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# White Rabbit-Dynamic

for Adventurous, Playful and Meaningful

Art Education in Museums

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## Introduction

There is a white rabbit appearing out of nothing in an instant. Unexpectedly it surfaces and disappears just as quickly. It appears any time of day and even in my sleep. The rabbit does not respect moments when I have to concentrate on traffic or work. It pops out of the nothing in the most unsuitable situations. You think I would have gotten used to the white rabbit by now but I did not. It has something very ambiguous about it. On the one hand it is a proper rabbit with beautiful white fur and dressed appropriately for work - Wait, that already is strange! Why is it dressed? And listen, it can even speak! That is very in-rabbitish. Why is it not a pet shop- kind of rabbit? You know, one of those adorable creatures that are looking so cute that they are breaking the hearts of little girls. These then melt their parents hearts with their calculated tears until mummy and daddy buy one of those poor creatures in the shop. Ultimately the rabbit follows the little girl home. This white rabbit is different, though. It appears rather paranoid, running late for work, worrying that its head might be cut off when it fails to fulfil its duties. It does not follow any little girl home. A little girl follows this rabbit home down the rabbit-hole to... yes you have guessed it long ago...to Wonderland. It is not just a white rabbit it is the White Rabbit from Alice in Wonderland.

## Context

Since reading the Alice books for a theatre project with teenagers this charmingly uncanny creature keeps me busy. It also is one of the characters that I remembered from my childhood when I first came in contact with Alice. There have been numerous editions since it was first published in 1865. Queen Victoria named herself a fan of Alice in Wonderland as well as Lindsay Lohan. So it must be good. There have been about 38 films of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. The 2010 Disney- film with Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter -up this point the most recent take on Alice in film- was a box-office hit. The Tate Liverpool opened an exhibition in 2011 that showed visual art inspired by Alice.

Let's summarise:

The White Rabbit is a powerful character crossing borders. It is the only character in the Wonderland that can migrate between the real world and Wonderland.

Alice in Wonderland is a unique piece of (literary) art. It also inspired different art disciplines as film, visual art and music. Fine art museums around Europe have shown the exhibition on *Alice in Wonderland Art* created by the Tate Liverpool.

## Relevance

Museum education is my work field. The aim of museum education is mediation between art and visitors. An innovative and attractive concept of art education is crucial for the survival of museums. Strategies of education, such as multimedia, interactive exhibitions and theatre in museums (live interpretation) are discussed with big interest among professionals of art education in museums. Strategies that encourage visitors to learn, discover and enjoy themselves at the same time are needed. No-matter what approach art educators choose, it will only succeed in enthusing visitors if they feel they have made meaningful experiences. Experiences that transcend predictable expectations in which visitors can find confirmation for what they already know about a certain artist, genre or epoque. Visitors will feel they have entered an experience of significance if something happened. Something deeper. Something leading them to an interpretation only they

could find but that still opens up exchange on art with others. This is hardly commensurable. So I will try to use Alice's journey through Wonderland as a metaphor for this hard to explain experience of vital meaning-making. I do not aim at finding methods or recipes teaching art educators in museums how to create significant and inspiring encounters with art. With the white rabbit-dynamic I would like to introduce something that gives a name to that phenomenon of when dealing with art suddenly gets fascinating. When it is sensitising your vision, inspires you to link concepts of things differently. When it allows you to connect yourself with the creative world of a stranger. The moment it lets you discover something new and yet well-known about yourself in an artwork. Lewis Carroll's Wonderland will represent this rich playground of infinite symbols of artworks.

### Issue of study

The main question for my work field in museum education is:  
How can a white rabbit-dynamic be initiated for interpretation in art education for museums?  
In order for that to make sense and to structure my quest I will try to find answers to the following sub-questions:  
Why does the White Rabbit have the power to lure Alice from the real world to the Wonderland?  
What makes the interplay between Alice and the White Rabbit special? ( white rabbit-dynamic).  
How can the white rabbit-dynamic be conceived as a metaphor for interpretation in art education in museums?  
Which criteria can be derived from the white rabbit-dynamic that make engaging with art adventurous, playful and meaningful?

### Readers Guide

The first part of the study deals with the original text of Lewis Carroll and the character of the White Rabbit. I explore the White Rabbit's power to bring Alice from the real world into the Wonderland. In the following I will elaborate how dealing with Lewis Carroll can disclose thoughts on interpretation by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Terry Barrett. Ultimately I will define a set of principles of how to trigger the white rabbit- dynamic in art museums. The aim is to identify a number of qualities and characteristics that initiate interpretation that is adventurous, playful and meaningful.

## Chapter 1

### The Phenomenon “Alice in Wonderland”

*Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, “and what is the use of a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations?” So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her. There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again. (Carroll, 1865/ 1998, pp. 9-10).*

### Exploring the Phenomenon

Alice in Wonderland is a tale that is hard to escape. Most people would at least have heard the name. Some might know individual characters like the pertly egg Humpty Dumpty or the Queen of Hearts. The name of the characters might evoke a faint memory of what they look like. This faint afterglow could often come up without knowing that these luscious characters are inhabitants of the Wonderland. The distant memories of what Alice and the crazy folks of Wonderland look like might be defined by the Disney cartoon from 1952, or one of the various other adaptations for film, TV and stage. Perhaps some readers think of Alice as obligatory literature for English class. Whatever the previous knowledge- I will try to give a short introduction to this children's classic that differs from any other book of its kind.

I will paraphrase content, interpretation and reception of Alice in Wonderland. It will deliver the context for my research on the white rabbit-dynamic and how it could be capitalised for art education in museums.

The White Rabbit is one of the most famous characters of Alice in Wonderland. This paper will promote it

from supporting character to the star role. Alice sees the rabbit when her sister is learning for school and trying to get Alice to do some work herself. Given the choice of reading a book that has no pictures in it or following a panicky and talking White Rabbit with pink eyes, Alice's choice is quite obvious. The adventurous little girl pursues the White Rabbit and just about so sees it vanishing inside its rabbit-hole. Alice miraculously fits into the hole and does not think twice to go through with her pursuit of the White Rabbit. She is falling softly and slowly and arrives in Wonderland.

