

AUDIOTRSCRIPTIE EXPERT TALK LAURA SOBRAL – 07 OKT 2023

Laura [00:03:36] Hello. Hi. Hi.

Sofie [00:03:40] Good morning.

Laura [00:03:41] Good morning. How are you?

Sofie [00:03:44] I'm fine. So. Hey, Laura. Where are we meeting you from? Are you in Brazil?

Laura [00:03:51] No, We're meeting from Portugal. From my side.

Sofie [00:03:56] Oh, okay. And where in Portugal?

Laura [00:04:00] In Porto.

Sofie [00:04:01] Okay.

Laura [00:04:03] So how about you?

Sofie [00:04:05] I'm in the Netherlands now, but I live in Antwerp.

Laura [00:04:08] Oh, okay. Today I have a pretty beautiful day, apparently a beach day. So after that?

Sofie [00:04:17] Yeah. Yeah. So I'm recording this call. Is it okay for you?

Laura [00:04:26] Yeah, totally.

Sofie [00:04:27] Okay. Can I talk to you about my research project?

Laura [00:04:33] Please..

Sofie [00:04:34] I'm not going to tell a lot. I'm just very curious about your imagination when I say a few words about what I'm researching. So I'm very into art engagements. I'm also working in museum education now, and I'm looking for a method to include movement in art engagements. That could be a lot. But I'm really curious about what that could be in your imagination.

Laura [00:05:18] When you mention movement, my first question would be, is it dance? I mean, is it walking? Is it dance? Is it interaction? Is it just, I don't know what kind of movement? Because I think about, for example, when you do a walking interview, you know, and you notice when you do a walking interview is like a method. So people are more comfortable and they kind of heave a bit more in their thoughts. So I guess that when people move, they have kind of the unblock, this ability of communicating and, you know, connecting maybe closer with others. But then it's like more a rational movement, like your movement, you're moving, but then using a lot your brain, your head and you know.. On the other side, you have dance that is pretty much kind of embodying what you're thinking and then letting your body just lead the way. So I don't know, what kind of movement would you be interested in?

Sofie [00:06:29] Well, currently I'm exploring this method. Do you know, family constellations?

Laura [00:06:37] Yeah.

Sofie [00:06:38] So the family constellations, by representing a certain aspect of an art piece or sculpture or a painting, You might actually feel something about that aspect through your body. And then we're just interviewing people about what they feel or what they represent. And, yes, it seems to work really well. But of course, I don't give any art, art history or facts.

Laura [00:07:12] Background, anything.

Sofie [00:07:13] You just let everything come from the people who are participating. So now my next step is what if I connect to the art history or the background about the piece? What if I connected with what they are telling me from their experience and just make that connection? But I'm mainly interested in what people, what comes up from people themselves and how they can really start looking and experiencing and feeling and taking a position towards an art piece.

Laura [00:07:54] What comes to my mind actually is quite random, but I'm just sharing with you because it's funny, I guess, because this kind of representing something the last time and the only time I did it, it was in the German class when I was living in Germany and it was German theater. So they would say like a scene. Then you would put yourself like a tree or something. Then you had to speak German, what you wore and the most the biggest challenge was to find out the right articles, you know, because they're teenagers. Okay, But, well, it was fun. I don't know at what level people do represent more what they're saying is more, or what they're feeling or what their interpretation is of something.

Sofie [00:08:48] The interpretation. It can be a feeling, it can be what they see, it can be the title of the work and the associations they make with a title or an artist or whatever, they can choose. So there are actually two sequences. The first is that where they are invited to just look at the sculpture. I'm really focusing on sculptures right now, in the setting of nature, which is actually also important because it's a really slow experience. And the combination with nature helps and also is very free. I also want to experiment in a museum with paintings inside, and I think that's going to be a total different experience. But in any way, the first invitation is that they just take a position towards the sculpture, and the first sculpture they see is figurative. So they make an easy association with it and some people go and stand really close because they feel they have to do something with the statue. Other people really want to go stand further away because they can't connect with it or whatever. So we just interview them. We say, okay, you put this, you take this position. What's happening here? That's the only question we ask. And then the next assignment is that day: look closer and find one aspect of the statue. It can be the color, the shape, the material, the artist, the title, the soul, the soul of the sculpture and they give a movement like it can also just be a position or if they feel more comfortable. Maybe a more creative position. For example, there's a sculpture that's called the Mediterranean, and someone read the title that she felt like, Oh, I want to lie down like I'm on the beach or whatever.

