and one of the main points that he emphasizes is that “objects are brought together not simply for the sake of their physical manifestation or juxtaposition, but because they are part of a story one is trying to tell.” In other words, objects in a museum are not always brought together for aesthetic purposes, but often for the purposes of conveying the original meaning of the time period and/or the artists who created these works of art. Some museums choose to provide as little interpretive content as possible for their objects, but this is potentially problematic because some visitors without prior knowledge or expertise do not have access to the information that provides meaning for the object beyond its pure aesthetic value. While there is admittedly a great aesthetic value to many medieval objects in the CMA’s collection, the main idea behind bringing all of these objects together was to tell the story of the people of the Middle Ages, and how they used these objects in their time period.

Vergo also writes that while objects are incorporated into an exhibition, they “become not merely works of art or tokens of a certain culture or society, but elements of a narrative, forming part of a thread of discourse which is itself one element in a more complex web of meanings.” In other words, Vergo is saying that objects in a museum do not only represent the era from which they come, they also create a larger meaning and the exhibit forms that narrative of meaning. When the pieces of the medieval collection at the CMA were brought together in the newly reinstalled galleries, they no

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91 Ibid., 46.
92 Ibid., 48.
93 Ibid., 46.
longer only represented the Middle Ages. Originally, the pieces had been scattered throughout the museum (except for the pieces in the Armor Court), but when they were brought together, the CMA created a narrative with them, and a more holistic meaning came to the surface. For instance, the CMA was able to emphasize the devotional use of these objects and the relationship between the wealthy nobles who patronized these projects and the church who accepted the grand donations. The CMA thus produced a more comprehensive interpretation of the medieval collection by the bringing together of the objects, and the museum professionals’ knowledge about the Middle Ages became musealized through the galleries.

Christopher Whitehead also explores the various means of interpretation art museums use to reveal meaning to their visitors in his book, *Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries*, published in 2012. His examination of interpretation demonstrates that it goes beyond mere labels and includes everything that surrounds the object. Also, he writes that the production of art interpretation is the manipulation of the physical display environment and the development of supporting materials like labels and panels.\(^94\) This complements the theories presented by Maroević, Smith, and Vergo because they also discuss the importance of considering the entire exhibit or gallery when looking at the interpretation of museum objects. These authors are also similar because they argue that museum professionals are the ones who control the space in which the object is placed, and so they decide what information is accessible. This manipulation of the space is a very important aspect of musealization to consider because it helps one to understand that

objects in a museum do not exist in a vacuum – there are multiple factors that influence the potential meanings of these objects, including the views of the staff, the other objects chosen for a gallery, as well as the physical display.

Whitehead also writes that “there are a myriad [of] interpretive ‘frames’ which can provide different but always partial understandings about art, and that their use in art museums is part of the production of knowledge about art and art history.”95 The frames allow the visitor to navigate through the museum and to better understand the cultures that produced the artworks.96 One such frame that museums use to convey knowledge to their visitors is that of the “historical-documentary” frame in which works of art can be presented as artifacts and demonstrate an important aspect of the culture that produced it.97 These frames are part of the information that museums produce, and they are a tool through which to view the interpretive practices at institutions like the CMA. The objects in the medieval galleries at the CMA are presented in part as historical artifacts in order to demonstrate their full significance of the time period and the people that produced them. The labels and panels emphasize the historical context of these artifacts, thus constructing information for the context of these objects. Frameworks such as this are not necessarily the ones that museum visitors have to “look through” in order to take away meaning and knowledge, but they do provide a tool for museum professionals to use to help visitors create meaning from these objects. Therefore, the discussion of the construction of meaning from objects, explored by Maroević, Smith, Vergo, and

95 Ibid., 53.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 73.
Whitehead, summarizes the theoretical framework for this study to more fully understand the process of musealization of the objects in the medieval galleries at the CMA.

Visitor-Object Interactions

In addition to exploring the construction of meaning, it is also important to consider the visitor-object interactions that occur in the museum setting. This allows for a better understanding of the musealization of the medieval objects at the Cleveland Museum of Art because the museum professionals aimed to maximize visitor-object interactions in order to make their meaning apparent. Visitor-object interactions through organization and presentation of objects in a museum setting is also discussed in the 2011 essay “Interpretation and the Art Museum: Between the Familiar and the Unfamiliar” by Cheryl Meszaros, Twyla Gibson, and Jennifer Carter. In this essay, the authors examine the theory of the “pedagogy of display,” which describes how art objects are organized and presented in a way that is intended to communicate certain messages and instruct on the importance of messages to the public. They argue that the interpretive practices of the museum, whether they are exhibitions, special programs, or educational programs, are fashioned by the relationship between the familiar and the unfamiliar. In other words, interpretive practices of staff are based upon what visitors are likely already to know (the familiar) and what they do not already know (the unfamiliar). Helping visitors to see an object as “familiar” from the “unfamiliar” is not simple – it is complicated because there

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98 Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
100 Ibid.
is a divide between the members of the public able to critically engage in art’s interpretation and the people who come into the museum already equipped with more sophisticated knowledge.\textsuperscript{101} The public takes “whatever” meaning it chooses.\textsuperscript{102} For example, it is likely that there are a great number of visitors from the general public that come to visit the CMA to view the medieval art galleries that know little of the history of the Middle Ages. These kinds of visitors might have a more difficult time making meaning from the objects and galleries that they view, and it is highly possible that the meaning they derive from it will be different than the meaning the designers of the galleries intended.

This idea that the meaning of objects is dependent on the viewer represents the twentieth-century turn in museums toward their audience, which presents a conundrum for art museums that want to articulate certain messages about their objects to the public.\textsuperscript{103} There is an “individual autonomy” of museum visitors, and so the information that is provided for the visitors is not necessarily what the visitors take away from experiencing objects.\textsuperscript{104} Museums like the CMA, then, attempt to give visitors as many access points as possible to the information visitors are most interested in so that they are able to construct their own meanings from the galleries. At the CMA, the most notable access point is the iPad application, ArtLens, which allows the visitor to learn more about objects that interest them most by simply accessing it through the application. Thus, the ideas of Meszaros et al. provide a framework for this study because they allow for the

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item[\textsuperscript{101}] Ibid., 38-39.
  \item[\textsuperscript{102}] Ibid., 39.
  \item[\textsuperscript{103}] Ibid., 44.
  \item[\textsuperscript{104}] Ibid., 45.
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deeper understanding of how visitors interact with objects and how they might take away a different meaning than what museum professionals at the CMA intended.

Sandra H. Dudley also explores visitor-object interactions in her essay, “Museum Materialities: Objects, Sense, and Feeling” (2009). Dudley wants to explore the meanings and feelings that visitors can make from objects, and how these meanings and feelings can have an impact on the visitors who view them.105 Dudley is trying to move away from the idea that museum objects serve society; rather, as she writes, she “is seeking to shift the focus back to physical objects, but with a strong emphasis on their impacts – actual and potential – on real people.”106 In other words, she hopes that museum professionals will focus on the individuals who come in to see museum objects, not society as a whole. An object might hold significant value for society because it could represent a noteworthy event in its history, but it might not hold the same meaning for a visitor, especially if the visitor is coming from a foreign society. Meszaros et al. support this with their notion of “visitor autonomy,” that each visitor can take away his or her own meaning. The CMA seems to take this theory into account in its interpretation of the medieval objects there because it attempts to provide multiple means of access to more information about certain objects so that different visitors can learn more about what they choose, most notably through ArtLens.107

Another focus of Dudley’s essay is the idea of materiality, the physicality of museum objects and their material characteristics that can be perceived through the

106 Ibid., 4.
107 This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.
senses. Materiality is essential to understanding her point of view on visitor-object interactions. She writes that “the sensible, physical characteristics of the thing [object] trigger and thus contribute to the viewer’s sensory perceptions, which in turn trigger emotional and cognitive associations, which together with the physical characteristics could be said to constitute the object’s materiality,” and that materiality is a “dynamic interaction” of meaning and physical form of the object.\textsuperscript{108} As Dudley writes, the sensory intake that museum objects provide is indeed an important consideration when discussing museum interpretation. In the medieval galleries at the CMA, lighting and other room features highlight the visual aspects of artifacts to draw visitors’ attention. Once an individual sees an object of interest, he or she comes in closer and interacts with it more fully, experiencing its more intricate details. As the user examines the object through his or her senses (primarily visual in most cases), he or she makes meaning through the trigger of the physical to the cognitive. Ultimately, an understanding of the materiality of museum objects gives us a better understanding of the wide range of factors visitors could focus on when they make meaning from the objects that they view in the museum.

Taking materiality one step further, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill also discusses visitor-object interactions in her book, \textit{Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge} (1992). This book allows for a better understanding of how visitors acquire knowledge from museums. Hooper-Greenhill discusses past and present theories of organizing museum space and how museums present themselves as self-directed places of learning.\textsuperscript{109} She writes that museums indeed have been “active” in the shaping of knowledge in the past.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 7-8.
\textsuperscript{109} Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, \textit{Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge} (New York: Routledge, 1992), i.
six hundred years at least, which is important to understand for visitor-object interactions because Hooper-Greenhill demonstrates how individuals not only experience items, but that these artifacts and the interpretation that the museum provides for them actively influences visitors’ understanding.\footnote{Ibid., 191.} Hooper-Greenhill also writes that “The production of ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’ is a process that can be found to be operating at all times, and the selection, confinement, and organization of material things” is one of the “modalities” of this production.\footnote{Ibid., 192.} Her statement here shows that visitor interactions with objects go much deeper than the surface, and they actually have the potential to influence what an individual comprehends about an object, concept, or even time period. If we apply this idea to the medieval galleries at the CMA, it can thus be understood that in their installation, the staff knew that the interpretive practices implemented for the galleries could supplement and/or change the knowledge that visitors had about the Middle Ages. As will be shown in the following chapters, the staff took great care to accurately represent the medieval time period through the objects shown there. The information that the CMA provides, then, adds to the knowledge with which visitors come into the museum.

Hooper-Greenhill also writes that “Knowing and knowledge have become three-dimensional, all-involving, and all-encompassing,” and that knowledge in the modern day involves the themes of “people, their histories, their lives and their relationships.”\footnote{Ibid., 198.} A large part of the shaping of visitors’ knowledge in museums today is in their own
histories and views of the world. This could mean that their own backgrounds influence
them to pick and choose what objects they want to view in the museum and what kinds of
information that they take away from the objects and interpretive content that they view.
In addition, Hooper-Greenhill notes that these themes drive the shifts in institutions
today, demonstrating the ever-growing trend in museums becoming more focused on
visitors and their experiences. Like the CMA, museums are becoming ever more aware
of the distinction between the individuals who walk through their doors, as Dudley
writes, and that each one comes with a personal history and experiences that guide them
through the museum. Knowledge is a commodity that museums offer, but the information
each person takes away will be different. Thus, museum professionals’ understanding of
the knowledge that they provide to visitors affects their interpretive practices, and they
use this understanding to try and facilitate more meaningful interactions between the
objects and the visitors in the museum.

Conclusion

The process of learning in the museum, the construction of meaning from
museum objects, and visitor-object interactions are all significant ideas that provide a
better understanding of how museum professionals planned for visitor learning at the
CMA and musealization of medieval objects. These concepts will frame the discussion
that follows with the understanding that the information that is presented in the medieval
galleries and through the education programs is a construction of the museum
professionals themselves and that the meaning of the objects is created from the museum

\[113\] Ibid.
context and from the identity of each visitor. The chosen themes in the new galleries that
the CMA presents allows the visitor to interact with the objects, but also to learn from the
objects by choosing what is most interesting to them. In the following chapters, it is these
interpretive and educational practices that this study will analyze, using these tools of
analysis to better understand the inner workings of the Cleveland Museum of Art.
Chapter 3

Making Meaning through Interpretive Practices in the Medieval Galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art

The interpretation of objects is one of the main ways that visitors derive meaning from objects. Interpretation allows museum staff to take an object in a museum and construct the context around it using various methods, such as a themed gallery, labels, media, and even lighting. The newly reinstalled medieval galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art were constructed with the intent to convey messages about the time period of the European Middle Ages and to display the themes that the staff (primarily the curator) thought most significant about the objects. This also fits with the museum’s larger plan to “refresh” the interpretation to make it more engaging and accessible to visitors because the staff wanted to make themes such as art as devotional objects more apparent to the public. The interpretive practices that will be examined in this chapter are the grouping and arrangement of objects, the aesthetics and placement of objects within the galleries, informational labels and panels, and technology. The interpretive practices following the reinstallation of the medieval galleries facilitate visitor-object interactions and increased opportunities for visitors to make meaning and learn from the objects because the CMA crafted a narrative of the Middle Ages that focused on the stories of the people

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2 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
3 Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
that lived during the time and provided context. This was done through grouping the objects together, making the galleries aesthetically pleasing, new informational labels and panels, and new technology.