This magical spell of the White Rabbit on Alice is irresistible. It ignites the curiosity of the little girl and kick-starts her exploration of a fantastic empire full of out-of-the-box sensations. Even in scary situations Alice cannot help herself but keep investigating. The spell and the fact, that the White Rabbit can take Alice from reality to Wonderland are two important characteristics of what I define as the white rabbit-dynamic. For now I would like to let go of this metaphor, that surely calls for more clarification.

First it seems appropriate to give some background information that will later help to legitimise the relevance of Alice in Wonderland for art education in museums.

I will start with the origin of Alice and how it evolved out of an improvised story into a classic that has never been out of print since 1865.

Subsequently I will then highlight three important classifications Alice in Wonderland has been given repetitiously. It has been described as a fairy tale, a story of a dream and a book about nonsense. Next I focus on strategies Lewis Carroll employed to encourage active reading.

Ultimately I will give a short subsumption of interpretations. Including how Alice has influenced philosophy.

### The Origin of Alice in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll was born under the name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in 1832 in Daresbury in the English county of Cheshire. He became a lecturer in mathematics and deacon on the college of Christ Church in 1861. He loved photographing and telling stories. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1862 Reverend Dodgson went on a rowing trip on the Isis with Alice and her sisters Edith and Lorina. (Tate, 2011). They were the daughters of the Dean of Christ Church, Henry George Liddell. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was a friend of the Liddell family. The sisters requested a story and Dodgson extemporised a tale about a little girl named Alice and her intriguing encounter with a white rabbit "I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit-hole, to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards" (Carroll as cited by Kreutzer, 1984, p. 35).

The curious little Alice in the story falls down this peculiar rabbit-hole that does not seem to end. She imagines herself on a downward journey to the other end of the world, where surely everything must be upside-down. Amazingly her fall is soft and slow. Fearlessly she can take in all the impressions of things she gains on her way down. There is even time to ponder where she would end up should this fall ever end. Could it be Australia or New Zealand? It turns out to be Wonderland. A place with fantastic, yet a bit weird, inhabitants ruled by the Queen of Hearts. On her pursuit of the White Rabbit Alice meets talking flowers, a smoking Caterpillar, a widely-grinning Cheshire Cat and a Mad-Hatter. Finally Alice plays a game of croquet against the sadistic Queen and ends up as the accused in a crazy trial. Before she can be punished, however, Alice wakes up from her vivid dream and tells her sister all about it. The real Alice loved this improvisation so much, that she asked Dodgson to write it down for her. Published under his

pseudonym Lewis Carroll Alice's Adventures in Wonderland became a classic that is "now one of Western literature's most quoted books" (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p. 18).

Eberhard Kreutzer (1984) extensively researched the phenomenal success and impact of Alice in Wonderland and its sequel Through the Looking-Glass. According to him research on Alice has accumulated to the extent of an industry in its own right. It is nearly impossible to get a manageable picture of all the research that has been done on the Alice-books (Kreutzer, 1984). He elucidates the multifaceted impact the Alice-books had. They have become part of the national identity in the United Kingdom and at the same time they are internationally recognised classics. They influenced elitist literature and have been excessively marketed for the masses. The Alice-books have become a reservoir for examples employed by philosophers. At the same moment quotes from Alice have found their way into everyday language. In the United Kingdom quotes such as "curiouser and curiouser", "jam tomorrow and jam yesterday- but never jam today", "there's glory for you" and "as large as life and twice as natural" (Kreutzer, 1984, p. 31) have become sayings used on various occasions. A great deal of art refers to Alice more or less explicitly.

### A Fairy Tale, a Dream or Nonsense?

Alice is the story of a little girl's dream. Perhaps it could even be called a fairy tale about a dream. There are a couple of immediate references to Alice's journey underground being a dream. When Alice is in grave danger to be charged in an outrageous trial at the end of the book she saves herself by waking up. Alice grows and shrinks by eating or drinking seemingly harmless substances and she can talk to animals and plants. Her travel through Wonderland is not a logical sequence of events continuously bringing her closer to a certain goal. Instead it is marked by a seemingly random order of encounters that never lead to satisfying solutions.

Michael Sheen voiced the White Rabbit in the 2010 film version of Alice in Wonderland by Tim Burton. In an interview with Alan Orange for movieweb in 2010 he explains the fascination of this story for children with being a dream we all dream together "I think that Alice in Wonderland is our collective dream and that somehow Lewis Carroll was able to be the vessel for it." (Sheen, 2010, retrieved from <http://www.movieweb.com/news/michael-sheen-talks-voicing-the-white-rabbit-for-alice-in-wonderland> on 03.03.2013).

This dream's ambiguous charisma of attraction and repulsion distorts the well-known. It is impossible to fully grasp it. Every time we think we know what it is about we fail to categorise it. The dream-world Lewis Carroll created encourages us to keep trying to understand it but, ultimately, it always refuses to be fully understood.

Perhaps it is for Carroll's meticulous research that the dream Alice falls into is so trustworthy that we accept its nonsense as natural. In the same way the children at the test-readings followed Alice trustingly on all her adventures.

According to the Cheshire Cat the animals, plants and persons she meets are all quite extreme in their behaviour and are all crazy "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll, 1865/ 1998, p.77.). In Carroll's thinking madness is a sort of continued dreaming whilst we are awake "May we not sometimes define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which is the sleeping life?" (Carroll as cited by Kreutzer, 1984, p. 63). Along with the aforementioned alienations, madness might complete the dream-perspective on Alice in Wonderland. The dream-like structure of the narration celebrates nonsense in a random order of "metamorphoses, bizarre confrontations and absurd punchlines" (Kreutzer, 1984, p.63). The dream-setting allows linking opposites, violating habits of thinking and playfully obscuring language. Language, logic and reality

are vigorously unhinged and dislocated.

Eberhard Kreutzer (1984) depicts that the nonsense without purpose is skilfully constructed. He explains the method as a gradual destruction of principles of order: Space and time. Rationality and moral. Identity and communication. All those along with the hierarchy of man and animal are stepwise annihilated. The fascination of the nonsense might lay in the assumption that it is a subtle reflection of the irrational dimensions of the human soul." (Kreutzer, 1984, p.15).

This could be another hint, when trying to understand the impact of Alice in Wonderland.