And then we interviewed them again and they listened to each other and they learned about all these aspects you can see. And then the next assignment is that one person picks five aspects of a sculpture, and then we pick a more abstract sculpture. And that person chooses five aspects. And she chooses in the group the people who are going to represent each of these aspects. And so, for example, someone gets the aspect 'history' of the sculpture, and they have to be the history and just take position and then feel in their body what they want to do. Do they want to go further, do they want to stand closer. And what does it do with their position towards the sculpture? And also we just interview them and it gives a very rich view on what the sculpture could be, but we don't give them any information.

Laura [00:12:28] So you have done this a couple of times, right?

Sofie [00:12:31] Yeah.

Laura [00:12:33] Okay, So what's your feeling towards it? Like, is it going the direction you would like to? Like what? What are your expectations, actually?

Sofie [00:12:43] Yeah, actually, from my view, my vision on art education is that I really want to help people find confidence in what they can tell about an artwork. Because a lot of people say, Ah, no, I don't have an opinion. I don't know what to say about it. No, no. And they just want to listen to curators or read museum texts and so I just want to improve the confidence. Okay. I can just trust my body or my feelings or whatever to talk about an artwork. And we can listen to each other and I can find all these different aspects depending on what comes from the group, and some participants are asking to give some information about the artwork, some background. So that's the next step I want to do to give some information, although that's not really what I want to do.

Laura [00:13:52] Well, if it's not, I don't think you need to.

Sofie [00:13:56] No, But I want to try if I can maybe just link something with what people say. For example, we were looking at a sculpture and someone felt a really big explosion. And afterwards I read that the sculpture was made during World War one. I can find a link and tell something about it if you try it, but it's not my main goal. But now I found this [00:14:26] method(ology) [0.0s] I know it works. I can really refine it and write a manual so that people can use this [00:14:35] method(ology) [0.0s] in museums. I'm a really big fan of it, and even the participants that were a bit sceptic about it are really enjoying it. So that's what surprises me that actually we take small steps and even though there is some resistance, you still can, yeah,.....

Laura [00:15:02] Well, yeah.

Sofie [00:15:05] But now I was thinking 'okay, I have this and what will be my next step?' And then I was thinking that I want to start looking into dance methods. And now that I've found a therapeutic method which I can use for Arctic patients. But maybe I can also find dance methods and try to implement it in art engagements.

Laura [00:15:30] Yeah. But what's your background?

Sofie [00:15:36] I don't have an artistic background. I'm in theater and film as a scientist.

Laura [00:15:43] Okay, But so movement wise, you were more familiar with theaterway of like it is representing, So maybe you can collaborate, I think Funches is a good environment so you can find someone from dance, for example. It's not, it's not mandatory or anything like that, but I think it's always nice instead of just going to Fox or something like that, because we can read about methods, but if you're talking about , it would be so nice because, when you see someone from dance, for example, explaining something or applying something for me being an urban planner is just like, I don't know, the way of doing it is totally different because their consciousness about the body and the space is totally different. And also the performance [00:16:31] spirit [0.0s] people also surprises me. It's always good to just have this kind of exchange. So you have been trying this on your professional environment already, or is it with volunteers who are acting like this?

Sofie [00:16:47] It's just with volunteers, but I work in a museum in Antwerp. It's called the Middelheim Museum. And it's a park and it's an open air museum, and so that's a really good setting, but I think it's going to be really exciting when I've tried in a really more classical museum, because now people feel really free to move and people are not actually looking because it's a park. People are walking and moving all the time. But in a classic museum or for example in a fine arts museum or something, people move in a different way. So you're going to be looked at in a very different way, and I think that's going to be exciting.

Laura [00:17:48] Because you wanted this contrast, right? So you want to challenge people.

Sofie [00:17:51] Yeah. But I'm working with volunteers, so it's not really a representation of all museum visitors. For that matter, I think that I don't have to create something that is suitable for everyone. I just want to create something that is suitable for those people that want to move.