**Grouping and Arrangement of Objects**

Interpretive practices encompass a wide variety of work in a museum, and the grouping and arrangement of objects are some of the most basic. A collection of items is rarely displayed in a museum setting with no order or particular arrangement, but rather the goal is to provide a narrative that visitors can follow to make more sense of the objects.⁴ John D. Falk, a leading scholar in the museum studies field, agrees that in rethinking the presentation of objects, the pieces need to be reassembled into a multilayered, comprehensible story of real people.⁵ The Curator of Medieval Art, Stephen Fliegel, is one of the main staff that crafted a multilayered story and rethought the presentation of the objects in the medieval galleries. In envisioning how the artifacts were to be arranged in the new space, Fliegel held, and still holds, a very specific position of power and influence because of his ability as a curator to control and to choose what is presented in the gallery.⁶ When he did this, he had a monumental and rare opportunity to essentially start from scratch to reinstall and regroup the medieval objects that had been collected over the years.⁷ “Nothing is more central to the task [of a museum] than the

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⁴ Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
⁷ Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
installation and interpretation of those collections,” according to Andrew McClellan.\textsuperscript{8} Clearly, this reinstallation was very significant for the CMA and it also served to visitors’ advantages so they could more fully comprehend the significance of the works of art. Previous curators and directors had randomly dispersed newly collected medieval pieces in a variety of galleries throughout the museum, so it lost control over the story that it wanted to tell about the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{9} In order to offer opportunities for clearer and deeper meaning for the visitors as per its museum-wide goals, the CMA grouped the objects according to chronology, geography, and around the most significant pieces of the collection so that the story of the people of the Middle Ages could be told and visitors could connect to the stories of those people.\textsuperscript{10}

The chronological arrangement of the medieval objects is one of these grouping elements that provides more meaning about the story and artifacts to the visitors. Chronological arrangements are relatively simple compared to arranging works of art by academic discourse, but they provide the visitor, who is not necessarily well-versed in art history, a much easier way to understand the significance of the art and how it develops across a time period. Also, Fliegel notes that a chronological arrangement of objects allows it to tell a story, which makes the objects “come to life.”\textsuperscript{11} By comparison, he states the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York groups its objects by academic categories, which, in his opinion, does not allow for good communication between the

\textsuperscript{8} Andrew McClellan, \textit{Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium} (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), xvi.
\textsuperscript{9} Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
objects and a lay audience that would generally be unfamiliar with such categories.\textsuperscript{12} A larger reinstallation goal was to use chronology for the rest of the permanent collection as well, in order to express its “encyclopedic character,” which also reveals a desire to make information about artworks more accessible to visitors.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, a chronological arrangement allows for the flow of a narrative that visitors can easily follow and identify what the people of the Middle Ages valued and treasured during the era.

The development of the chronological narrative is also facilitated by the galleries surrounding the medieval ones. On the first floor of the original 1916 building,\textsuperscript{14} the progression begins with art from the ancient Near East, then Rome, then Byzantium, then the Early Middle Ages followed by the High Middle Ages; this continues through the Renaissance in further adjoining galleries and progresses onto the seventeenth century on the floor above.\textsuperscript{15} Through this arrangement, the visitor is truly placed into the context of the Middle Ages because he or she is able to see the development of the events that led up to and followed this time period, and how the artwork of the Middle Ages fits into the larger narrative of the history that surrounds it. Even if the visitor walks “backwards” in time through the galleries, the changing stories of the people of the different time periods is quite apparent through the chronological progression of the galleries.

This chronological progression is a tool that the Frazier International History Museum in Louisville, KY, also uses to showcase its medieval objects from the British Royal Armouries. Its arms and armor collection ranges from early Middle Ages through

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
\textsuperscript{14} The structure as it stands today is a construction of new buildings added on to the original Neoclassic one built in 1916. See Figure 1 for map of layout.
\textsuperscript{15} Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
the end of the nineteenth century. The Frazier’s goal with its artifacts was to tell “the complete American story – not the abridged version that begins in Jamestown with the colonists, but a larger story that begins in Europe some 600 years earlier.” Arranging the objects in a timeline of sorts in one of the floors of the museum does create the effect of telling a story, and visitors are able to discern who the main characters were in this narrative and the objects that they would have seen and used within the events of the various eras. Clearly, setting objects up as they progress across time seems to be a common method used by at least two Midwestern American museums that feature prominent works of art from the Middle Ages.

Let us follow a potential path of a user at the CMA to examine how a chronological arrangement allows for his or her understanding of the artwork in these galleries. If a visitor worked his way through the first floor beginning with the ancient Near East, he might be struck by the profusion of images of the Christ figure as he went through Rome and the Middle Ages, and he would be able to observe its development across this period of time. A sculpture in the early Christianity section strikes his eye: the Good Shepherd, which originates from the late third century AD (see Figure 15). He learns that in late antiquity, the Christ figure often resembled older Roman gods and myths because of the cultural influences of the Roman Empire. In this tradition, this character of a well-built man carrying a sheep would have been associated with the demi-god Hercules, but to the early Christians, he would have also been the “good shepherd”

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that herded individuals into the peaceful afterlife.\textsuperscript{17} As he progresses through the galleries, time also progresses and the images of Christ in the Middle Ages develop into ones with characteristics further removed from their Roman influence.

In Gallery 109, his attention is struck by another figure, the \textit{Crucified Christ} from Cologne, Germany in the mid-fourteenth century (see Figure 16). This sculpture captures the moment after Jesus’ death and it emphasizes the immense suffering that his humanity endured with the frail, emaciated figure and the torment depicted on his face.\textsuperscript{18} It becomes apparent that Christ’s image in medieval Europe became increasingly associated with the idea of his suffering. The meanings of the changing nature of Christianity and images of Christ are thus made apparent to the viewer. While the exact locations of these two objects pre-reinstallation are unknown, it is unlikely that the chronological progression of images of Jesus were as clear as they are today since the artifacts were more spread out through the whole museum. While not every individual will focus on the same pieces of art or theme, there are dozens of other pieces from which visitors can observe the changing representations of Jesus or other figures over time throughout the Middle Ages because of the chronological arrangement of the collection that tells a cogent story of the people of the time period.

The geographical groupings also work to tell a story of the people of the Middle Ages to museum visitors for them to make meaning from the collections and it is also part of the larger museum-wide goal to showcase the wide variety of world art it holds.

Stephen Fliegel emphasizes that geography is just as important to establish as chronology in the galleries, and this is because it provides a place and a setting for the story that the medieval galleries are arranged to tell.\(^{19}\) There are several main places from which the medieval collection stems, and at each gallery with a different location, wall panels describe the characteristics of that region and significant themes of the art that stems from it. This aids in interpreting the significant messages to the visitors because it helps to place them in the mindset of the people who created, used, and observed these objects in their respective time periods. Within the given space, there is a story that the staff wanted to be told, and Fliegel states that this particular geographical arrangement caters to the strengths of the collection.\(^{20}\) In other words, the CMA holds enough pieces from particular locations at a certain era that it is able to clearly demonstrate the values and characteristics of the people of the age, which makes it easier for the visitor to understand the meaning of these objects as they would have been seen by the people from that time period.

Galleries 109, 110, and 111 are the ones that are grouped mainly by geographic location. Gallery 109 features art from the court of Burgundy from 1250 to 1450, Gallery 110 features Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese art from 1200 to 1510, and Gallery 111 features are from Germany and Austria from 1300 to 1530. All of the artwork in these galleries is considered “Late Gothic” as well, so the similar time period allows the visitor to see what was happening artistically in different regions at roughly the same era. For each gallery, there is also an informational panel that alerts the visitor to the region from

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\(^{19}\) Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
which its objects stem and it establishes the main features of the art from the region. For instance, the wall panel “Art from the Court of Burgundy” states that a main influence on the artifacts was the court of Paris before 1364, and that the dukes of Burgundy became the main artistic influence in Northern Europe after that time. This gives the impression that the artwork in this gallery set trends that the rest of Western Europe would follow, and indeed, some of these trends are apparent in the other galleries with objects stemming from later years. Geography, therefore, helps the museum visitor to visualize the origins of the art so that they may better place the story in their minds and make a deeper meaning.

The medieval galleries are also staged to revolve around several significant pieces of the collection, which allows the visitor to see a primary example of art from the time period if he or she does not notice the smaller nuances of the display, and this creates a higher chance for the visitor to connect with and learn from the object. Fliegel greatly emphasized the unique nature of many of the pieces of medieval art in the CMA’s collection, so naturally when designing the galleries, these particular objects would be a main focus to distinguish the CMA as well as the story of the medieval art that it is trying to tell. These objects also serve as place-holders in the galleries and are strategically chosen and placed to capture sightlines of visitors in order to draw their attention, which was done in the rest of the museum as well. The museum decided to use “sightline” objects (ones to which users’ eyes are naturally drawn) to focus consideration of

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21 Museum panel for “Art from the Court of Burgundy,” 2010, Cleveland Museum of Art.
22 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
23 Ibid.
overarching themes and concepts.\textsuperscript{24} Pieces of the Guelph Treasure (see Figures 8-12), for instance, were placed in the center of Gallery 106 and the room seems to be centered around them (see Figure 17). Since these objects are the main focus of the room, they also serve to demonstrate some of the major themes of the artwork in the galleries, such as private wealth and devotion.\textsuperscript{25} It is also then easier for the visitor to understand the meaning of what some of the more insignificant objects in the gallery are, such as a small ivory diptych depicting scenes from the passion and afterlife of Christ (see Figure 18). On its own, this piece of art might not have had much meaning for a viewer without much knowledge of the Middle Ages. However, surrounded by similar objects from roughly the same time period, the object takes on new meaning of the context within the gallery and it becomes another example of wealth and devotion of the High Middle Ages. Scholars of museology like Ivo Maroević and Peter Vergo would likely also argue that the meaning of this object, and the others like it in the gallery, is enhanced because the main focus of the room is the Guelph Treasure, which highlights the theme of private wealth and devotion in the Middle Ages. Therefore, visitors have a greater chance to make meaning and connections with these objects because of the placement of the Guelph Treasure at the center of the gallery signifying and demonstrating the theme that the CMA desires to come across to the visitor.

This is similar to what the Detroit Institute of Arts did with its reinstallation. Its main goal was “interpretive clarity and richness” through an “implicit yet often

\textsuperscript{24} Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
\textsuperscript{25} Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2014.
understated museum narrative of meta-art history.”26 The DIA, however, was much more
direct about making its new galleries visitor-centered through interactive learning
components.27 It seems that the CMA, then, took a slightly more cautious and even
guarded approach in the rethinking of its interpretive practices within the galleries
themselves. As will be noted later in this chapter, even ArtLens and Gallery One, the new
interpretive technology at the CMA, are more limited than the DIA’s tools because they
are not the main focus of the reinstallation or how visitors can learn about the art. Even
so, the chronological, geographical, and “significant object” groupings used in the
medieval galleries at the CMA are able to provide more opportunities for visitors to make
deeper meaning for the objects by setting the scene of the story that the objects are a part
of and connecting them to the people who lived in that era.