### Activating the Reader

Before the actual opening scene with Alice and her sister, Carroll places a poem describing the afternoon rowing-trip that lead to the now famous tale. "The atmospheric evocation of the dreamy hours of bliss on that rowing-trip create an appellative scope of reference for the reader"(Kreutzer, 1984, p.16). Fantasising about the Golden July Afternoon the reader's imagination runs wild when reading about Alice encountering the White Rabbit. The reader is asked to relate the poem about the Golden July Afternoon to the beginning of the tale. More activating strategies follow. Another smart move of Carroll is letting Alice word her epiphany that a book should be written about her, whilst she is stuck in the White Rabbit's house. The conventional approach of being a passive observer of a fictional world does not work any more, after this odd wish ruptures the illusion (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p. 35). It can be related to Bertolt Brecht's philosophy of theatre. He tore down the fourth wall and employed *Verfremdungseffekte* that made the audience aware that they are participating in the process of actors trying to impersonate someone. In contrast to intending to create the illusion of actually being that fictional character. This is paraphrasing the essence of Brecht's "Schriften zum Theater 1" (Brecht, B. & Hauptmann, E., 1967).

Carroll asked the renowned illustrator John Tenniel to make the drawings for the first publishing. In the text Lewis Carroll encourages the reader to look at these drawings "if you don't know what a Gryphon is, look at the picture" (Carroll, 1865/ 1998, p.110).

The mouse tail (Carroll, 1865/1998, p.36.) is a poem in twistingly set words. Here the text evokes the picture of a mouse tail. It has a degree of abstraction to it and only makes sense if you combine the shape of the printed words with the content of the tale before and after. " This synaesthetic multimediality, whereby images interact with the text -just as the words on the page connect with the pages of the book-turns the Alice books into a Gesamtkunstwerk of a particular kind, one in which the intellectual work and the means of book production go hand in hand." (Tate, 2011, p.12).

Carroll plays with the readers expectations by beginning conventionally and then – just when you are comfortable – breaking the spell with turning the convention upside-down "When what follows does not confirm the reader's expectations, a sudden realisation takes place in the reader that he is reading a new text and he is stimulated to read more attentively" (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p.30). Zadworna-Fjellestad calls it "the collision between the familiar and the unexpected " that makes automatisms impossible to apply. It is Carroll's way of luring the reader into trusting his narrative before encouraging the reader to become more careful with that trust.

Zadworna-Fjellestad further believes that the anecdotal character of the tale is not fully explained by referring to the impromptu story it evolved out of. In her thinking it is another tool to make the reader work "Presented with a series of discontinuous short sections, the reader is constantly activated in his reading. He is forced to see the blank jumps in the narrative and is provoked to

seek some unifying (...) relation between particular parts in order to synthesise them. (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p. 33). After these first riddles, games and tasks are overcome, the reader is to face the biggest mystery: an ending that is no ending. At least not in the classical sense with a proper resolution to the heroes objective. Escaping Wonderland by waking up is not the happy end one would expect. It does not solve any of Alice's problems. Instead the problems of the dull reality are what she comes back to "What Alice 'awakens' to is a grey, interpreted world of fixed relations and closed possibilities" (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p. 25). Alice has not killed Lord Voldemort, bet Captain Hook or found her real grandfather. The story comes to an end because for the simple reason that she wakes up when she is in the midst of an unsolvable mess. It is Lewis Carroll's way of laying bare "the conventions and traditions of the genre" (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p.32) by refusing to resolve the plot in a classic way.

### Interpretation, Perception and Philosophy

The ambiguity of the author, who was a reverend, a mathematician, a teacher, a photographer and an author might explain why experts from so many disciplines claim the book for their field of expertise. Sometimes Carroll has even been named a philosopher.

Already when Alice was first published reader's were keen to learn what the original intention of Lewis Carroll was. Numerous suggestions of possible meanings were discussed. The author himself showed a great deal of openness for interpretations. The only thing he disliked was limiting its meaning to one very particular way of reading it. It was not a just a „spiritual voyage, a puritan's satire on Victorian mores, or a mathematician's play on logic and the strictures of language" (Tate, 2011, p.56). It could have been all of those things if it came to Carroll. Just not exclusively.

In the 1960's the artists Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore gave their answer by quoting the Caterpillar and its question to Alice "Who are you?" (Carroll, 1865/1998, p.54). Following their version of interpretation this was "The question of the constitution and construction of identity in a society saturated by the influence of mass media". (Tate, 2011, p.19). More than fifty years later that answers still has a valid sound to it.

According to the Swedish researcher Danuta Zadworna-Fjellestad, Carroll's aim might have been to demand tolerance of the incomplete. Zadworna-Fjellestad sees "a resemblance with post-modern literature" (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986). Perhaps that could also be applied to other disciplines of art. The ruptures, ambiguities and unanswered questions that characterise Alice are signature qualities of post-modern art. As comprehensible as this sounds, Carroll would probably not have confirmed this. It might have been restricting its meaning to much to one aspect.

In Philip Hübl's introduction to philosophy *Folge dem weißen Kaninchen... in die Welt der Philosophie* he introduces Aristotle's conviction that philosophy begins with wondering. It starts with marvelling -with the amazement of a child (Hübl, 2012, p. 10). Hübl reasons that reality is the real Wonderland. In the motion picture The Matrix from 1999 the main character, Neo, receives a message on his computer saying "Follow the white rabbit". A moment later a woman with a tattoo of a white rabbit comes to pick him up. Neo, played by Keanu Reeves is taking on a bewildering pursuit of answers. The questions are: "Could the whole world be an illusion? Can machines think? Do we have a free will or is everything determined by fate? (Hübl, 2012, p.7) Alice in Wonderland has been quoted, referred to or sampled in at least 50 scientific works of philosophy" (Kreutzer, 1984, p. 31). The Alice books are a playground for "...exploring linguistic codes and conventions the reliability of text and images as means of representation, and the resilience of signs in general- that invite readings against a backdrop of the same issues relating to physiological perception,

epistemology and linguistic confusions that Alice constantly has to contend with.” (Tate, 2011, p. 17). When asked to solve the riddle of the meaning of Alice in Wonderland Carroll would answer: “I didn't mean anything but nonsense! Still (...) words mean more than we mean to express when we use them: so a book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant. So, whatever good meanings are in the book, I'm very glad to accept as the meaning of the book.” (Carroll as cited by Kreutzer, 1984, p.18).”