Laura [00:18:15] Yeah. One thing that just crossed my mind is if you make it as you were saying, like instructions, you could put somewhere in the park and then someone could perhaps do it by themselves just to experiment. Or you can find a hashtag and they can just film it, put it on social media and then you can see it afterwards. So it would be nice to do to understand how is it when you have this kind of guidance and if it could be just a personal experience also they could answer some questions. I don't know, if you put it online. I don't know if you're interested in this kind of feedback. I'm also curious about your interviewing these people. So how are you treating this data? Because as you said, I think, it's the contextualization or the artist intention. They're super relevant for art in general, but also this kind of interpretations of people. I don't see it as less valuable, probably like you. So it would be nice, if you want to somehow empower people about their own feelings and their own perception about the artwork, if it could be just a layer of information, of data, then you put, connected to an artwork. So somehow it starts to create kind of a very diverse landscape.

Sofie [00:20:08] So you would actually use the experiences of people? Oh, sorry. I can't hear you anymore. The connection is gone.

Laura [00:22:38] Sorry I had some connection thing, so it's okay, I think it's better not to use a camera for the next 5 minutes and then it can try again.

Sofie [00:22:50] So you were saying that about the data, or the layer of information we get from people explaining about their feelings and perception?

Laura [00:23:07] Yeah, because, I mean, [00:23:09] **Becca**, [0.0s] normally, I mean, I don't know if you're talking about contemporary sculptures or kind of [00:23:16] **stories**, [0.0s] ones, but as you mentioned, kind of World War something, people, they actually couldn't have such a diverse view on their work. It was very limited. It was like, their idea, the curator's opinion, maybe the opinion from some people they know, you know, or maybe if exhibited, a very particular group of people would have access. And now you have people from all parts of the world and different context and they interact super differently and they interpret things differently. So I think it's quite [00:23:55] **enriching**, [0.0s] and being the park, I think it's even nicer because as I said, a lot of people, it could be children, I just feel that it's a very interesting layer of information. Like somehow to widen the perception of someone that was probably in an all white, quite rich and, you know, from the Netherlands or something like that. So I think that if you have, I don't know, someone from Subsaharian Africa saying something about that, how what it triggers, I think it's very valuable. I mean, I would be interested in this kind of things.

Sofie [00:24:41] Okay. So you would use it as a place where people from different cultures or different cultural backgrounds could come together to explore not only the artwork but also each other's backgrounds or views.

Laura [00:24:59] I think that when you talk about What you feel or how you see it? You always bring with you your background, your context. And I mean, it's not just about different sociocultural backgrounds, but if you are part of the Netherlands, probably you have different people, different age groups, different Social context... So I think the public that's one of the richness of public space, you know. So you have people from different profiles. So [00:25:47] **it's just not one way of seeing**, [4.0s] a sculpture and I think that's it. Very interesting from your work. [00:25:59] **Somehow we thought that you're receiving information, right? Like you're being a coach**, [8.8s] or you're being like, you know, something is it's being shared with you or shown to you. And I think you're making it some kind of dialogue?

Laura [00:26:19] Yes

Laura [00:26:22] which is kind of using art for this kind of self-perception or self value. So, yeah, I think I like this idea. And then I think it's quite interesting that it's outside. I know that I also would be interested to know how it works in a museum? But I really like the idea that it's in the park, you know, because of the public, because of the possibility of people doing that without anyone. I think, of course, you can do it in a museum, also to understand and to compare. But I don't think even though it's curious to do it in a museum, because I know what. I understand what you say. I mean, it's when you bring like three movements for inside the museum, it's kind of disrupting. It's nice. But from your first aim or goal that you've shared with me, that is to empower people, it doesn't really matter if it's disruptive with the environment. They are. It's about like self work, you know, or interactive work. And for that, I think the park is nicer.

Sofie [00:27:46] Okay. Yeah, I can totally see that. and also, our museum is has a free entrance. So it's free for everyone to visit, which also is very inviting for all kinds of people. If you don't want to look at the statues, you just walk in the park. If you just want to be there to learn your kids how to ride a bike, it's fine if you want to be there just to run, or to do some sports, it's fine. And that's, I think what's interesting about this context, that it's really, everyone is free to enter. And also if you're talking about different people from different cultures, the environment is much more suitable to bring people together from all kinds of context.