Aesthetics and Placement of Objects within Galleries

In addition to the grouping of objects in the medieval galleries and their
arrangement, the aesthetics of the space and the placement of the artifacts within it are
important aspects to consider for understanding the interpretive practices. As Christopher
Whitehead writes, interpretation goes beyond the mere labels and panels created by the
museum staff, and it includes everything that surrounds the object, which includes the
physical display that has been “manipulated” by the staff.28 For our purposes, we can
define “aesthetics” as the manipulation of the physical space to make it pleasing to the
eyes of visitors. Fliegel greatly emphasized in his interview that it was not just the story

26 Penney, “Reinventing the Detroit Institute of Arts,” 36.
28 Whitehead, Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries, xi, xiii.
and the labels that were important for the objects, but the creation of an aesthetic ideal; the galleries not only had to tell a cogent story, they needed to *look* good so that visitors would be compelled to come in and discover that story.\(^{29}\) Museum visitors often choose how to spend their time very carefully within the museum, so it is essential that galleries are designed to draw people in by more than just the presence of objects.\(^{30}\) In order to create an aesthetic ideal that accomplishes this, the Cleveland Museum of Art used multiple elements, and these included the placement of the objects within the galleries, the color and lighting, and the use of a proper amount of space to showcase the artworks, not the mounts that hold them. All of these elements combined create galleries that are pleasing to the eye and draw in the visitor with the attraction of the design so the end goal of telling the story of the Middle Ages can be accomplished.

The first element, the placement of the medieval objects together in only three large galleries, was a significant improvement upon how the objects were able to tell the story of the Middle Ages and convey meaning to the visitors. Falk writes that learning in a museum is influenced by the way that the visitor orients himself within the space, so it follows logically that taking knowledge away from the medieval objects is facilitated by placing them in their own galleries so that the visitor knows that he has arrived in the medieval section.\(^{31}\) As previously discussed, former directors had “shoehorned” newly collected medieval objects into galleries throughout the entire museum as it added on new buildings, which created the problem of visitors locating these objects within the

\(^{29}\) Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
\(^{31}\) Falk, “Toward an Improved Understanding of Learning from Museums,” 5.
museum and identifying meaning as it related to the story of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{32} The medieval objects were actually scattered around at least four galleries (211, 212, 213, and 223), so it is understandable that Fliegel wanted to place them all together. By placing all of the items from the Middle Ages together in only three galleries, each one dedicated to medieval art specifically, the story of those people was much easier to tell because this allowed a coherent narrative to be constructed through informational panels instead of just labels, as well as through the chronological and geographical progression of objects. If the goal was to convey the story of the Middle Ages, it is much easier for visitors to connect with the objects and the people who used them if they are all located within a close distance to each other. A key factor of making this narrative of the Middle Ages is to give the visitor a sense of where he or she is in relation to the whole museum, and the section on the Middle Ages is clearly designated on the map, signs, and wall panels (see Figure 1 for map).\textsuperscript{33} Failing that, a visitor who is less observant of such “road maps” would be able to tell that they had stumbled upon a different kind of story than the ones told in other parts of the museum just from the artwork being in its own three galleries. Therefore, placing the objects in their own galleries allows for a much better storytelling method through interpretation and a heightened immersion of visitors in the world of the Middle Ages.

The design of the galleries was another aspect of the aesthetics that would draw visitors in to discover the medieval objects. “Design” can be defined as the way that the space is laid out. According to Fliegel, he provided the CMA’s Design Department with a

\textsuperscript{32} Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.  
\textsuperscript{33} Hood, “Staying Away,” 156.
vision of what he wanted the reinstallation to look like, and he and the design team worked together to create the end result that we can see today.\(^{34}\) In the design of the galleries, two of the most important aspects that needed to be considered were the color of the walls and the lighting, which, when installed properly, create the ideal aesthetic atmosphere to showcase artifacts and to draw in visitors.\(^{35}\) The users also need to be able to see as many aspects of the objects as clearly as possible to increase the chance of visitor-object interaction and learning from the object. As Sandra H. Dudley writes, the physical characteristics of museum objects are the ones that have the potential to trigger the visitor’s sensory perceptions, which in turn trigger cognitive associations.\(^{36}\) Also, as Kiersten F. Latham and Elizabeth Wood write, design is about the quality of experience” and if the designers do not consider this, visitors will have a much more difficult time making meaning.\(^{37}\) Since the physical characteristics of an artifact, then, are so significant in individuals making meaning from objects, it is logical that the lighting and display make the physical characteristics of them as clear as possible for this to happen.

Many of the objects now have overhead lights, especially ones in glass cases, to better illuminate their features. For example, there are several sculptures that are now better lit because of the new gallery design. In Gallery 211, several pieces of a transenna (an “openwork screen of stone or metal enclosing a shrine”) stood against a wall below eye level, and the lighting seemed a bit dim (see Figure 19 for image).\(^{38}\) Now that the sculptures have been reinstalled, the overheads shine on them in a way that allows for

\(^{34}\) Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
\(^{35}\) Ibid.
\(^{37}\) Wood and Latham, The Objects of Experience, 118.
\(^{38}\) Museum label for Transenna Post, c. 700s-800s, Cleveland Museum of Art.
better viewing, and they have been placed on a raised platform as well to place them more at eye level (see Figure 20). Since the lighting makes the features of the artwork more prominent, a visitor is able to take in more through his or her visual sense and can gain make better cognitive associations with what he or she sees, and he or she has the potential to make a deeper connection with the object. Visitors can also gain a clearer idea of how artists at the time would have sculpted pieces such as this and an idea of how transennas were decorated at this time period.

In addition, the newly installed galleries better utilize the space for the objects with smaller mounts and a less-cluttered atmosphere for them to allow more room for visual contemplation of the art. The mounts for the medieval artifacts, as well as the mounts for others, were very large and bulky, and they drew attention away from the actual work of art that it was supporting, according to Fliegel.\(^\text{39}\) This not only diminished the significance of the actual object, but it had the potential to take away meaningful visitor-object interactions because of the large, obstructive nature of the mounts. In Figure 21, a photograph of a pre-installation gallery shows how the mounts were previously set up. The room is a display of columns, column capitals, and sculptures that used to be part of cathedrals of medieval Europe. As can be seen from the image, the room is cluttered and full of mounts, and the capitals reside on top of false columns that keep them away from the full gaze of the visitor. In the new gallery with medieval capitals and columns (seen in Figure 22), there is much more space in between pieces and the columns are much less cluttered. The capitals, while still outside an average person’s

\(^{39}\) Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
sightline, are on top of false columns that are actually closer to the ground than they were in their previous arrangements. This allows the visitor to be able to interact with the objects more fully and to make deeper connections because of the better view of the pieces of art and the increased room for contemplation.

Another example of a cluttered gallery with medieval objects is pictured in Figure 23. In the space, there are many objects from the Middle Ages that most likely have a common theme, but there are so many of them in the space that it does not seem to have any sense of purpose or direction, other than to display examples of medieval artwork. The old arrangement seems “very compressed,” in the words of Fliegel, but the reinstaliation allowed the CMA to put more space between the objects. Figure 24 demonstrates one of the newly redesigned galleries that features the *Fragment of a Processional Cross*, c. 1050, that can also be seen in Figure 23. The space has been divided symmetrically in the redesigned gallery, and it gives the visitor more of a sense of direction and purpose for the space. In addition, the *Fragment* has also been placed with other pieces of art from the same region and time period from which it originates: the Byzantine Empire. As previously discussed, the situation of artifacts from similar geographic locations allows for a better establishment of context, which therefore increases the potential interactions between user and object. The increased space allows the visitors to have a better experience with the artwork and to interact with it more fully in a space that is uncluttered and aesthetically pleasing.

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**Informational Labels and Panels**

Informational labels and panels are perhaps two of the most important interpretive elements that play a part in the interpretation of museum objects. According to the essay by Meszaros et al. discussed in Chapter 2, didactic texts are the source from which visitors draw most of their information, and these elements are what they rely upon most to gain information in galleries.\(^{41}\) Also, Beverly Serrell writes in her seminal work *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, that the “purpose of interpretive labels is to contribute to the overall visitor experience in a positive, enlightening, provocative, and meaningful way.”\(^{42}\) Fliegel also emphasized the importance of labels in his interview, stating that these tools provide context as well as information that is necessary to understand and appreciate the artwork that it describes.\(^{43}\) Objects, especially ones from the Middle Ages that many users are unfamiliar with, do not speak for themselves and they need to be interpreted by professionals to make their meaning clear.\(^{44}\) This is not to say that the CMA provides only one possible interpretation for its medieval artifacts, but rather the staff believes that visitors are able to take away more meaning from the works of art when they are presented with information that contextualizes the objects. Thus, labels and panels are some of the most basic elements of interpretation that aid greatly in the understanding of the inner-workings of the staff of the CMA in creating the newly reinstalled galleries for the medieval collection.

Since labels are such an important element in interpretation, the CMA staff

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41 Meszaros, Gibson, and Carter, “Interpretation and the Art Museum: Between the Familiar and the Unfamiliar,” 37.
43 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013.
44 Ibid.
developed new labels and wall panels for the medieval galleries to give visitors a better sense of the meaning behind the objects. The old texts, according to Fliegel, were old-fashioned and the presentation was re-thought in the writing process. While Fliegel did not specifically note how the labels were outdated, it can be inferred from internal documents on the reinstallation that they likely did not fully engage visitors or present in-depth interpretation. Wall panels were also added to the medieval galleries, as they were to the entire museum, which had not been there before. The introductory panels were made larger and more visually compelling so that overarching themes would be more apparent to individuals. The advantage of creating new labels was that they could be updated with the most current research as well as visitor studies that show trends of what visitors are looking for in their museum visits. Museum professionals and scholars also generally agree that creating immediately accessible and engaging text by encouraging people to make personal connections with the art, like the newly developed labels at the CMA, is very important because it allows users to take advantage of that information and form cognitive associations with the objects that they view, which creates more meaning from their experiences.

Making information accessible to visitors was indeed one of the goals of the museum staff, especially the curator, who is the main individual who researches the

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45 Ibid.
46 Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
47 Ibid.
objects and the time period to write the labels. In the inner museum, the curator can be considered the chief constructor of the interpretation that is presented to the visitors of the medieval galleries. The labels are written with a college-level audience in mind, according to Assistant Director of Interpretation Lori Wienke, which makes them more accessible to a broad audience. However, there is a challenge when presenting information with a limited amount of space and which leads to the potential danger of over-simplifying the material, a concern that many museums take into consideration when interpreting artifacts to the general public. The CMA also needed to take into consideration the length and amount of information that could be put on the labels, for didactic and aesthetic reasons. Curators, more often than not, want to put as much information as possible onto labels, but design departments like smaller labels so that the galleries look neater. Also, according to Serrell, when visitors get to select from a smaller group of elements, they spend more time learning about what interests them, not continuously searching for something with which they can connect. Despite this challenge in the process of creating didactic texts, it is understood that providing them is essential to providing context for users to understand the Middle Ages and the stories behind the objects, much like the artwork throughout the rest of the museum.