### Insights for Interpretation

This phenomenal range of possible approaches inspires me to translate Alice in Wonderland to art education in museums. If Alice in Wonderland has had so much impact on all sorts of fields, if it is actually the source or the fertile ground for a lot of art, it might be worth a try to examine what can be learned from it for art education in museums. The White Rabbit took everyone there. From Nabokov, to Dali. From Max Ernst to Andrew and Lana Wachowski -the directors of The Matrix. This incredible impression can probably never be fully explained. I hope to have given some good reasons, though, why Alice in the Wonderland is of relevance when dealing with art. In the following chapters I will try to retrieve valuable insights for art education in museums from this Wonderland of creativity. I would like to end with one more try to explain the phenomenon of Alice in Wonderland. This one is from Virginia Woolf. She refers to Alice in Wonderland and its sequel Through the Looking-Glass:

“The two Alice's are not books for children; they are the only books in which we become children...” (Woolf as cited by Tate, 2011, p.8).

## Chapter 2

### White Rabbit

After outlining the context of Alice in Wonderland in the first chapter, I would like to focus on the White Rabbit itself. I will try to answer the question of why the White Rabbit has the power to lure Alice from the real world to Wonderland. That requires a closer look at the relationship between the White Rabbit and Alice.

The peculiar interplay that connects them appears quite 'dynamic'.

The online version of the Oxford Dictionary describes 'dynamic' as an adjective that can also be a noun. As an adjective the "dynamic of a process or system *is* characterised by constant change, activity, or progress. *In* physics dynamic is relating to forces producing motion. Often contrasted with static. *In* linguistics *dynamic is* expressing an action, activity, event, or process. Applied to a person it describes someone positive in attitude and full of energy and new ideas" (retrieved from <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dynamic> on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 2013). What happens between Alice and the rabbit is definitely something bringing about change that will not stop. Not until Alice wakes up from her dream at the end of the story. This change happens because both parties in this relationship are active and strive for some kind of progress. Alice is keen to learn more about this talking White Rabbit. Up to this point there is no real contact between the two characters. Alice tries to get into conversation with the rabbit but it does not react to her. The motion produced between these two forces leads to Alice falling down the rabbit-hole. Apparently not on purpose, the scuttling force moves the adventurously curious force and brings about wonders. The young, energetic Alice encounters these wonders with the most positive Victorian attitude and enriches her knowledge with puzzling new ideas. This dynamic between Alice and the White Rabbit is the issue of this chapter. It will form the heart of the set of criteria for art education in museums I will establish.

### At Home With A Rabbit

To begin with, I would like to imagine the White Rabbit allowing us to do a home story on it. We have heard lots about it and we would like to learn some facts: Who is this White Rabbit? What makes it special?

Getting to know someone better usually begins with learning their name. It would be the polite thing to do, anyway. Alice, who proves to be very polite, does not ask the rabbit its name. In the beginning there is no time and later the need to ask dissolves itself when "she came upon a neat little house, on the door of which was a bright brass plate with the name "w.rabbit" engraved upon it." (Carroll, 1865/1998, p.41). So the name of the rabbit is actually White Rabbit. I could be named Pale Person if that came into fashion.

What it does, though, is that the White Rabbit could be anyone. Just any regular Victorian citizen dutifully going about his work.

According to Eberhard Kreutzer (1984, p.100) the Victorian catalogue of virtues accentuated qualities like alacrity to work, fulfilment of duties, seriousness and rectitude. The list goes on with considerateness, discipline, puritanism and mannerliness. It all fits with the White Rabbit. It seems as if Carroll meant the rabbit to be the representative for all of those principles. The poor animal is

nearly falling into pieces under the pressure of all its duties with never enough time to accomplish its missions. Yet it never protests against its fate.

With all its burdens the White Rabbit also enjoys being called “yer honour!”(Carroll, 1865, p.45) and working for the royals. It assists the King and the Queen of Hearts as the keeper of protocol and announcer “and near the King was the White Rabbit, with a trumpet in one hand, and a scroll of parchment in the other.”(Carroll, 1865/1998, p. 128).

The rabbit also seems to be the only character in Wonderland that acts according to conventions that resemble the above-ground world. It is not said, that this enables it to move around above-ground but Lewis Carroll would probably not mind us assuming so.

Alice is given guidance by the White Rabbit at court. Not in a nice manner but in comprehensible words. In contrast to the advice Alice gets from the Caterpillar or the Cheshire Cat, that is something she can work with. Useful information to not get in trouble with authorities.

When Alice asks the White Rabbit about the Duchess for instance, it signals her to keep quiet about this touchy matter “Hush! Hush! Said the Rabbit in a low, hurried tone. He looked anxiously over his shoulder as he spoke, and then raised himself upon tiptoe, put his mouth close to her ear, and whispered. “She's under sentence of execution.”(Carroll, 1865/1998, p. 97).

Alice and the White Rabbit have common ground to communicate but yet they are opposites. The “oldish fearfulness of the rabbit juxtaposes the youthful pluckiness of the heroine” (Kreutzer, 1984, p.42).

### Transgressing to Wonderland

Now, this is not a very good home story, so far. Let's talk clothes and emotions!

After Alice fell down the rabbit-hole, she fails in trying to get in contact with the rabbit. She drowns in her own tears and more or less accidentally gets washed into Wonderland. After meeting a couple of other Wonderlanders she sees “the White Rabbit returning, splendidly dressed, with a pair of white kid gloves in one hand and a large fan in the other”(Carroll, 1865/1998, p.20).

Kreutzer explains (1984, p. 42) that the fan, the white gloves and the pocket-watch are typical utensils of the Victorian magician. The White Rabbit itself is the most recognisable of those typical utensils. Originally Carroll intended to equip the White Rabbit with a bouquet of flowers. He replaced the flowers with the fan. The exchange took place to strengthen the transgression from the real world to the Wonderland. The magical fan was to help in that. When the White Rabbit loses its fan and gloves it runs into Alice.

Weirdly the rabbit mistakes Alice for its housemaid, Mary Ann. Alice, who is stunned by being reprimanded by a rabbit, decides to not contradict the rabbit but to play the part of Mary Ann. She is trying to help the little creature even though it is bossing her around. She runs off to its house and there she finds the gloves and the fan. Near the magical fan is a bottle. Alice drinks from it and becomes gigantically big. She is stuck inside the rabbit's house. Kreutzer (1984, p.42) suspects the magical power of the fan to be the trigger for this transformation.

End of home story. Time for some external sources.

