

Documenting object experiences in the art museum with CIDOC CRM

Erin Canning

University of Toronto (Master of Museum Studies & Master of Information candidate)

erin.canning@mail.utoronto.ca

This paper explores using CIDOC CRM to document affective aspects of viewer experiences of art objects, such as they can be recorded through scholarly research. This proposal is based on my Master's thesis on affective metadata for art object experiences, in which I developed a schema and controlled vocabulary with which to document affective qualities of viewer-artwork experiences, and validated it through empirical research (University of Toronto; supervisor: Dr. Costis Dallas). On this basis, I explore applying CIDOC CRM to this knowledge representation challenge; the event-centricity of the CRM makes it well-suited for documenting the event of experiencing artworks. I consider the extent to which the CRM can serve to document affective properties, which leave no lasting material evidence. I propose a solution of how affective experiences may be represented with CIDOC CRM, and consider whether an extension is required to account for aspects of the issue that may not be accurately represented by the CRM.

This proposal looks at an area of object research and documentation not yet directly considered by CIDOC CRM or existing extensions. It introduces an interdisciplinary view of documentation that includes affect theory, empirical aesthetics, and visitor research as collaborators in a strategy of holistic object documentation. It seeks to engage CIDOC CRM in continuing to push the boundaries of what is conceptualized as object information worthy of documentation. Additionally, proposing a formal representation of affective visitor-object experiences suggests the potential for new visitor-facing museum practices, such as digital visitor guides making recommendations based on the affective potential of museum objects.