The finished labels and panels demonstrate that the resulting product facilitates

49 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013; Hooper-Greenhill, introduction to Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge, 7-8.
50 The inner museum can be defined as the part of the institution that remains relatively (and mostly) separate from the visitor. The visitor interacts with the outer museum, or what is open to the public and officially on display.
51 Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
52 Stephen Fliegel, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, April 2, 2013; Serrell, Exhibit Labels, 131.
53 Ibid.
54 Serrell, Exhibit Labels, 43.
visitor-object interactions through telling the story of the people of the Middle Ages. In Gallery 106, for instance, which features pieces of cathedrals (like capitals for columns and pieces of sculptures of biblical figures), a panel describes the time of cathedrals and monasticism (see Figures 22 and 25). The addition of this panel demonstrates the CMA’s new attempts at facilitating visitor-object interaction and individuals learning from the objects in that gallery. The text provides historical background of cathedrals, includes two images of these structures, and describes where they were most likely to develop in the medieval west.\footnote{Museum panel for “The Age of Cathedrals and the Rise of Monasticism,” 2010, Cleveland Museum of Art.} These elements seem to encourage users to picture the objects not just as separate pieces, but as parts of a whole that once were integrated into an entire building, as well as to imagine the pieces as part of a larger story of the people whose lives revolved around these cathedrals. Also, it appears that the CMA used a certain framework for the objects in that particular gallery, much like Christopher Whitehead’s “historical-documentary” frame in which art is presented as artifact to demonstrate an important aspect of the culture that produced it.\footnote{Whitehead, \textit{Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries}, 73.} The panel certainly emphasizes the historical context of the objects in the gallery. At the very beginning, the panel includes a quote from a major chronicler of the time, William of Malmesbury, which describes the cathedrals of the time as “grandly constructed” in order to give visitors a better idea of what people from the era thought about the art.\footnote{Museum panel for “The Age of Cathedrals and the Rise of Monasticism,” 2010, Cleveland Museum of Art.} It adds to this perspective when it states, “Churches and cathedrals were embodiments of local and civic pride, and cities vied with
one another to create ever more beautiful and embellished structures." This helps visitors to understand and make connections in their own minds, possibly even of modern-day rivalries between cities, and to provide a mental picture of great cathedrals and why the people built them. Thus, interpretation provided by this wall panel facilitates visitor-object interaction by providing context and fleshing out the story of the Middle Ages.

A wall panel in Gallery 106 also serves these purposes. Here, there is a focus on the luxury arts and an introductory panel describes the medieval trend of decadence in art meant for devotion (see Figures 17 and 26). It further demonstrates the CMA’s use of a certain framework similar to Whitehead’s “historical-documentary” frame, which shows that the staff who created the interpretive material desired to create a consistent method of presenting medieval art to the public as artifacts and display how they were used and viewed by the people of that time period. This element also includes a quote from a prominent figure from the era, Abbot Suger, who also happened to be close friends with the royal family of France in the twelfth century. The quote demonstrates how Abbot Suger and others like him justified the wealth invested in creating devotional objects: “Bright is the noble work, but being nobly bright, the work should brighten the minds.” Brightness from the gold, jewels, and light from stained glass windows brings one closer to God (or so Abbot Suger and many others thought at the time). This helps the visitor to place the artwork in its original context and to form associations with similar devotional

58 Ibid.
objects with which they are familiar, or possibly even other “luxurious” items that they
know of that are meant to inspire devotion. The information that follows reinforces this
idea – it states, “Patrons of fine metalwork, ivory carvings, and illuminated manuscripts”
sponsored a “variety of extraordinary objects destined for religious and secular use.”
This also demonstrates the value of the medieval pieces of art at the CMA to the people
who also lived in that age. The context provided here therefore further demonstrates how
informational panels are used by the CMA to aid in visitor understanding of the medieval
artwork by telling the story of the people of the Middle Ages.

The CMA also conducted an audience evaluation mid-reinstallation in 2009 to
determine how visitor made meaning in the rethought space. The study found that visitors
rarely read the new introductory panels where the gallery themes were presented, so the
interpretation team made new panels that were “larger and more visually compelling”
that included maps and timelines.

These were in the galleries that had ancient,
medieval, and African art, which were set to open in June 2010, and after the opening,
initial research indicated that about 25% of visitors were using the enlarged and more
engaging panels, as opposed to the 5% who read the originals. This demonstrates that
users have been finding the panels interesting and engaging, as the CMA intended with
its overall reinstallation interpretation plan.

Panels are also a large part of the Frazier International History Museum’s
galleries that hold its British Royal Armouries collection. There are actually a great deal

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60 Ibid.
61 Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
62 Ibid.
more panels than in the CMA, which is likely because the Frazier is a history museum so
the staff could have felt the need to place the objects deeper in context. One is pictured in
Figure 27, and it is clear that the whole tool is being used to place the weapons and armor
into their historical context. It includes an image from the Bayeux Tapestry, a cloth
depicting the Battle of Hastings in 1066 where Norman William the Conqueror defeated
the English King Harold, as well as information on the short conflict between these two
rulers. It does not focus on the aesthetics or symbolism behind the art like the CMA does
with much of its medieval collection, but rather focuses on the overarching narrative of
which the objects were a part. Both the CMA’s and the Frazier’s panels aid in visitor
understanding for their artifacts from the Middle Ages, but the CMA focuses more on
specific themes like devotion and the Frazier on a larger story.

The CMA’s new labels were also meant to aid in visitor understanding. They
include “tombstone” information, such as the title of the work, the date it was created, the
artist if known, the geographic origin, the medium, and a brief description of the object.
These elements work together to further aid visitors’ understanding of the medieval
artwork by connecting the artifacts to the people and time period of the Middle Ages,
which the object cannot necessarily do on its own. A good example of the depth text can
add to the understanding of a piece of artwork is the one for the Vesperbild (Pietà),
created c.1515-1520 in Upper Bavaria, Germany by a Master of Rabenden (see Figures
28 and 29 for sculpture and label). Without the label and without a knowledge of artwork
of the Middle Ages, the visitor might observe that the sculpture is of Mary holding her
son Jesus soon after his death, and that the artist has depicted both characters with
sorrowful and suffering expressions on their faces. With the label, however, the visitor learns that this *vesperbild* was part of a larger movement in Germany in the Middle Ages that used sculptures such as this one in the evening, or at “vespers,” as part of Good Friday liturgy.\(^\text{63}\) It also attempts to put the visitor in the mindset of a later medieval individual who might have viewed this sculpture to heighten a potential connection with that person. It states that “*vesperbilds* encouraged viewers to contemplate Christ’s suffering and empathize with the Virgin’s sorrows more directly and emotively than ever before.”\(^\text{64}\) There is an emphasis on the emotional connection that medieval viewers would have made with the sculpture, and it seems like it encourages its modern viewers to do the same.

This sculpture (and other devotional figures like it in the medieval galleries) also serves as a good example to demonstrate how identity can influence how and what a visitor learns from museum objects. According to Falk, identity serves as a “motivational category” to learn and remember things from museum visits, and learning results also depend on who the visitor is collectively and as an individual.\(^\text{65}\) If a visitor’s identity consists of strong religious views, especially those oriented with the Catholic faith, he would more easily be able to understand the purpose of devotional items in worship and would interact more substantially with the artifact because of this part of his identity. His identity, then, drives him to learn more about worship in later medieval Germany.

Another label for a medieval piece of art on display that attempts to increase

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\(^{63}\) Museum label for Master of Rabenden, *Vesperbild (Pietà)*, 1515-1520, Cleveland Museum of Art.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.

visitor-object interaction through connection with the people of the Middle Ages is the one for an altarpiece entitled *Virgin and Child with Saints*, created c. 1320 by Ugolino di Nerio da Siena in Italy (see Figures 30 and 31). The label not only provides a description of the altarpiece, but a short paragraph on devotion and religious art. This, in fact, is part of the CMA’s larger interpretive strategy. Their idea was to deliver thematic and contextual information at selected sightline objects, which the *Virgin and Child with Saints* is. The reason they did this was because visitors tend to read labels associated with sightline objects.66 This additional material describes the centrality of religion and religious orders to Italian communities of the fourteenth century by stating that “Religion permeated [emphasis added] Italian life in the 1300s, and religious images would have been encountered in many locations, both public and private.”67 “Permeated” is quite a strong word choice, which shows that it was likely chosen to grab the visitor’s attention (as was the object) and to stress the great extent of the involvement of religion in the lives of the Italian people at this time period. The label continues, “The combination of an image of Christ’s infancy with one of his death [as seen in this piece] reflects the popular belief [emphasis added] that the Virgin realized and contemplated her son’s destiny, as should the viewer [emphasis added].”68 The modern visitor therefore has been given a perspective from which to contemplate the altarpiece, the perspective of an Italian individual in the Middle Ages. Perhaps viewers have not attempted to view the artwork in this way before, and the label prompts them to try to interact with the artwork in a

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66 Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
68 Ibid.
different way and to see how medieval people would have seen the altarpiece. In the end, the labels and panels in the medieval galleries at the CMA attempt to amplify visitor-object interaction by placing the visitor within the context of the Middle Ages and connecting them with the popular beliefs and viewpoints of the people from that time period who created and viewed the art.

Technology

The use of interpretive technology at the Cleveland Museum of Art for the medieval art collection is the newest tool to facilitate visitor-object interactions and learning from the artwork. According to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, new technology and interactive elements are increasingly being added to museums to further engage museum users in the United States. Customization and personalization of experiences has largely become a part of daily life, and museums have realized that they also need to allow visitors to personalize their experiences in order to draw them in and to maximize their interactions with their objects. Digital culture has allowed for the development of computer-based interpretive media, which allows museums new ways to create experiences and enhance engagement with their audiences. The CMA has also recognized these trends, which is why it has developed several significant technological means to allow its visitors to create such an experience in order to heighten the meaning each one takes away from a visit. The tools the CMA uses in order to facilitate more

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meaningful visits and to facilitate interactions between users and medieval objects are its
website, the iPad application ArtLens, and the interactive space of Gallery One.

The CMA’s website, www.ClevelandArt.org, is one of the main technological
tools that it uses to provide at least a cursory interpretation of its objects, including the
medieval ones. The CMA’s entire collection is online, and many of the artifacts have
pictures to accompany them; this allows visitors to be able to experience them before or
after a museum visit.72 Once the main page for the collections has been reached, the user
has an option to either search it as a whole or browse specific ones, and one that is
featured as a main part is the medieval artwork.73 A click on the icon (which features the
Table Fountain as its background image, one of the CMA’s most unique and prominent
pieces of the collection) takes the user to a description of the CMA’s medieval works of
art, which provides a description of their significance. It states that the CMA is
“internationally renowned for the importance and quality of its holdings,” that it features
a “unique collection…with…objects that are not replicated elsewhere in the United
States,” and that it “holds some of the most distinguished examples of medieval
masterpieces to be found in an American public institution.”74 This description shows
that the CMA is trying to display to its visitors the immense value, and it is perhaps
employing this language to make the visitor feel privileged to be able to have access to
this collection, especially online. Once visitors reach the page with the medieval
collection, they are able to refine the search through time period, artist, and/or medium,

73 Ibid.
and they have access to all information that is on labels and wall panels. Access to this kind of information so easily from a computer can allow them to understand the objects more fully through the interpretive information provided, including photographs.

Therefore, the CMA’s website is a great tool to enhance users’ ability to learn from objects in the medieval collection.

Beyond the website, the brand-new iPad application (launched in January 2013) ArtLens also allows museum visitors to not only enhance their understanding of objects by providing additional interpretive content, but to create their own personalized experiences to facilitate interactions with artifacts. From the initial plans with the reinstallation, the idea with ArtLens was to balance mobile interpretation with text in the galleries. Also, the additional content with multiple perspectives on pieces of art “suggests there is no single way to interpret or enjoy” an artifact and it invites “listeners to become part of the conversation.” “Adaptive customization” is also key to ArtLens, as it adapts to the needs and interests of each individual. According to the CMA’s webpage on ArtLens, the app allows the user to customize his or her experience and it provides “layers of interpretive content” on many works in the collection. The technology can also be useful to help break down complex material into smaller bits to make it easier to understand for a general audience, something that is likely useful for interpreting potentially unfamiliar medieval objects. For instance, individuals are able

75 Ibid.
76 Internal documents, Cleveland Museum of Art.
78 Ibid.
79 Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
create their own personalized “tours” throughout the museum made up of art that they find interesting or intriguing, and these tours can be easily accessed by others. In addition, the app has a feature called “Near You Now,” which determines where a person is within the museum and what kind of additional interpretive content is linked to the objects around him or her.\textsuperscript{80} The app is meant to facilitate “storytelling and engagement” with all objects in the galleries.\textsuperscript{81}

The medieval objects in the gallery are incorporated into ArtLens quite smoothly. While there is no content in the app that focuses on the those specifically, seven museum-created tours currently feature pieces of this collection for visitors to explore, and there are eleven of these objects that feature additional content.\textsuperscript{82} Visitors can easily see if an artifact that they are interested in has supplemental material on ArtLens by a logo for the app above the label in the galleries. Above the interpretive text for \textit{Saint Lawrence} in Gallery 111 is an additional decal that indicates that there is more content about the sculpture accessible through ArtLens (see Figure 32). From the app, users can use the “Near You Now” feature to locate the object with the program, or they can locate the artwork manually from a map of the gallery on the screen. Once visitors locate the object, its picture appears on the right half of the screen while the information appears on the left half.

