

Immersive Experience in Dieter Roth's Studio with *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm* (1969-1998) *Fabiana Senkpiel*

1. Dieter Roth's Studio with *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm*

Roth's artist-studio is located on the first floor of an apartment building opposite the main building of the Kunstmuseum Basel, Gegenwart, Switzerland¹ (Fig. 1). Approximately in the middle of the room are two towers, which extend from the floor almost to the ceiling. The two towers, called *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm* (*Self tower*; *Lion tower*) were created in 1971 on the occasion of an exhibition at Daniel Spoerri's *Eat Art Gallery* in Düsseldorf, then they travelled to the Guggenheim Museum in New York. In 1989, the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation provided Dieter Roth with a room in which he could continue his work on the towers together with his sons (Dobke 2003: 256; Dobke 2002: 108-112)². The towers consist nowadays namely of self- and lion-portraits serially produced over the years (1969-1998), partly also in situ, which are made of chocolate and sugar masses that are in the process of decay, stacked on top of each other in two towers on self-supporting racks (Dobke 2003: 256-258; Beil 2002: 193-202; 208-209). Some of the rows of figures have already collapsed or collapsed in on themselves, with some material remains of the collapse lying around on the ground (Beil 2002: 193), including debris from the collapse in 2007, which is scattered around the entrance area to the studio (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1 - Apartment building with Dieter Roth's studio, St. Alban-Rheinweg 52, CH-4052 Basel, Switzerland; Photo: Nathalie Noorlander.

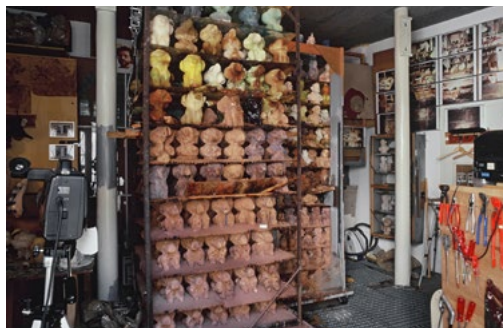


Fig. 2 - Dieter Roth, *Selbstturm*, 1969-1998, wood, glass, cast figures of chocolate and sugar, approx. 245 x 87 x 80 cm; *Löwenturm*, 1970-1998, iron, glass, cast figures of chocolate and sugar, approx. 260 x 100 x 100 cm. Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung, deposit in Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel (Location St. Alban-Rheinweg/Basel) © Dieter Roth Estate, Courtesy Hauser & Wirth/© 2021 Laurenz-Stiftung, Schaulager Basel, Switzerland; Photo: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Martin P. Bühler.

The first four floors of the *Selbstturm* are taken up by “old and already eaten away” self-portraits by Dieter Roth, followed on two floors by a combination of bust-heads and lion-bodies as a sphinx, which on the further floors change into busts made of chocolate and sugar and also take on an iridescent colouring from brown to white and then to blue (Berkes 1997: 9-10). From the sixth floor of the *Selbstturm* onwards, Roth has given the figures’ facial features an older look. The first three floors of the *Löwenturm* consist of lion figures, while the fourth and fifth are a combination of lion- and self-portrait-bust³. This is followed by floors in different colours, mainly brown shades of chocolate, which merge into orange-coloured icing (*Ibid*). Dieter Roth considered the colourful structure of the towers as a symbol of nature: the blue colour at the very top stands for the sky, below it the colourful sugar figures stand for the flowers and in the lower part the brown tones symbolise the earth (<https://schaulager.org/de/aktivitaeten/forschung-projekte/dieter-roth>; Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel 2015: 266).

In addition to the two towers, the studio includes so-called “creative zones” (Berkes 1997: 11), for example, two smeared cooking cookers, the pots and working materials (to the left of the entrance) that Roth used for melting and heating, then pouring and shaping the selected foods during the artistic process. But there is also an office zone to the right of the studio entrance: A work table served to document not only the changes occurring in the work due to the unstable materials used, but also for further work planning. Roth meticulously documented the experiments with food colouring in various combinations. This documentation is a visual one: in addition to the photographs (Polaroid shots) that now hang framed on the walls of the studio, the moulds and prototypes are also present, on a shelf and in a glass cabinet, which is supposed to protect them from worm infestation. This original documentation of the towers can still be found in files on the wall shelves and is therefore a fixed, accessible part of the installation (Berkes 1997: 10). The artistic working process itself is thus made the subject (Kunz 2011: 7) and the processual character of the creation of the artwork becomes visible (Dobke 2002: 200), as in a self-reflexive way is often the case with Roth. Unlike today, each visitor to the studio was originally filmed in order to record his or her participation in the artwork in the sense of a contribution to the decline as well as in the sense of collective authorship (Kunz 2011: 7; Dogramaci 2011: 8-12; Dobke 2003: 257; Dobke 2002: 109-110; Berkes 1997: 11): a camera reminiscent of this process is located at the entrance. Art historian Ralf Beil has related Roth’s comprehensive documentation process to the concept of the archive, emphasising the point that it is a documentation and an attempt at preservation of something in dissolution: Dissolution is documented and conserved as dissolution (Beil 2002: 200).