### An Independent Icon

Almost like a magnetism or spell Alice gravitates towards the White Rabbit. She just goes for it “In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again”.(Carroll, 1865/1998, pp. 9-10). The readers – if they keep reading- run with her. The

identification with Alice, masterfully prepared by Carroll aka Reverend Dodgson, sucks us in. "We readers (vaguely aware that we too may be a dream) believe Alice, because her dreams are, in a literal sense, real. (...) What we readers follow is not Reverend Charles Dodgson's narrative', through the persona of Lewis Carroll We follow Alice herself, following the White Rabbit, following the elusive Mary Ann. Like Don Quixote and his Cervantes or like Ulysses and his Homer, Alice is more alive to us than her creator. This is perhaps what Dodgson would have wished, both for himself and for his dream child." (Tate, 2011, p. 121). The actor Michael Sheen who was cast as the rabbit's voice in the Tim Burton- film from 2010 was aware of it being a very popular character of a classic "I can't remember a time when I didn't know about the White Rabbit (...) I felt there must be an archetypal White Rabbit in there and that I should not get in the way of that" (Sheen, 2010, retrieved from <http://www.movieweb.com/news/michael-sheen-talks-voicing-the-white-rabbit-for-alice-in-wonderland> on 03.03.2013). The shape of the archetypal rabbit might have been carved out of the uncountable versions of Alice that have been published since 1865. On top of that come the stage-adaptions, films, music and the merchandise. The Tate (2011, p.12) depicts how the White Rabbit and its fellow characters have been appearing on board games, as a dolls and figurines, and slides for magic lantern shows. Through these constant reproductions as illustrations they emancipated themselves from the tale. Some characters more than others. The White Rabbit surely is one of the most succinct characters. Typing in White Rabbit in the facebook search engine leads to a seemingly infinite number of hits: art galleries, fashion shops, bands, a theatre play called *white rabbit-red rabbit*, a bus stop that is also a party venue and many more. Carroll's characters have inspired readers to not only imagine the characters looks while reading but to go and create something related to the characters. New versions through centuries and decades lead to new ideas of the same character but something essential always remains. The reason why people want to reproduce the White Rabbit makes them stay true to the original. To the archetypal quality Michael Sheen described. Sheen was aware of the honour and the responsibility that him speaking the rabbit in a blockbuster production would have a big impact on a new generation of Alice fans:" It's wonderful to think that for a whole generation they will associate my voice with The White Rabbit.(Sheen, 2010, retrieved from <http://www.movieweb.com/news/michael-sheen-talks-voicing-the-white-rabbit-for-alice-in-wonderland> on 03.03.2013). The strength of the White Rabbit in relationship not to Alice, but to us, roots in the reproductions of Alice that are made over and over again "This constant updating of Alice with new illustrations and illustrated editions has meant that the characters and settings of the two books – Alice and other figures such as the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar on the mushroom and many more – have become highly recognisable icons in their own right. (Tate, 2011, p.19). So the White Rabbit has gained a lot of independence from its creator Lewis Carroll It could only do that, of course, because he has written a book with so much creative power that people want to re-live it and put their own spin on it, time and time again.

The aim of this paper is to retrieve valuable findings for interpretation in art education in museums from Alice in Wonderland and its character the White Rabbit. The first two chapters have served to gain understanding of what makes the Wonderland by Lewis Carroll so uniquely inspiring. The next step will be to examine which theories on interpretation share relevant characteristics with the work of Lewis Carroll.

## Chapter 3

### Beyond Conventions

Museums today need to unite components that seem to be drifting in opposite directions. On the one-hand they have to present art with integrity on the other hand they need to have a convincing marketing concept. Key element for employing Carroll's work for internal and external needs of art museums is interpretation. Interpretation discloses special experiences. This chapter will serve as a bridge between the favourable characteristics attributed to Alice in Wonderland and interpretation in art museums.

It is necessary to understand what happens when we engage with art. Subsequently this understanding needs to be applied on how engaging wit art can be cultivated in art museums. Philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) examined interpretation. According to Gadamer meaningful interpretation in art museums changes you. "When leaving the museum, you do not step out with the same awareness of life you had when you entered the building; if you have made a genuine experience of art, the world has become lighter"(Gadamer, 1977/2012, p.43). Terry Barrett (born 1945), researcher in the field of art education studies, how interpretation can be taught. Barrett believes art to have the unique power of serving "as an entry point to a powerful pathway of discovery that can lead individuals to an inspiring sense of our collective humanity" (Barrett, 2008, p.79).

Both, Gadamer and Barrett noticeably show wonderland-characteristics.

Relating the work of Gadamer and Barrett to Lewis Carroll translates the power of Wonderland into philosophy on interpretation and subsequently into art education in museums.

Their thoughts will help establish prerequisites for wonderland'ish interpretation in the closing chapter of this study. Interpretation that is in-conventional, anti-authoritarian, adventurous, playful and meaningful.

### Peculiar Components

Here a short summary of some aspects I deem relevant for transferring the Wonderland to Gadamer and Barrett. First of which is the invalidity of conventional principles of order in Wonderland. For example when Alice finally realises that she cannot handle things the ways she was trained to. Playing a very unfair game of hedge-hog croquet with the Queen leads to her giving up on trying to make sense of things. On the croquet-ground with the Queen Alice sticks to the rules she knows from playing the game with her family. In Wonderland it works differently and she complains to the Cheshire Cat: "I don't think they play at all fairly (...) -and they don't seem to have any rules in particular; at least, if there are, nobody attends to them" (Carroll, 1865/1998, p. 100). Applying above-ground conventions in Wonderland constantly leads to frustration. It is impossible for Alice to establish any kind of intact interactions with the creatures of Wonderland. Even the most innocent games and spare time activities like tea-time or croquet can not be completed in the manner Alice is accustomed to "The games have no rules, and the riddles have no answers, for in Wonderland the latter are asked for the sake of asking" (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p.21). Identifying rules, or the purpose of things cannot be done in Wonderland. The logic she was taught

is invalidated.