For \textit{Saint Lawrence}, there are five multimedia videos (each no longer than one

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82}Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013; Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014; ArtLens, Cleveland Museum of Art.
minute and twenty seconds) that feature a voiceover of Stephen Fliegel, who describes the supplementary knowledge for the piece of art. These videos include one on the artist, one on the geographic origin of the sculpture, one on how it was made, one on the sculpture in color, and one on the symbols of martyrdom. So, if visitors find this particular piece of art interesting, they have the opportunity to learn more about the object and to interact with it more fully. The additional content and the tours are not necessarily meant to direct the “right” way to view the objects in the museum, but rather provide a tool for examining artifacts in different ways. ArtLens allows the staff to provide more opportunities for individuals to learn and to create memorable experiences with these features by enabling the development of personal connections with the art in the galleries.

However, it is possible for this kind of technology to limit interaction with objects as well. Scholars such as Munley et al. are concerned that technology might limit social interactions individuals can have in museum galleries because it often has a tendency to be for one person’s use at a time. If visitors are paying attention only to technology, they miss the chance to interact with others and therefore take away a less-meaningful experience. In addition, Steven Litt of the Cleveland Plain Dealer writes that ArtLens could “become an attraction in itself that fails to encourage the kind of close looking that’s central to the experience of art.” For instance, if visitors take an iPad into the

83 “Saint Lawrence,” ArtLens, Cleveland Museum of Art.
84 Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
85 Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
87 Steven Litt, “ArtLens app at the Cleveland Museum of Art is impressive, but it has a few glitches,” The Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 20, 2013
medieval galleries, they might find that there is additional content for the *Table Fountain* that adds to their understanding of decorative arts in the Middle Ages, but they might also fail to take a closer look interact with others. Even so, the app allows visitors to learn more according to their own needs and interests, which can facilitate their understanding and knowledge of the Middle Ages through the objects in the CMA’s galleries.

Gallery One is another new technological development that can aid in understanding of the Middle Ages through the artwork presented there. Like ArtLens, Gallery One does not feature the medieval galleries of the museum specifically, but it does incorporate this collection into its main features. One of these features is the Collection Wall, which is a “one-of-a-kind, 40-foot multi-touch” surface that “displays high-resolution images of almost 4,000 works of art from the permanent collection, most on view in the galleries.”

The images change every forty seconds, and it is possible for people to touch it and browse through the objects featured there. Dr. Caroline Goeser, Director of Education and Interpretation at the Cleveland Museum of Art, states that her goals with Gallery One (as well as ArtLens) are to provide tools for visitors to better understand the art and for visitors to “find transformative moments of discovery…that make art relevant for them.”

The medieval objects at the CMA are some of many that have been incorporated into the Collection Wall in Gallery One, which shows that the staff intends to facilitate understanding of medieval artwork with this new technology as

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89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.
well. Through the Collection Wall, it is possible to locate pieces of artwork from the Middle Ages that interest them and to see the connections that this artwork has with other pieces in the medieval collection as well as other pieces throughout the entire museum.

Gallery One and ArtLens seem to be the most similar aspects with the DIA’s reinstallment because the DIA is completely visitor-oriented and provides comprehensive access to additional information from which visitors can make meaning. However, the CMA has also concentrated its new “visitor-oriented” technology into two main tools, as opposed to the complete refocusing of the DIA to include interactive displays in all of its galleries. The CMA appears to have taken a more cautious approach to integrating electronic components into its reinstallment. For example, the DIA placed into its galleries an “I Spy” Flipable and graphic panels “where reproduced images of works of art had details called out with text.” These new elements are always there, right in front of the visitor, as opposed to Gallery One and ArtLens, which can be excluded from a visit if the user so desires. Both the “I Spy” and additional content on ArtLens aim to give individuals more to connect with, but the DIA does so in a more upfront way.

While the CMA did incorporate new interpretive means to aid visitor understanding and meaning-making, they did not do so to the same degree as the DIA. Audience research has yet to completely catch up with these two reinstallment so it is not possible to determine which approach is more effective for users. Even so, the emphasis on the visitor is still present at the CMA because of these new technologies, and they

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91 Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
93 Ibid., 174.
demonstrated that the goal of the CMA in interpreting its medieval collection to the general public is to facilitate their understanding to the highest degree possible by providing additional content and to encourage interaction with objects through technology applications.

Conclusion

The interpretive tools and practices of the staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art show the desire of the staff to facilitate an understanding of the objects and the time period of from which they stem. The way that the objects are organized, arranged, lighted, interpreted, and studied are all for a purpose of providing opportunities for visitors to learn more about them and to make deeper connections. All of these elements combine into an interpretive strategy for the medieval collection at the CMA, which is part of the strategy of the museum as a whole, similar to the DIA’s reinstallation, demonstrating that the CMA certainly has its place in the larger trend of museums to increase visitor-object interactions. In the following chapter, the current educational practices related to the medieval collection will be explored, and will further demonstrate the dedication of the staff to enlighten and to inspire through the telling of a story of a time long past.
Chapter 4

Interacting with the Medieval Objects at the Cleveland Museum of Art through Educational and Special Programs

Educational programs have their own role to play in creating opportunities for visitors to have meaningful experiences by learning from and understanding the medieval objects at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Education is different than interpretation because it creates a more directed experience for the visitor, usually with a staff member guiding learning processes with users in a themed program or presentation, such as a classroom lesson or lecture.¹ The Departments of Education (which is combined with the Interpretation Department) and of Teaching and Learning facilitate this process. Museum educators have had substantial influence in making collections in museums more successful over the past few decades especially, and they have been shifting the balance of power away from curators to devise their own methods for engaging their visitors and audiences that are more focused on visitor needs and wants.² The staff at the CMA, for instance, does not want to teach art history alone, but to encourage visitors and students to make personal connections with objects and to create a memorable experience.³ This is not unlike the Frazier International History Museum, which also aims to help individuals to make meaning in its programs related to its medieval objects.

³ Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
The design of education curriculum was mostly unaffected by the reinstallation except for the new 13,000 square foot space dedicated entirely to such programs.\textsuperscript{4} Other than this, the content remained essentially the same during the reinstallation process. This is because the museum as a whole concentrated on rethinking interpretation in galleries and providing new tools like ArtLens to enhance understanding instead of enhancing education programs, which received a large grant in the late 1990s specifically for this purpose.\textsuperscript{5} However, a comparison with the Detroit Art Institute will show that its reinstallation “fundamentally changed” its own practices by including the new interpretive elements in school tours.\textsuperscript{6} In the end, like interpretive practices, educational programs at the CMA also aim to facilitate visitor-object interactions by making art accessible through teaching a variety of classroom programs, regular programs, and intergenerational learning programs, all of which are designed to make the art in the medieval galleries of the CMA more accessible to the public.

\textit{Classroom Programs – Department of Teaching and Learning}

The Department of Teaching and Learning, headed by Dale Hilton, offers a variety of different classroom experiences that use the medieval collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art. One program in the “Art To Go” curriculum is entitled “Cool Knights: Armor from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance,” and it allows students who visit to interact with several medieval objects through hands-on learning, a

\textsuperscript{4} Franklin, “For All the People Forever,” 5-6.
\textsuperscript{5} Dale Hilton, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 31, 2014.
\textsuperscript{6} Jennifer Wild Czajkowski, e-mail message to Lauren Cengel, April 10, 2014.
unique opportunity. The other three are “Distance Learning,” which are taught via live videoconferencing to school-age children and non-traditional students alike. The three of these that will be examined in this chapter are “Medieval Masterpieces,” “Knights, Castles, and Kings,” and “Arms, Armor, and Simple Machines.” According to Hilton, the medieval programs are among some of the most popular and they make up 10-20% of the total used each year. They clearly demonstrate that learning in twenty-first century museums has been “refreshed” and that teaching styles have been changing in order for students and visitors to take away the most from their experiences with the museum.

The Art To Go and Distance Learning Programs do this by establishing context, encouraging critical thinking about the art, and relating the art to modern experiences.

Art To Go

“Cool Knights: Armor from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance” utilizes pieces from the armor collection that resides in Gallery 210. It is recommended for grades two through twelve and features “Real pieces of armor used by Medieval knights and Renaissance noblemen” that “can be touched and sometimes tried on in this lesson.” What is unique, and even unusual, is that individuals can actually touch (with cotton gloves, of course) these irreplaceable pieces of art made hundreds of years ago.

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7 Ibid.
9 Dale Hilton, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 31, 2014.
This sensory aspect, usually not allowed within a museum or a classroom setting, allows the students to gain a new perspective on the art in front of them. Again we see here Sandra Dudley’s idea of materialism, which emphasizes the connection that museum visitors can make with objects through the senses. The sense of touch allows users to explore the object in-depth like they would not in a traditional museum setting, and so it creates a stronger connection. In addition, the educational theory of transference can be applied. Transference simply indicates transfer of learning, and according to this theory, a student relates his or her experiences in one situation to the learning of another. This “transfer” of experiences can also occur with the experience of holding an artifact of the Middle Ages – by holding the artifact, the student is able to transfer his or her feelings of how the person wearing the armor might have felt to his or her newly acquired knowledge of the Middle Ages. This sensory experience of touch gives the students a better perspective of knights and soldiers used the armor because they physically feel what historic figures felt, and it brings them closer to obtaining a contextualized viewpoint of the objects in the Armor Court.

This is not unlike “The Days of Knights” at the Frazier International History Museum. Children in kindergarten through third grade can be “transported back to the days of proud knights and noble ladies” by handling reproduction armor, listening to a story, and using what they have learned about heraldry to create their own shield. It is interesting that both the CMA and the Frazier Museum use the technique of allowing

students to handle either real or reproduction armor to teach it. This displays the
importance of the use of touch in museum educational programs when teaching about a
time period that is not close to the modern day. As previously noted, the sensation of
taking an object in through feeling its surface or wearing it allows for a deeper
connection between an individual and an object, which the Frazier Museum also seems to recognize.

There is one major difference between programs at these institutions, however. At
the Frazier Museum, “The Days of Knights” and “Armor of Yesterday and Today”
include some kind of “live performance” like a sword demonstration or costumed
interpreter talking about life in the Middle Ages. This added element can certainly help children develop a mental picture of the original context of weapons and armor. The webpage advertises it this way as well by saying that “Your students will never forget” this part of the presentation, indicating that such a show solidifies the experience for the students and gives them something fun by which to remember what they have learned. This is perhaps due to the differences in overall collections of the two places. While the medieval objects at both are a prominent part of the overall institution, the CMA has a much wider scope of history to cover for its educational programming, and so it might not be able to go into as much depth by using costumed interpreters. Even so, the CMA is still able to provide a memorable experience of its own by allowing participants to handle medieval armor.

Also, the teacher preparation guide for “Cool Knights” also shows how it has been structured to facilitate student-object interactions for individuals to learn and to make the objects more accessible. In the program’s introductory text, it states that “Armor…makes history come alive” and that “Now, hundreds of years later, these same suits help us reach back through the years…and almost touch these kings and princes from history.”\(^\text{18}\) The writers are clearly trying to emphasize that viewing these objects will help the students to gain a better understanding of the Middle Ages. By seeing the armor, individuals can see what people in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance actually wore, and so they have a much easier time obtaining a mental picture of what those time periods were really like. The pieces of armor are the tools that the CMA utilizes through this program to help visitors to learn more about the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

In addition, the program clearly attempts to place the students in the mindset of the people of the Middle Ages and Renaissance by using something called “historical empathy.” Defined by Kaya Yilmaz, it is “the ability to see and judge the past in its own terms by trying to understand the mentality, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and actions of historical agents using a variety of historical evidence.”\(^\text{19}\) So, it is essentially a teaching framework that uses objects from the past to connect to students in the present by getting them to understand and think like people in the past. A good example of this is from the preparation packet in a section that gives the teacher prompts to get the students thinking about the subject material. The question states, “If you were a


king, or a duke, or maybe even an emperor, what kind of armor would you wear? What material would it be made of? What color would it be?"²⁰ Linking the students mentally with historical figures facilitates their understanding about armor and how it was used in the past, placing them in the mindset of the people of the Middle Ages.