Laura [00:28:52] Definitely. And then imagine you go there because you want to take your kid to ride his bike but then you find, I don't know, an invitation to dance with a sculpture. Maybe you're not very into art, maybe you're not there because of this sculpture, but why not? And I think it's a very different profile from the ones that go to museums, even though it's free because you never go to a museum to ride your bike. You know, you go to visit to go to a museum. So, Yeah. Using art also as part of of the landscape in a good way, you know. I like it. I really like it. I would be happy to go, actually. Someday...

Sofie [00:29:37] You're welcome. I hope I can really implement it as a method, because it's also what's interesting is that our collection is going to be different now. There will be four themes. And one of the themes in our presentation of the collection is movement. We have a lot of artworks that invite people to move, f. ex. by dancing, there's an artwork that explains the score you can dance. Also an artist that is studying verticality and horizontality with building walls and different kind of adversity. I don't know what the word is in English. Yeah. And they actually, the artist invites people to engage with her artwork, but there's some confusion about it with people not knowing which artwork they can touch and which one they can't. So we really have to think about explaining that in a better way to the public. But that is, I think, also very interesting for my research project. There's there's actually artworks that ask people to move and so maybe this can also be interesting to add.

[00:31:05] Definitely. And would the museum be open to have a tour, an official tour with you inserting some of your methods in there?

Sofie [00:31:17] So I think if I really think it through It's really possible because also well-being of people and mental power, mental health is a very important aspect in our museum. The open air museum is also close to a hospital for psychiatric patients. And that's also what I think I'm doing with this slow movement of engaging with artworks. It's also about your mental well-being and your feelings and your, like you said, self-perception. And so I think that also really fits in very well in what we are doing.

Sofie [00:32:14] I have a friend who is really into disembodied methods of research. I know that's something I never,... Maybe I read one piece or two, but I think if you want to see, I think it's the whole body of knowledge, the power.

Sofie [00:32:29] Now, really looking for that. So yeah, if you can give me some of these details....

Laura [00:32:37] I'm not very into it. And she's finishing her Ph.D., so she's probably crazy, but I'm trying to reach her and to ask if she has something to share.

Sofie [00:32:49] Or if you could give me her name. I can also do some research about what she's doing.

Laura [00:32:58] Yeah. No, she's more into pedagogic approaches to architecture. So something, it's more like the feminist embodied methods of research, but I think it's something like that. She has been reading more than producing something about it. Yeah, but yes. And I think it's very interesting when you say like mental health and [00:33:23] **inviting**, [0.0s] things. For me, it's quite a feminist approach and I can now just give you references on that. But maybe my brain is making connections that I can read that. Yeah, I think bringing things to the body actually in a museum and asking people from like.... Actually the invitation is also allowing people to move.... Yeah. And when you say it's close to a mental health institution it comes to my mind that is like dance is, if you don't know if that is dance, it's just about kind of moving like crazy because it's like taking people out of their body patterns and inviting them to explore something that they're feeling and, you know, sharing this. And I think it makes people very vulnerable. That's why you were thinking or you are thinking about bringing into a museum. Yeah, because like this contrast of a formal space that you shouldn't be yourself, you shouldn't think

about yourself, you shouldn't manifest yourself, in opposition of something that you really like, asking people to do it and saying that that's important, like you are important, what you feel it's important. It's interesting that your point of view is valuable. Like, let's look at that together. So yeah, again, I think it's a dialogue because it's about the artwork as a trigger for reflection, not like some kind of admiration or putting it in the glass. Yeah, exactly like it. I don't know. .

Sofie [00:35:12] Yeah, I do. Yes. Because when you explain what I'm doing, I get so much more inspiration. It really helped me to hear my work from your perspective and just you explained what I'm doing with so many words that I found for myself already. So it triggered me to do more research, now, for example, the feminist aspect really I think is interesting, but it gives me confidence to just stick to my purpose and maybe not give the historical background. And although people are asking for it because I'm very convinced that everyone can do research on their own if they really want to know something about an artwork, they can look it up on Google and they find everything they want and it's not my purpose. So yeah, maybe I just should stick to what I'm doing and maybe also not go to the other museum, but find other people, more a diverse group of people and experience that. Yeah, that's also interesting.

Laura [00:36:26] Well, if you can just keep me posted somehow.

Sofie [00:36:30] Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure we can keep in touch.

Laura [00:36:34] Okay. Thank you very much.

Sofie [00:36:39] bye bye.