Even the White Rabbit as the character resembling real world rules most, never has to face the consequences of the short-comings worrying it so much. Purpose and functionality are annihilated. The White Rabbit does not only play an important part at the beginning of the story, it is also present when Alice wakes up at the end of the book. When she finds herself back with her sister, she realises that it must all have been a dream. A dream that seemed to real to be a dream. Zadworna-Fjellestad (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p. 35) depicts that Carroll gave a different kind of resolution by letting Alice tell her dream to her sister. The sister then begins to dream herself halfway into Wonderland. She keeps herself from falling down the rabbit-hole completely but she already saw the White Rabbit. Alice's ability to inspire through language is the result of her voyage through Wonderland, that "she has learned to live in language and became a story-teller (an artist) herself." (Zadworna-Fjellestad, 1986, p. 35). The line between fiction and reality is crossed again, by the White Rabbit. When Alice is excitedly telling her sister, she inspires her sister to see the White Rabbit herself. The story might begin all over again. This time with Alice in the place of Lewis Carroll and her sister in hers. Differentiation, ambiguity and the inexplicable are peculiar components of what makes following the White Rabbit so intriguing. They are also characteristics applicable to the thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

### Deep Contemplation

Hans-Georg Gadamer depicts that art is an event evoking sensations. We put these internal sensations into words to share them with others. We have to try and choose the right words to make ourselves understood. However these words never result in closed definitions that perfectly represent how we experience an artwork "no voice in the world can achieve the ideality of a poetic text. To a certain extent each voice has to insult with contingency" (Gadamer, 1977/2012, p.72). This discrepancy leaves space to fill for everyone engaging with artworks. Variations and differences can only roughly be united and synthesised. The challenge is to "decipher an artwork" (Gadamer, 1977/2012, p. 45). Comparable to reading poetry and trying to unite the verses until we have composed a meaningful interpretation. During that process we constructively contribute meaning to the artwork. A dynamic unfolds in which the line between recipients and artists get blurry "the art as creation of a genius cannot be separated from the congeniality of its recipients" (Gadamer, 1977/2012, pp. 34/35). Separating both parties is impossible when the process of interpretation is in flow. A free play between artist and recipient. Gadamer defines play as a movement that is repeatedly going back and forth. The play is an independent impulse free of purpose. The purpose is the artwork itself. Like a living organism "serving solely the purpose of being alive and self-preservation" (Gadamer, 1977/2012, p.70).

Playing according to Gadamer needs playmates. It is "an action communicative in nature" (Gadamer, 1977/2012, p. 39). The event of engaging with art unites us with peers. It is a *Fest*. A celebration. "In the festive – an analogy for the communal dimensions of aesthetic experience – the individual subject comes to stand differently in its relationship to others. Just as the artwork comes to stand in the festival, so too does the artwork bring its spectators to stand as a community" (Gadamer, 1977/2012).

The exchange on these attempts of identifying the essential meaning of an artwork with our peers will remain an on-going process. Yet, they are not futile. They bring us closer to a deep experience of being human. Deep contemplation. It makes engaging with art meaningful and important. Gadamer was fascinated by the shocking nature of art whose "play with content, is taken to such extremes, that it continuously breaks our expectations" (Gadamer, 1977/2012, p.36). To him, its

potential of disrupting conventional expectations is a core quality of modern art. Art breaking conventional structures does not only destroy. Given the fact, that it is valuable art, it build its own recognisable patterns. Hans-Georg Gadamer depicts that interpretation merely reproducing concepts that have already been established is inanimate. Interpretation needs to be a process in which new meanings are actively constructed.

### Transparent Discovering

Terry Barrett, professor of art history and art education at the University of North Texas and professor emeritus of the Ohio State University, introduced “conversation” as a means for collectively learning interpretation, when staying in Amsterdam as part of the artist-in-residence programme at the Amsterdam School of Art. He set up a two-year research project in the years of 2008 and 2009. The project examined interpretation beyond “conventional concepts”(Barrett, 2010, p.139). It was called *No Landscapes*. It explored meaning-making surpassing the expectable. *No Landscapes* revealed alternative approaches. Barrett’s approach starts with combining the artist’s ideas coming forth out of an artwork with the viewers personal notions. The idea, however, is not to “read the artist’s mind”(Barrett, 2010, p.143). Previous experience and interviews with artists that were part of *No Landscapes* have proved that artists generally do not want their intentions to be taken for the only valid interpretation. Artists tend to have an “open attitude”(Barrett, 2010, p.143) amenable to new ways of seeing their artworks. Following Barrett’s thinking, everyone is capable of contributing valuable meaning to an artwork. To adequately value an artwork viewers need to “make themselves aware of as many aspects of an artwork as possible”(Barrett, 2010, p.168). Simultaneously they must make their process of discovery transparent. The teacher in the process of “dialoguish” meaning-making takes on the role of facilitator. Instead of being ranked higher and feeding students with information according to a conventional concept of looking at art, the teacher becomes a “co-learner reacting to perceptions that are constantly changing”(Barrett, 2010, p.184). The teacher discovers new layers to an artwork together with the students. Learning interpretation becomes a constructivist process among peers. The teacher sets guide-lines and stimulates the discovery of the artwork by asking questions and listening. Participants involved in *No Landscapes* were convinced by the environment Barrett established. His respectful and empathic contact with the students impressed. “Interactive teaching is about making contact, about establishing relationships. With his attitude and appearance he [Barrett] gives people a feeling of safety encouraging them to talk”(Barrett, 2010, p.164). Terry Barrett states that discovering art needs to be an adventure. The discovery of the unknown within us, through which we are linked with artworks. Barrett names approaches such as *No Landscapes* interactive teaching.

### Animated Artworks

Slightly applied to the given circumstances of art museums Barrett developed interactive touring. It is a nice example clarifying the power of Barrett’s approach to stimulate meaning-making that is playful, adventurous and meaningful. Interactive touring is a museum practice with respect to the visitors specific backgrounds, talents and previous knowledge. It incorporates “preferred learning styles and social and cultural agendas”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 76). Objectives of interactive touring are “to expand and refine the range of one’s feeling life, to think in images as well as to articulate