It is interesting, though, that Jennifer Wild Czajkowski, Vice President of Learning & Interpretation at the Detroit Institute of Arts, states that the reinstallation “fundamentally changed” her museum’s school programs, unlike the CMA.²¹ In particular, it was the tours that were affected because of all the new interactive elements that were woven into the galleries. Guides began to include these components and pointed them out so that visitors could understand the museum’s organization and stories better when they were on their own.²² In addition, the DIA has also slowly worked a user-based design into its educational practices, which includes “evaluation for as many programs as [they] can.”²³ This is clearly different from the CMA, which did not use the reinstallation as an opportunity to rethink similar plans. The Department of Teaching & Learning did not emphasize the use of audience research as the DIA did.²⁴ In the end, while the CMA does try to facilitate visitor-object interactions, it does not necessarily have the same dedication to user research as the DIA, which has incorporated this to a much greater extent than before its reinstallation.

²⁰ Kline and Rogers, Cool Knights, 10.
²¹ Jennifer Wild, Czajkowski, e-mail message to author, April 10, 2014.
²² Ibid.
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Dale Hilton, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 31, 2014.
Distance Learning

The three Distance Learning programs also aim to get students to connect with objects from the Middle Ages. Distance Learning is quite different, though, from the Art To Go at the Cleveland Museum of Art. As the name implies, it does not take place at the museum, but from a distance at the facility or institution where the class is located. They reach students locally, regionally, and internationally, and they can be used for schoolchildren or other groups like senior citizens in care facilities; the CMA has been running these for fifteen years, and there are about 700 programs used each year as well.25 Figure 33 displays a snapshot of what the Distance Learning classroom looks like—the instructor stands in front of a green screen and an image is projected onto what the classroom sees, and a technician controls the images that are projected onto the screen as well as the sound. According to Dale Hilton, the main goal is to facilitate interactions and connections between the students and the objects, as well as to make the art more accessible to the public that cannot physically come to the CMA itself.26 An examination of the teacher guides for the medieval programs will further demonstrate this.

All three of the teacher guides include program objectives that instructor plans on completing with the class, and they clearly show that the design is meant to facilitate the students’ interactions with the objects, even if it is done virtually. For instance, the “Medieval Masterpieces” program states that certain pieces of art from the museum’s medieval collection “help make connections between art and religion for classes studying

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26 Ibid.
world religions, culture, and/or European history.” In other words, the students will use the art as the primary means to learn about the Middle Ages and the characteristics of the time period. The “Knights, Castles, and Kings” program also states that “students will be introduced to noble life in the Middle Ages through arms and armor, courtly and religious objects,” and that “They will be asked to comment on what they see, question, and draw conclusions about the role of castles, knights, and kings in medieval society.” The teachers at the CMA use the art to engage the students and to get them to think critically about the Middle Ages. Finally, in “Arms, Armor, and Simple Machines,” one of the objectives is to get individuals to think about how simple machines (like levers and pulleys) have played a role in the development of weaponry and armor, and how they were used in everyday life, much like these other programs.

Establishing context of the Middle Ages and then getting the students to think critically about the art that stems from this time period are two very important elements for interacting with the pieces of art. In her interview, Hilton discussed how the beginning of the “Knights, Castles, and Kings” program was run – first, the instructor asks how many people have heard of the Middle Ages, and then a timeline is put up on the screen so individuals can understand where the time period falls in history. She then asks if the they have heard of Christopher Columbus and the Roman Empire, and then says the end of Rome was the very beginning and Columbus was at the end; this helps to

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30 Dale Hilton, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 31, 2014.
establish chronological relativity so that they have a basic idea of when the Middle Ages occurred.\(^{31}\) After she establishes context, an image of a piece of medieval art is put on the screen and she asks the class what they think it was or what it was used for. This process of asking questions and building off of how the students respond encourages critical thinking and allows them to almost figure out for themselves what life was like in the Middle Ages by interacting with the art in this way.\(^{32}\) Therefore, the way that these Distance Learning programs are structured to encourage participants to think critically allows them to more fully interact and connect with objects from the medieval collection at the CMA.

Historical empathy plays a large role in this. According to Yilmaz, establishing this is an “active process” and students need access to resources that will aid them in understanding a historical time period.\(^{33}\) The “active process” that Yilmaz describes is the question-and-answer method that the CMA instructors use to guide participants closer to the answers that they are looking for about the medieval pieces of art. In addition, the resources that the instructors use to accomplish this are the medieval objects themselves. They are central for the students to understand the time period because they provide a connection with the past that nothing else really can, and this allows fuller engagement, intellectually and imaginatively.\(^{34}\) The connection and interaction with these artifacts are heightened when instructors provide a perspective from which to view certain ones by comparing them with the modern day. For instance, in “Knights, Castles, and Kings,”

\(^{31}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) Ibid.
\(^{33}\) Yilmaz, “Historical Empathy and Its Implications for Classroom Practices in Schools,” 333.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., 332.
when teachers show chain mail as an example of armor in the Middle Ages, they explain that in that time period, these people did not have bulletproof vests to protect them from attack. This provides relative contextual detail and allows the students to gain a clearer picture of the purpose of chain mail. Therefore, the various elements of the Distance Learning programs and the Art To Go program that centers around the medieval collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art allows students to more fully interact with the objects in the collection and to understand what life was like in the Middle Ages.

**Special Programs – Interpretation & Education Department**

Special programs, like traditional educational programs, also provide a way for museum visitors to interact with the objects in the medieval collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art, but these reach a much broader (and often more mature) audience. “Special programs” can include tours, informal gallery talks, and events for all ages, and they are often guided or led by a staff member or visiting speaker. The CMA provides different access points for various people that have specific interests in art in the galleries, and there are quite a few of these provided for the medieval works of art. Also, like the DIA, these programs were not affected by the reinstallation process, since both places chose to focus on the interpretive practices in the galleries themselves. The staff member at the CMA that develops them is Bethany Corriveau, the Audience Engagement Specialist working from the Interpretation & Education Department. She

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37 Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
38 Larry Baranski, e-mail message to Lauren Cengel, April 7, 2014.
develops “lectures, demonstrations, workshops, and other events” that are designed to supplement what is already provided through interpretive content in the galleries and to spur people into the galleries to interact with the objects there.\textsuperscript{39} The programs that this section of the paper will cover are Art Bites, and regularly scheduled lectures and events for permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions. The ones at the CMA that focus on the medieval collection serve the same purpose as the traditional educational programs: to facilitate interactions between visitors and museum objects.

**Art Bites**

Art Bites are a relatively new program that Corriveau has developed – they began in 2013.\textsuperscript{40} According to the CMA’s website, Art Bites are talks during lunch hours that “are unique explorations of the galleries inspired by favorite books, television shows, and more, all in thirty minutes or less,” and they include a “thematic twist.”\textsuperscript{41} The draw of the program, then, is its ability to relate aspects of popular culture to the pieces of art in the CMA’s collection, and it can be done in a short period of time for a quick visit. This fits into the larger trend of higher numbers of individuals attending museums for a leisure activity, where they can browse or attend an event to discover the past.\textsuperscript{42} Museum atmospheres have changed over the past decade to the point where users feel free to


\textsuperscript{41}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42}Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, 2.
engage and have fun, as opposed to being told “boring” dates and terms from the past.\textsuperscript{43} So, Art Bites allows the staff at the CMA to provide an avenue through popular culture to facilitate interactions with the art in the galleries.

The Art Bites session that relates to the medieval collection focuses on artifacts from the Armor Court and the popular HBO television series, \textit{Game of Thrones}. It is designed “to explore real-world equivalents of the arms and amour [\textit{sic}] in \textit{Game of Thrones}.”\textsuperscript{44} Corriveau selected several different pieces of armor that related to the show and explained what the objects were and how they were used; she then made the connection with each one to an aspect of the show (such as characters’ particular weapons).\textsuperscript{45} This program facilitates interactions with the art because it relates the objects to something that has generated much interest over the past several years, and it shows what the \textit{real} objects are that informed their fictional counterparts. Art Bites draws in visitors that might not have necessarily been interested in the medieval collection or the Armor Court in the past, which creates new opportunities for meaning-making. Thus, the \textit{Game of Thrones} Art Bite provides an access point for visitors to interact with the objects more fully and to understand them as well.

\textbf{Programs for the Permanent Galleries}

There are also quite a few programs related to the permanently installed medieval galleries that the CMA that allow visitors to more fully interact with the pieces of art. The

\textsuperscript{43} Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
\textsuperscript{45} Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
adult lecture series are designed with a more mature audience in mind and each year the museum features a variety of “artists, scholars, and curators” that speak on topics related to pieces in the permanent galleries. Since 2012 when the new atrium and many of the new galleries reopened, the CMA has featured six lectures that focus on the medieval collection of the museum, especially on newly acquired items. From a closer examination of these topics, it is clear that these programs align with the CMA’s larger goal of using them to allow visitors to make connections with the medieval art and to promote a fuller understanding of the history behind them.

Several of these center around the 2010 acquisition of Icon of the Mother of God and Infant Christ (Virgin Eleousa), made in Crete circa 1425-1450 by the Cretan icon painter Angelos Akotantos (see Figure 34). The icon is significant not only because it is representative of the culture and religion of Greece in the fifteenth century, but because it was painted by one of the most well-known icon artists on Crete at the time period. The CMA was no doubt eager to show off one of its new splendid acquisitions since its reinstallation, as shown by the events that surrounded it in 2012 and 2013. One was a lecture entitled “From Byzantium to El Greco: Icon Painting in Venetian Crete,” which took place on September 30, 2012, and the speaker was Maria Vassilaki, a professor of History and Byzantine Art at the University of Thessaly in Greece. According to the

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47 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
event page, Vassilaki discussed the historical and artistic background of Crete during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance and how Cretan artists were influenced by Venetians who occupied the island until the late seventeenth century. In particular, she focused on the influence this had on the artists like Akotantos who painted icons. This contextual information, while not necessary to appreciate the Virgin Eleousa, provided supplemental educational material that potentially enhanced visitor understanding of the piece to a more sophisticated level. Learning that the artwork was made in a place that had been occupied by a foreign culture for centuries could have changed how individuals perceived the icon; afterwards, they might look for signs of this Venetian influence that would not have been obvious before. Meaning-making is thus made more intricate through providing information to facilitate connections.

Two other programs, designed to complement one another as well as the Virgin Eleousa, demonstrate how the CMA attempted to facilitate visitor-object interactions and connections through its special programs. These were the Performing Arts Series “Mother and Child” and the pre-concert talk on Virgin-and-Child imagery, both scheduled for December 14, 2013. The whole event was designed to enhance the understanding of the devotion that lies behind the Virgin Eleousa with a lecture on what the imagery of the icon means and music that was also inspired by similar images of the Virgin and Child (which the CMA also holds many of in its medieval collection). These are particularly special in enhancing visitor understanding and appreciation because they

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51 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
can engage visitors with methods that are not typically encountered in an everyday visit. That is, the choral music engages the sense of sound instead of just sight and it demonstrates how images of Mary and her son Jesus inspired music as well as art. The lecture also allows users to more fully engage with the icon as well as similar artifacts because it highlights the visual aspects so that audience members can learn to recognize and even observe features in others in the future; this enhances visitor understanding of the artwork. Therefore, the programs centered on objects in the permanent galleries that hold the medieval collection at the CMA were designed to enhance and facilitate interactions between visitors and the objects by providing more sophisticated supplemental information.