The studio not only questions a museum context of storage, but even withdraws from it (Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel 1997: 63). Regarding the status of the studio space, there is further talk of a fluid hybrid form between studio and kitchen (Gaßner & Nachtigäller 2012: 17), whereby Roth himself referred to the studio as a kitchen (Beil 2002: 202). However, this designation seems to fall short in view of what has taken place there. Indeed, in view of the material experiments with chocolate and sugar, the creative processes and substance transformations, as well as the production of the busts and the further creation of the towers in situ, the studio can be read and interpreted as a site of art-related knowledge production (Senkpiel 2018; 2020: 304-308; Wagner 2004: 127-129; on the studio as a form of knowledge: Diers & Wagner 2010). Or, to put it with philosopher and

art historian Kathrin Busch (2014: 456): because of this researching procedure that “includes the spatial form of representation” and because of the “adoption of techniques of collecting and archival knowledge management as well as experimental knowledge acquisition”⁴.

The studio tour for visitors usually takes place on Sundays at 2:30 pm; visitors are let in in small groups of a maximum of four people, accompanied by a supervisor, with a person offering a guided tour. After crossing the threshold to the studio space, the visitors gradually become accustomed to the dark lighting and the cool climatic conditions of the studio, designed as a result of conservation measures for a slower dissolution of the work (Berkes 1997: 11), as well as to the air flowing from the air conditioning system (Dobke 2003: 257) which also stimulates the sense of hearing through its acoustic presence as an accompanying sound piece. Furthermore, when someone, after opening the door, enters the room, his or her olfactory nerves initially perceive an exhalation. The scent emanates from the self- and lion-portraits made of chocolate and sugar masses that are in the process of decay (Fig. 3, 4). The studio visit and its aesthetic experience turns out to be an exciting challenge for the sensory perception of the visitors.



Fig. 3, 4 - Busts made of chocolate and sugar masses that are in the process of decay (Details Fig. 2).



2. Immersivity: Placed in the Space of Representation and the Question of the Image

Immersivity can be outlined with the status of a body that is surrounded by an environment in which the distance between subject and environment is reduced as much as possible, or in which ideally a continuum between subject and environment is created, whereby a spatial and temporal unity or at least an overlap of these levels can be aimed at.

As art historian and media theorist Oliver Grau (2003) has shown, the phenomenon of immersion is not exclusively a present-day characteristic of digital and virtual art, but it is possible to show a history of immersive images strategies and illusory spaces through the art of past eras and different art forms, and that immersion can evoke emotional responses and constitute presence (*Ivi*: 13-15). In the context of immersive digital media and of virtual reality, the issue of presence is conceived differently: media semiotician Ruggero Eugeni (2018), argues that immersive media increase the forms of presence for the viewer by manipulating the temporal dimension of his or her experience of presence. To investigate the experience of presence in the context of virtual reality Grabarczyk & Pokropski (2016: 28-29) use the term presence for the psychological feeling, while they use the term immersion for the properties of artificial systems that enable the feeling of presence. Immersion is also described in general terms as a state of intense engagement with a medium: for example, cinema scholar Adriano d'Aloia (2012) is dealing with immersive tendencies in film through the use of water as a material and medium, as well as through its symbolic properties and art historian Ursula Frohne (2001) deals with the relationship between immersion and participation in video installations.

When one speaks of immersion, one is also actually speaking of a space experience (on the significance of material and immaterial space in contemporary art cf. Lammert, Diers, Kudielka & Mattenklott 2005). Whether the space for an immersive *image* experience must be enclosed or not, is controversially discussed: Grau (2003: 13-18) assumes a hermetic framed (closed, enclosed) space while americanist Laura Bieger (2007: 198, 211-212) sees no necessity for this, stressing a productive blending of perception and spatial situation. Architect Christian Teckert (2012: 382) mentions immersion in connection with the concept of *prop(r)ioceptivity*, which is a body-related sensation of the position of one's own body in space that contribute to the formation of a self-conception (on proprioceptism, cf. Schönhammer 2012: 23, 29, 58, 79-81, 193, 228, 253; Montero 2006; Martin 2000).

Based on the idea that the characteristic of immersivity in general is that the audience is placed in the space of representation, for the discussion of case studies one would have to try to describe the respective space and also what the respective representation is.