relationships between emotions and unique visual elements or compositions”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 77). Visitors learn to link imagery and human sensations. By engaging in conversations visitors of museums turn conventional perspectives of looking at art upside- down. They take part “in a form of interpretive play that animates, and in a sense performs works of arts as visitors look at them and talk about them”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 77). Visitors collectively brainstorm on positions on artworks and are the expert on their very own part in the dialogue with artworks and peers. Playing with possible meanings results in an “hermeneutic improvisation”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 77). One version of how to facilitate interactive touring asks visitors to choose one particular painting from an exhibition. The visitors “assume the stance of something or someone in the painting and inform us about the painting by writing about it from the imaginary point of view they chose”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 77). The visitors take an amount of time agreed on beforehand to work on their impersonations. After absorbing someone or something in a picture the visitors read out their view on the painting and the world from the perspective of who or what they have 'turned into'. “By variously choosing free-form verse and narrative fiction, the (...) visitors engaged in an 'interpretive play ' and 'hermeneutic improvisation and experimentation' that 'animates' the works with the visitors energy and passion; and they selected their own learning style”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 78). The educator discreetly facilitates this interactive process of interpretation. He might contribute interpretations of experts on art at a later stage of the interactive touring. In some cases they might feed the meaning making of visitors. Other than that he mainly “stays out of the conversation except [on occasions when he can] further it”(Barrett, T. 2008, p. 83). Interactive touring opens up new perspectives and activates a personal delving into the world of art. It gives “an opportunity to understand in a unique way the artwork, the interpreter, and life through the interpreter's world view. Interpreting individuals can become a temporary community that helps alleviate the isolation many of us experience in modern living” (Barrett, T. 2008, pp. 83-84).

Gadamer and Barrett seem to agree on a number of items. Both can be transferred to Carroll. They decline conventions and hierarchies organising teacher and student or artists and recipient. Blurred lines allow everyone to contribute to meaningful interpretations. Engaging with art leads to discovering deeper layers of being human when exercised in exchange with others. The discovery of artworks works best when it is adventurous, playful and meaningful.

Gadamer names it “a specific kind of abidance”(Gadamer, 1977/2012, p.74) which makes us gain deeper and richer findings when engaging with art.

The next and final chapter will serve to identify a set of criteria which help looking at-, thinking about-, and talking about art to become such a vivid and deep experience.

## Chapter 4

### About To Happen

Adventure – as a word- is based on the Latin adventurous, which means 'about to happen'. A dynamic expression. It raises excitement of the unknown which lays ahead. Like the adrenalin rushing through your veins right before you go out onto the stage. The second before an air plane takes off. The forces working on Alice, shortly before she jumps down the rabbit-hole. The incident when talking about art with others thrills you. An inexplicable urge has taken hold of you. You feel that you are about to discover something new. Your partner- or partners in dialogue are captured by that very dynamic in that very moment, too. And together you take-off for an adventure of deep contemplation.

Studying the White Rabbit, Alice, Carroll, Gadamer and Barrett might raise the chances of embarking on an adventurous discovery together with peers and teacher.

Art museums today face challenges of catering needs of diverse audiences. Often recreational motives are leading interests of visitors. These need to be met while, adequately presenting art in all its complexity. Interdisciplinary- and multidisciplinary approaches are en vogue. Art museums need to legitimise these with regards to content. Events, cafés and shops are offered in many cases, to offer a complete package for a fun and inspiring day out. Thematical links with exhibitions are used to unite all offers in- and around the museums. A vision on art education in museums that fills these multifaceted offers with meaning is needed.

In this chapter I will establish, how the white rabbit-dynamic can lead to art education uniting needs of diverse target audiences, as well as doing justice to the artworks presented. In order to do that, I will give a brief overview on the situation of art museums today, highlighting why innovative strategies of art education are needed. Accordingly I will conclude findings of this paper. These will be arranged in the white rabbit-dynamic to inspire engaging with art addressing the diverse factors distinguishing art educations in museums today.

### Repositioning of Art Museums

Today's museums have to prepare themselves to hold their own on the highly competitive market of the leisure-, culture- and entertainment sector. The collective research *Volgt de gids? (Follow the guide)*, published in Belgium in 2001, examines needs, problems and chances of art education within the changes museums have been undergoing in the last decade.

In the introduction of *Volgt de gids?* Spierts (2001, p.19) calls today's visitors of museums „cultuurtoeristen“- (culture tourists). They are always on the look-out for the latest interesting cultural experience. He specifies their decreased interest in a critical examination of what is offered. Culture tourists do not distinguish between accepted classifications of „high“ or „low“ culture. Spierts ascribes their motivation to visit museums to share the latest offer of a cultural experience. He refers to research by De Haan en Knulst from 2000, when stating that today's generations of the young have been socialised differently in matters of art. It can be expected that they will not visit cultural institutions when they get older. There is no difference between young people of high – and low education. Spierts (2001, p.20) predicts debates on the need for public support of museums in the future. The legitimacy of museums will become harder to

defend with less people making use of them.

Given the fact that a lot of visitors of museums express “relaxation and leisure” as incitements to pay money for culture, art educators would be wantonly negligent not to listen. Words as “amusement, play, fun and pleasure”(Spierts, 2001, p.20) need to be taken seriously by art educators, for there is something to be learned from them. Borders between art, culture, information, amusement, entertainment, media and communication have become blurry. There are a lot more “cross overs” (Spierts, 2001, p.20) now. Subsequently museums have to change, to reposition themselves “there is not only an increase in sensational exhibitions and a more international orientation. The concepts for museums are getting rescaled: alignment with the fashion world, design and media, fringes activities like restaurants, museums shops and merchandising are becoming increasingly important; special arrangements are thought of to please the culture tourist.”(Spierts, 2001, p.20). Spierts doubts that museums would increase acceptance if they turned into theme parks. Essential to museums is their character as places to “reflect on everything human through art”(Spierts, 2001, p.20) concludes that art education in museums will have to deliver meaningful experiences to strengthen the place of museums within a community.

## Conclusion

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll is appealing on various levels. It can be read as a fairy tale, as a dream, or philosophical playground. It does not serve an obvious purpose or tries to convey a special morale or formula. There is no message, yet, it seems to have been touching something deep within people for more than a century. This something could be assumed as something universal about being human. We are inspired to discover this universal playground by many activating means with which Carroll occupies us as readers. From time to time borders between fiction and reality are suspended. Lewis Carroll sucks us into the Wonderland together with Alice by gradually unhinging conventional expectations. Once we have succumbed to the skilful storytelling of Lewis Carroll we find ourselves dealing with discontinuous pieces of plot we need to synthesise. It proves impossible to unite the pieces to one exclusively valid sequence of events. The White Rabbit motivates Alice to throw all worries and concerns overboard and jump into the adventure. Alice for her part is open to the adventure and keen to learn. Kreutzer (1984, p. 64) talks of her spontaneous impartiality and thirst for knowledge as driving forces for her adventures in Wonderland.