Programs for Temporary Exhibitions

While the CMA was undergoing its renovation and reinstallation, it was understandably much more difficult to schedule programs for its collection. So, during the intermittent period before the medieval objects were reinstalled, the CMA featured many pieces from the collection in temporary exhibits at the CMA itself and that also traveled to other museums in the United States. One of these was called “Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe,” and it featured ten special events related to the objects featured, as well as tours.⁵⁴ Programs related to “Treasures of Heaven” were important to the museum not only to aid in visitor understanding of the pieces of art, but also to show them that the reinstallation process did not completely

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sideline the precious objects. The CMA designed the special programs for “Treasures of Heaven” to allow for more meaningful visitor-object interactions, also by placing them in historical context like the programs for the permanent galleries.

One in particular was clearly designed to enhance visitor understanding and facilitate their interactions with the objects in the exhibit: “Relics, Sanctity, and Kingship in the 13th Century: Louis IX and the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.” Gerry Guest, Associate Professor of the Department of Art History and Humanities at John Carroll University, gave a talk discussing the Sainte-Chapelle, which is a famous medieval church built by King Louis IX of France that housed countless relics, including one that was believed to be a piece of Christ’s cross.\(^55\) Also, a brief description on the CMA website states that “An examination of the building as a whole…reveals the key role the relics played in medieval notions of holiness and authority,” which clearly shows that the draw to engage audience members was to place the use of relics in larger historical context and to demonstrate that relics were part of a larger movement of religious devotion and royal power in the Middle Ages.\(^56\) This program appears to help visitors understand that relics and objects like them did not exist in a vacuum, but that they were surrounded by similar artifacts and even buildings of a similar purpose.

The CMA’s desire to emphasize the history of the medieval world can also be seen in the lecture “From Constantinople to Rome and Back Again: The Transfer of Byzantine Relics in the Medieval and Modern World.” An Associate Professor of Theology at Fordham University, George Demacopoulos discussed the history of the holy

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
\(^{56}\) Ibid.
remnants of St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom and how they fit into the politics of relic possession that originated from the early Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{57} Like other topics, disputes over relic possession and theft (common occurrences at the time) are not necessarily ones that traditional interpretive content in the galleries can cover in depth. This event allowed the CMA to provide an additional resource for guests to come and learn more about a medieval phenomenon and to help them understand why relics and reliquaries like the ones on display were so desirable for powerful institutions like the churches of Rome and Byzantium. Therefore, lectures such as these were designed to facilitate visitor-object interactions by emphasizing the historical background surrounding objects in the collection. The programs for the temporary exhibitions, permanent galleries, and Art Bites all demonstrate that the CMA’s goals with this aspect of museum education was to provide the resources to help visitors make meaning from the pieces of medieval art in the museum.

\textit{Intergenerational Learning – Interpretation & Education Department}

The drawback to formal lectures and related events is that they do not appeal to a broad audience, even though they can provide a good deal of rich supplemental information. They are aimed for mature adults, and so the Cleveland Museum of Art, like others, has developed programs that would attract visitors of all ages.\textsuperscript{58} Now more than ever, museums are competing with other “leisure” activities to draw in visitors, causing

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013; Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
them to change how they operate.\textsuperscript{59} Intergenerational learning programs at the CMA are part of its response to users over the past ten years that desire a more interactive and engaging space, and that can feel free to explore the museum in an informal fashion, versus the more formal traditional programs. They are the final piece of the puzzle that make up the CMA’s educational programs and they represent the most creative aspect that they staff can present to facilitate visitor interactions with the art.\textsuperscript{60} Generally defined and as the name indicates, intergenerational learning aims to make the knowledge of museums accessible to the entire public made up of all groups and individuals, regardless of age.\textsuperscript{61} These programs at the Cleveland Museum of Art related to the medieval collection aim to get visitors of all ages to interact more fully with the works of art by making the learning fun and by encouraging imaginative thinking based on context provided about the meaning and the purpose of the art.

Intergenerational learning provides a variety of programs for visitors to engage with the medieval works of art. Most of them incorporate medieval art from the collection into the whole, but there several that focus solely on medieval objects. Like the special programs, the intergenerational learning events seem to focus around new or prominent pieces of the collection (most likely because these will tend to draw in more visitors). One that recently took place in May 2013 was a Family Day event called “Medieval Menagerie,” and it focused on the newly acquired Caporali Missal from the early Renaissance in Italy and the Armor Court. Family Days like this one occur on the

\textsuperscript{60} Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
second Sunday of each month, and they are opportunities for families to participate in activities that are “suitable for all ages” according to the website. Clearly, this event is a tool for the CMA to use to engage multiple generations with activities that make learning about the collections fun.

The “Knights and Armor Hunt” is one such activity that this Family Day included. It invites families to “Explore the world of knights and armor in the collection” by finding pieces of art in the Armor Court and medieval galleries. For each object, a brief description is given along with a zoomed-in capture from which the groups are meant to locate the piece. Also, the museum notes what the artworks were used for in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. This helps the groups to not only have fun by finding the art, but also to learn its background and meaning for the people of the past. For instance, the tour features *Three Panels from a Casket with Scenes from Courtly Romance*, made c.1330-1350 in France (see Figure 35). The description introduces the reader to jousting and explains how the medieval game worked: “The knight could get points by jabbing his competitor” with “blunted lances.” By drawing the visitor’s attention to the two knights jousting on the panel, the text creates an interaction between visitors and the object, since they now have a better idea of what exactly is going on in the panel. To increase this interaction, the program also asks, “What are the ladies in the balconies doing?” That way, even if the participants’ eyes are drawn to the jousting knights at first, they are encouraged to look more carefully to discover what the other

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63 *Knights and Armor* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2013).
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
people on the panel are doing as well. The open question also leaves room for the groups to create their own interpretations, and perhaps even connect the object with their own experiences of cheering a team on at a sports event.

The “Museum Menagerie Hunt” also stimulates families to interact with the art in the same way that the “Knights and Armor Hunt” does. The Middle Ages are not the sole focus (it includes objects from the Renaissance as well), but the combination of the art from the two time periods allows groups to see what kinds of continuities and changes occurred across the years. In this program, guests seek pieces of art that incorporate animals into them; it states that “Animals abound in the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries. They run, jump, and play. Seek out these animals. And, be on the lookout for other animals in the galleries.” From the description, it appears that the goal is to get visitors to see how the art can “come alive,” so to speak, through the representations of different animals. The use of active verbs like “run, jump, and play” emphasize the lifelikeness of certain objects as well. The medieval art that the program features are the Chaumont Tapestries, which have images of many animals woven into the fabric (see Figure 36). Also, the questions here not only prompt looking more closely to interact, but they also attempt to stimulate imaginations.

The guide also asks, “Do you think unicorns are real or imaginary? Where else do animals live in this garden?” It aims at a younger audience, inspiring them to think about what might have inspired unicorn myths or if they might have actually existed. The whole family can help to answer what other animals are in the cloth as well. These two

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66 Museum Menagerie (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2013).
67 Ibid. There is a unicorn woven into the far right of the tapestry.
“hunts” for art in the CMA that involve the medieval collection clearly prompt a deeper interaction between visitors and the art in the galleries. According to Edmonson, these goals are indeed one of the driving forces behind things like Family Days at the CMA. All programs, including ones that feature items from the medieval collection, are meant to encourage visitors to find personal connections with the art and to make a memorable experience that will instill a desire to return.⁶⁸

The methods of utilizing historical empathy can be seen in these programs as well. If “Empathy characterizes historical thinking that yields enriched understanding within context,” these two “hunts” certainly demonstrate this principle.⁶⁹ The programs do encourage visitors to explore and have fun within the museum, but it is to a larger purpose: for individuals to learn about the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This is accomplished by first providing an interesting fact about the time period to give the visitors a basis for further understanding and then exploration of the art. For instance, the Medieval Menagerie stop for the Chaumont Tapestries first states that the “unicorn’s horn was said to cure people who were sick.”⁷⁰ This phrase intends to place participants in the mindset of the medieval individuals who believed this myth, thus establishing context. Even from this small piece of information, users gain a much better idea of how unicorns were viewed during the Middle Ages. This allows for a better understanding of the art and a fuller interaction; it also likely prompts groups to have fun debating whether or not unicorns were real.

⁶⁸ Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
⁷⁰ Museum Menagerie.
In addition, placing the CMA in the larger context of institutions that have significant medieval collections aids in the understanding of how the time period is presented to the public in a museum setting. The Frazier International History Museum offers “Interpretations” so that audiences of all ages can learn about the Middle Ages. Among the many different options are “Day in the Life: The Norman Knight,” “Arming the Knight,” “The Hastings Knight,” “The Geste of Robin Hood,” “Armed Foot Combat: Hand and Half-Sword,” “Medieval Sword and Buckler,” and “Day in the Life: A Medieval Archer.” For these, a costumed interpreter acts out a role or gives a topical demonstration with reproduction pieces of armor. From this assortment and the frequency by which they are offered, it is clear that the staff of the Frazier Museum believe that events that appeal to the young, old, and individuals in between are one of the most effective means to present the history of the Middle Ages. While users do not explore the galleries or hear a lecture like at the CMA, they can still hear stories about life in a distantly removed era and how its artifacts were used by the people of that age. This provides information for visitors to make meaning with pieces of art in the galleries, and so their experiences are likely made more memorable.

Finally, there are several “Art Stories” programs that occurred on the CMA’s Family Day that relate to the Middle Ages. One of these is called “Lords, Ladies, and Castles,” and it seems to be aimed at children at the early elementary school age. It also fits in with the goals for the rest of the programs to help individuals interact with the art and to have fun while learning. Also like the others, it begins with some historical context.

about the Middle Ages (albeit less than the others since it is aimed towards a fairly young audience): “Today we’re talking about life in castles. Lords and Ladies lived in castles. They were usually rich landowners.” This shows that the staff wants to give the visitors a basis, no matter how small, that they can build off of for later activities. The rest transitions between “Art Moments,” short stories about the Middle Ages, and a group activity. From a closer examination of the materials it is apparent that the goal is to draw the group into the story to provide a picture of life in the Middle Ages, and then to give them a real example of medieval life with art from the collection.

The first “Art Moment” features the Chaumont Tapestries, and the curriculum focuses on questions that establish what castles were and who lived inside them. The instructor asks the children, “What do lords and ladies look like? What do they own, how do they act?” and attempt to get them to engage with the art that they see in front of them. The teacher then transitions into the first book to focus on where lords and ladies of the Middle Ages live: in castles. The book, *Over at the Castle* by Boni Ashburn, provides a fun element for the children with which to engage. The art moment that follows features the *Birth and Naming of St. John the Baptist* by Juan de Flandes from the Netherlands in the fifteenth century and a page from *Queen Isabella’s Book of Hours* from Spain in the fifteenth century (see Figures 37 and 38).

Although both of these pieces represent scenes from the Bible, the artists reconstructed them as if the events happened in the Middle Ages with contemporary building structures and clothing. As one can see from both of the pieces of art, the

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72 *Art Stories Curriculum Sheet: Lords, Ladies, and Castles* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2013).
73 Ibid.
interiors of castle-like structures are depicted, so this allows the children to get a glimpse of what the insides of medieval structures might have looked like during the Middle Ages as well as the people that lived inside of them. The questions in the curriculum also direct the children’s attention to the way that the interiors look, which shows that the program truly does intend for the children to have meaningful experiences interacting with the art and looking more closely than they probably would have otherwise. The technique of switching between examining art and “storytime” with a children’s book about the Middle Ages allows participants to have fun while learning about the Middle Ages through art from the time period. Thus, the intergenerational learning programs provide information and structures from which visitors can learn, and the knowledge they take away allows them to make deeper connections with the objects in the medieval galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Conclusion

The educational programs at the Cleveland Museum of Art are indicative of a larger trend in the museum world. Over the past ten years especially, museums have been making a greater attempt to provide memorable experiences for visitors and to make learning about the objects within them engaging and fun. The staff at the CMA does not just want to teach art history, but to encourage visitors and students to make personal connections with museums and for them to have a memorable experience and to want to

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74 Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014; Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
come back.\textsuperscript{75} This can clearly be seen in the educational programs that focus upon the medieval collection at the CMA. Even though its audience research is not as extensive as the DIA’s, the classroom programs, special programs, and intergenerational learning programs all show that the goal of the CMA is to engage their audience and to bring them into the world of the Middle Ages through examining the artwork. Such elements bring the world of the Middle Ages to life and encourage visitors to learn more about the time period and the art that stems from it, no matter what the age.

\textsuperscript{75} Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
Conclusion

A great many aspects of the educational and interpretive practices of the Cleveland Museum of Art have been discussed in this study that pertain to the medieval collection. Interviews of staff, exploration and analysis of the galleries, and educational programs clearly represent the museum’s goal for presenting a renewed interpretation of the collection to the public. Through the examination of these sources, it was discovered that the main goal of these elements was to facilitate visitor-object interaction and to provide potentially meaningful experiences by making opportunities for personal connections with the art. This is a significant contribution to the field of public history and museum studies because it demonstrates how large American art museums like the CMA operate after a reinstallation, and because it explores the representation of medieval objects in American art institutions in the twenty-first century, which has not been extensively discussed by previous scholars. This is significant especially in relation to two other places, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Frazier International History Museum. Comparing the reinstallations of the DIA and the CMA revealed that while the CMA desired to “refresh” its interpretive practices to make the museum more engaging for visitors, the DIA took a bolder approach in its greater emphasis on interactive tools placed in all of its galleries, not just one, and not in a limited scope with an optional Apple application. Comparing the Frazier Museum and the CMA showed that many similar practices are used in American museums to represent the history and art of the Middle Ages to the American public, such as the chronological grouping of objects and using touch to teach children about armor.
In order to accomplish a full understanding of these elements of interpretation and education that the staff of the CMA used, I conducted extensive research of the museum, its staff, and what they do. Interviews were conducted with individuals in the Curatorial Department, Interpretation & Education Department, and the Department of Teaching & Learning. In addition, the galleries that now hold the medieval collection at the CMA were extensively analyzed in terms of design, placement and grouping of objects, and informational labels and panels. Photographs of galleries that held medieval objects before the reinstallation also allowed for the comparison of past and current interpretation practices. Educational programs were also analyzed in order to present a complete picture of how the CMA reaches out to various audiences and how it attempts to more fully engage these individuals with the programs that it offers.

The findings of this research for both interpretation and education at the CMA was indeed that the construction of the story of the Middle Ages through various elements was intended to connect visitors to this story by providing multiple avenues for them to access information and to have meaningful experiences by viewing objects in the galleries and by participating in the programs. The interpretive practices that the CMA uses provide several prime examples of how it has refocused on the avenues its users can take to interact with objects. The medieval galleries are based on a narrative that utilizes chronology and geography to aid individuals in understanding the story of the people of the Middle Ages. The narrative’s details show in the fabric of the informational labels and panels. These provide the context and relevant information necessary for visitors to understand the objects and to be placed in the mindset of the people of the Middle Ages,
and they thus have more opportunities to make meaning from the objects. The supplemental information provided by Gallery One and especially ArtLens takes this meaning-making to the next level by allowing the personalization of experiences and more chances to learn about what is interesting to each person who walks through the doors. All of these elements are in place to facilitate visitor-object interactions, and, as Patty Edmonson remarked in her interview, to create a memorable experience for each person by allowing for personal connections to be made with the art.¹

The educational programs for the Cleveland Museum of Art using the medieval collection further demonstrate how the museum fits into the larger trend of providing experiences that can be more meaningful. For example, the unique experience that the Art To Go program, “Cool Knights,” provides by allowing students to actually touch pieces of art allows them to more fully experience the materiality of the objects, and to develop a deeper connection with them.² Three Distance Learning programs bring the art of the CMA to more audiences than it ever could before through technology, thus making the art more accessible to individuals who would not have been able to experience the art otherwise. For a more mature audience, events like lectures provide a more sophisticated understanding of many pieces of the medieval collection, and this information is rich in content and provides a variety of experiences like the concert connected to Icon of the Mother of God and the Infant Christ. Finally, intergenerational learning makes going to the museum fun for all ages by using new and creative techniques to get visitors to learn about and interact with the art with programs like the Medieval Menagerie Hunt. As Dale

¹ Patty Edmonson, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 24, 2014.
Hilton stated in her interview, educational programming has become more interactive over the past ten years and there is more of a focus on audience engagement and less emphasis on simply dispensing information.\(^3\)

These findings also illuminate possible areas for future research. For instance, it could focus on the quality of the visitor’s time spent in the medieval galleries at the CMA, as well as their experiences with the educational programs that the CMA provides. Audience evaluations are critical to understanding how visitors make connections with museum objects. A study of how visitors at the CMA make meaning from its medieval collection would be a critical contribution to public history and museum studies because it would help scholars better understand how they connect with artifacts from a time period that is far removed from the modern day, and one that also holds a large amount of mystery. Also, as it stands, the CMA has done limited evaluations on reactions to the newly reinstalled medieval galleries, so this would aid the CMA in focusing its efforts to facilitate interactions between visitors and medieval objects.\(^4\) It might also be enlightening to compare how Americans connect with pieces of art from American history versus ones from the Middle Ages – would they have a clearer understanding of the significance of objects from America’s past instead of those from the Middle Ages?

Looking into additional avenues such as these would certainly make substantial and unique contributions to the field.

Overall, this case study is significant because it demonstrates a larger trend in the museum world of interpretation and education departments in American institutions

\(^3\) Dale Hilton, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, January 31, 2014.
\(^4\) Meghan Stockdale, interview by Lauren Cengel, July 20, 2013.
currently rallying around efforts to engage their users, like the Detroit Institute of Arts did from 2002 to 2007. According to Jennifer Wild Czajkowski and Shiralee Hudson Hill, interpretation practices are indeed centering on creating “dynamic, dialogic experiences that will ignite visitors’ imaginations, ideas and emotions and encourage self-reflection and social engagement.”

The audience is now in conversation with museum professionals, and objects have been made more approachable by easing the strict interpretations provided in years past. While the CMA did not refocus its goals as intensely as the DIA, it is still apparent that the efforts to engage visitors are there through many elements, such as revised gallery interpretations and ArtLens. Educators stand at the forefront of this development in institutions that share the art and history of the world, and the CMA’s programs reflect this by moving away from the idea of a style of teaching of an “authoritative lecturer before a passive audience” to one that actively engages individuals by asking questions and what they think of the objects.

Professionals like Lori Wienke, Bethany Corriveau, Patty Edmonson, Dale Hilton, and curator Stephen Fliegel are part of a generation that knows that museums need to actively reach out to a variety of audiences, and this shows through the design of the galleries and programs that they helped to develop to engage these audiences and allow for multiple avenues of learning.

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6 Ibid., 256.
7 Lori Wienke, interview by Lauren Cengel, Cleveland, OH, December 4, 2013.
The Cleveland Museum of Art is putting visitor-object interactions at the center of its goals more than ever before. Its interpretive and educational practices show that, as Mary Ellen Munley and Randy Roberts write, “The mindset and internal operations of museums have been fundamentally changed” over the past thirty years.\textsuperscript{10} This has allowed collections such as the medieval one at the CMA to become more accessible to a diverse public. The objects are the center of meaning-making opportunities for the CMA, and this truly shows in its tremendous efforts to help the public to understand the value of the works of art that stand before them. The Cleveland Museum of Art’s interpretive and educational practices that aim to facilitate visitor-object interactions and allow users to learn as much as possible from its medieval collection are truly remarkable feats, ones that will leave their impact on visitors for generations to come.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 36.
Appendix

Figure 1. Floor plan showing location of medieval galleries. *Source:* Cleveland Museum of Art, *Map* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2014), 3.


Figure 11. *The So-called Horn of Saint Blaise*, c. 1100-1200, Cleveland Museum of Art.

*Source:* “The So-called Horn of Saint Blaise, 1100-1200,”


Figure 12. *Portable Altar of Countess Gertrude*, c. 1038, Cleveland Museum of Art.

*Source:* “Portable Altar of Countess Gertrude, shortly after 1038,”

Figure 13. Visitors viewing the Guelph Treasure on January 11, 1931, the first day the exhibition was open to the public. *Source:* Carl Wittke, *The First Fifty Years: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1916-1966* (Cleveland: The John Huntington and Polytechnic Trust and the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1966), 33.


Figure 17. View of newly reinstalled Guelph Treasure in Gallery 106. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.


Figure 20. View of reinstalled transenna pieces in Gallery 106. *Source:* Photograph by Lauren Cengel.

Figure 23. “2000-03.” Cleveland Museum of Art. Source: Cleveland Museum of Art Registrar.

Figure 24. “2010 Gallery 105(1).” Cleveland Museum of Art. Source: Cleveland Museum of Art Registrar.
The Age of Cathedrals and the Rise of Monasticism

Certainly, the more grandly constructed a church is the more likely it is to entice the dullest minds to prayer and to bend the most stubborn to supplication.

—William of Malmesbury (about 1080–1143)

Churches and cathedrals were embodiments of local and civic pride, and cities vied with one another to create ever more beautiful and embellished structures. During the Middle Ages, architecture, the most expensive of the arts, flourished particularly in the 1100s and 1200s, a time of relative peace, prosperity, and population expansion. This period also saw the expansion of monasticism, which placed further demand on the construction of churches. The greatest concentration of building activity occurred along corridors of trade, where the presence of wealth made possible the great Gothic cathedrals of Paris, Chartres, Amiens, Cologne, and Salisbury. Such cathedral cities were also often centers of learning, scholarship, and pilgrimage, further increasing the need for larger and more extravagant buildings. Monasteries, often the keepers of important relics, also emerged during the period as important centers of prayer and pilgrimage. The resulting cathedrals and churches were embellished with sculpture and stained glass that announced their otherworldly status.

Figure 25. Wall panel in Gallery 106. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.

WESTERN MEDIEVAL ART
The Luxury Arts
1000–1350

Wherever you are … marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work. Bright is the noble work, but, being suitably bright, the work should glorify the minds.

—Abbot Suger of Saint Denis (1081–1151), De Architectura

The establishment of a powerful Western Empire under Charlemagne in 800 helped to advance the pictorial and luxury arts of northern Europe to a new degree of sophistication and technical refinement. The emperor and his court, members of the nobility, and religious leaders emerged as important patrons of fine metalwork, ivory carvings, and illuminated manuscripts, commissioning a variety of extraordinary objects destined for religious and secular use.

Church furnishings including altar fronts, candlesticks, croses, reliquaries, chalices, and patens were produced in great numbers, although luxury objects used in secular contexts were also made. The art of working precious metals was practised both by secular artists and monks. Early in the 12th century, one such monk who called himself Theophilus, a pseudonym that means “friend of God,” composed an important instruction manual for producing art in various media. Many of the objects he wrote follow the techniques he described.

Figure 26. Museum panel in Gallery 106. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.
Figure 27. Wall panel in British Royal Armouries galleries at the Frazier International History Museum. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.

Figure 28. Vesperbild (Pietà), Master of Rabenden, 1515-1520, Cleveland Museum of Art. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.
Figure 29. Museum label for “Vesperbild (Pietà),” Cleveland Museum of Art. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.

Figure 30. Virgin and Child with Saints, Ugolino di Nerio c. 1320, Cleveland Museum of Art. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.
Figure 31. Museum label for *Virgin and Child with Saints*. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.

Figure 32. View of additional ArtLens label for *Saint Lawrence*. Source: Photograph by Lauren Cengel.
Figure 33. Snapshot of a Distance Learning program. *Source:*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buYPIWzeUE.

Figure 34. *Icon of the Mother of God and Infant Christ (Virgin Eleousa)*, attributed to Angelos Akotantos, c. 1425-1450, Cleveland Museum of Art. *Source:* “Icon of the Mother of God and Infant Christ (Virgin Eleousa),”


References

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