The White Rabbit makes Alice get to Wonderland and back to reality. It emanates a magical attraction Alice has to follow. A spell she cannot withstand. The White Rabbit is also the most accessible creature of all Wonderlanders. The conventions it follows correspond with the rules of the above-ground world. The rules Alice knows. It would make a good contact creature for her, if it was not for its elusiveness. The White Rabbit does not offer easy solutions or answers. It challenges Alice to actively construct strategies to get around in Wonderland. Despite its uncanniness the White Rabbit is fun to deal with. It is playful, it makes Alice play a role. The White Rabbit can also exist independently of Lewis Carroll’s narration. Uncountable reproductions have made it an icon. The reason for the reproductions is the creative power of Carroll’s vision. Without that the White Rabbit could not have become such a strong character.

Hans-Georg Gadamer considers inevitable incompleteness in the process of interpretation. It cannot be completed, for both artworks and recipients appropriate infinite reservoirs of symbols

that cannot be fully discovered and explained. Synthesising meanings found within artworks reveals discrepancies, differences and variations. Yet, recipients are not in an inferior position to an artist represented through his artwork. Lines between art and viewer get blurry. When we engage with artworks we even contribute meaning to artworks. Both artist and recipients are co-players in the playful event of interpretation. Interpretation delivers more meaningful concepts when we engage in an exchange on art with our peers. In this festive community, we can come closer to the unreachable original genius of artworks.

Engaging with art allows us to advance beyond conventions. Interpretation is not about deciphering a message but to appreciate them for what they essentially are. Like a living character, whose purpose is to live, artworks are there because they offer an experience of art. Experiencing art is linked with the nature of being human. We experience a rewarding feeling of deep contemplation.

Terry Barrett's interactive approach to interpretation is a transparent process of discovery. Recipients explore as many layers as possible of an artwork. The objective is not to reconstruct the artist's intention, but to combine the artist's view as represented through the artwork with the personal point-of-view. Interpretation in dialogue with peers can make recipients feel part of a community. When teaching interpretation of artworks the teachers act as facilitators instead of experts. Their role is to set guidelines for the discovery of the unknown within oneself and within artworks. Teachers in interactive approaches create a learning environment in which students feel encouraged to enter into a communal process of meaning-making.

### The White Rabbit-Dynamic

The set of criteria below indicates qualities that make interpretation adventurous, playful and meaningful. These principles unite findings by Carroll, Gadamer and Barrett. I titled this list with white rabbit-dynamic, as I reason, that the qualities identified are beneficial for a dynamic interplay between artwork and recipient that makes interpretation rewarding and important. They give impulses for approaches to art education in museums that are fun and meaningful at the same time. The white rabbit-dynamic can be a basis to design innovative strategies of art education that are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. Alice in Wonderland unites all these factors, including even the marketing, making it a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Yet, it does not restrict readers' independence. Alice in Wonderland cannot merely be consumed as feel-good fiction. It activates critical reflection, differentiation and tolerance for the incomplete in a playful manner. The white rabbit-dynamic encourages looking at-, thinking about- and talking about art in museums that is adventurous, playful and meaningful. I have come to five principles:

1

A white rabbit-dynamic is a dynamic relationship between the work of art and the viewer which allows the viewer to constantly cross borders between real world and the Wonderland of art. It is a power to help viewers glide along with impressions evoked by engaging with artworks. It is Barrett's pathway to deep contemplation and to an intense experience of the sensual and material correspondence world art can be.

2

The white rabbit-dynamic is the intriguing moment that initiates the interaction of viewers with art. It is the hook that captures the interest in an artwork by intuitively stimulating a first interest.

The white rabbit-dynamic activates interest by using visual reference points of viewers rich worlds of imagery. Another stimuli can be an emotional access. The white rabbit-dynamic personalises engaging with art and leads to intrinsic motivation. It enables identification with artworks by linking the 'aboutness' of artworks with human sensations. It blurs the line between recipient and artwork (Gadamer).

3

The white rabbit-dynamic makes art accessible without giving simplifying answers. It supports a constructivist approach of art education, as defined by Terry Barrett. It encourages visitors of museums to build their own understanding of what they see by transparent discovery. It provides viewers with challenge and inspiration to use their own capacity of developing interpretations. There is tolerance for incompleteness and space for critical questioning of conventions. The white rabbit-dynamic cultivates awareness - following Gadamer - that interpretations cannot be finalised.

4

The white rabbit-dynamic activates the thirst for knowledge and meaning making with peers. Active construction, social creativity and cultural participation characterise the white rabbit-dynamic. Visitors of museums form temporary communities in which they collectively interact in the process of meaning-making. So, interpretation becomes *festive*, as in the definition of Gadamer. The educator contributes and inspires but does not foreclose interpretation. Like Barrett educators act as co-learners and facilitators.

5

The white rabbit-dynamic incorporates play. It initiates aesthetic experiences through creating phenomena and sensations. Terry Barrett exemplified how play may appear in forms of interpretive play, animation and the performing of artworks. The play embraces diversity, ambiguity and differences- correlating with ideas by Gadamer.

Terry Barrett states in an interview with AHK students, that interpretation does not always get exciting. He explains that thrilling interpretation is traceable in the reactions of students. Talking about artworks becomes an artwork in itself when the members of the temporal community are engaged. "Whilst the clients were speaking and Barrett reacted, a second artwork was hoisted in the dim room. An artwork of words, ideas and thoughts (...). No-one could see it but it just about outshone the original artwork. Everyone in the room was committed to elevating it (...), until it was placed in the room as a monumental construction of ideas" (Barrett, 2010, p.157). This dynamic is not to be controlled and hardly measurable. Something about this phenomenon of communal interpretation beyond conventions will remain inexplicable. The white rabbit-dynamic therefore, is quite optimistic. It will not work as a recipe, or concrete action plan to follow on the path to exciting interpretation. It is what we should strive for. Interpretation following the White Rabbit can take you to the depth of humanity. It inspires to think, contemplate and laugh. Lewis Carroll planted various seeds for interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. Alice in Wonderland is art, intact despite commercial use. Alice in Wonderland squares the circle of the contradictory parameters art museums have to unite. The white rabbit-dynamic encourages adventurous, playful and meaningful interpretation for art museums.

*The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" He asked. "Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."* (Carroll, 1865, p. 142)

I stop.

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