Back to our specific case study, this means that Roth's ad hoc furnished artist-studio is an example for a concrete, natural, three-dimensional, enclosed and narrow space that can be used to discuss an immersive experience starting from the real physical presence of the visitors in it. How can the role of the artist in creating the immersive environment and the role of the audience in its reception be described? As far as the role of the artist is concerned, one must consider the circumstances of the creation of the studio and the years of its use by the artist before his death. 1989 the space was made available to the artist – as stated at the beginning of the

essay – so that he could continue working on the self-portrait and lion busts for the construction of the towers: the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation bought an unfinished artistic concept (<https://schaulager.org/de/aktivitaeten/forschung-projekte/dieter-roth>; Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel 2015: 266) and the artist set up his workshop there. From the very beginning, it was possible for visitors to the nearby Museum für Gegenwartskunst to visit Roth's studio. In this way, the artist provided insights into his working environment and working methods and into the construction of the towers. The now serially produced, fragile and brittle self-portrait busts of *Selbstturm*, *Löwenturm* go back to Roth's work *Portrait of the Artist as Vogelfutterbüste* [*Portrait of the Artist as Birdseed Bust*]: an allusion to James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Roth dismissed this novel of artistic awakening as kitsch (<https://schaulager.org/de/aktivitaeten/forschung-projekte/dieter-roth>; Laurenz Stiftung & Schaulager Basel 2015: 266; Senkpiel 2018: 310-312; 2020). The towers can be seen as a kind of self-monument that displays the artist's own transience and finiteness through the busts' self-portraits in various ages intertwined with the material they consist of, which is left to an uncontrollable process of decay.

Against the backdrop of the elements listed in chapter 1 to describe Dieter Roth's studio with *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm*, it can be stated – even if it is almost self-evident – that Roth's studio can be seen as a place of self-representation by the artist, possibly also as a subsequent staging-strategy of artist (self-)representation on the part of the studio's owning institution after his death. Contributing to this are the sculptural self-portraits exhibited in the installation tower structure, which are also located in the middle of their place of production and creation, which, thanks to the traces of the working process, heightens the moment of artistic self-representation in a self-reflexive way. The semantic density of the artwork consists precisely in its positioning in the context of its creation and is heightened by countless other elements that are connected to the themes of process, its own temporality and finiteness, as well as chance and archival procedures.

As far as the role of the artist is concerned, it can be stated that the artist plays only an indirect role in shaping the immersive experience of the studio: first, after Roth's death, the artist is present in the studio in the form of absence; second, the materials he chooses for the towers, which decisively shapes the immersion in the studio (cf. chapter 4), work now on their own, so to speak, over time.

To understand how the visitors accept the immersive offer of the studio, it is necessary to characterise the properties of the space surrounding them in more detail. To trace a possible conception of space in relation to Roth's studio, I would like to draw on some of the characteristics of heterotopia, but without wanting to transfer Michel Foucault's spatial concept one-to-one to it: as is well known, there is hardly a place today that is not characterised with this term (Günzel 2017: 102). I refer mainly to functional change and heterochronicity (Foucault 2005a; Foucault 2005b). According to Foucault, heterotopias can undergo a change of function: the example of the studio could be used to illustrate this in that it was originally conceived as an artist's workshop and has since become a space that is dislocated but attached to a research, collection and exhibition institution (Schaulager and Kunstmuseum Basel, Gegenwart). In addition, countless elements from the artist's professional and private past are currently gathered in this place, for example, the tools for making the self-portrait and lion busts, photographs with family members, all kinds of objects etc., which is also why the space gathers dif-

ferent levels of time – Foucault would say heterochronous here – and thus has features of an archive and a kind of museum. There is also the aspect of the closedness or openness of the heterotopia, which manifests itself in Roth’s studio in the way that the studio space, which is closed in itself, can be opened up to visitors, which has already happened from the beginning and is nowadays continued in an institutionalised way.

The boundaries between art space, private space and real space thus seem to dissolve in the studio. Consequently, to use a frequently employed metaphor, the immersive experience in Roth’s studio could be described and interpreted as an immersion in Dieter Roth’s universe (Weber 2019).

Space is also as a condition of the image of the artwork *Selbstturm*, *Löwenturm*: The pictorial field takes in all the elements mentioned in chapter 1 (on the pictorial constitutive function of the field, cf. Boehm 2013: 247; Boehm 2012, on the concept of the studio as a “real picture”, cf. Molderings 2012: 95) and includes the installation-sculptural work. The space of Roth’s studio is understood here not only as a condition of immersivity but also as an activating frame, as the work of art’s iconic field that determines and promotes the multisensory perception during the aesthetic experience, also in the sense of an efficacy or *dynamis* of images (on the topic cf. most recently Alloa & Cappelletto 2020: 1-11). When I speak of multisensory perception and aesthetic experience, I am referring to the share (or extent) of sensory perception in aesthetic experience that goes beyond the ‘mere’ visual. Sensory here means first of all literally: concerning the sense organs, the reception of sensations; while with the prefix multi- I aim at the simultaneous use, but with different densities or time-shifted, of several senses in the aesthetic experience, that is, at their interaction (introductory to the topic of multisensoriality from a perceptual-psychological perspective Schönhammer 2013: 253-275, and from a cultural-philosophical perspective Diaconu 2005; on the intermodality of the senses from a phenomenological perspective Waldenfels 1999: 58-63). With aesthetic experience, in turn, I mean with the philosopher Juliane Rebentisch (2003: 11-12) formulated: “a process that takes place essentially between subject and object. Aesthetic experience [...] exists only in relation to an aesthetic object”.

The approach to the question of the image of Roth’s studio with *Selbstturm*, *Löwenturm* and its constitution of meaning must be also dealt with from two levels that interact and complement each other: one cannot be thought of without the other, they stand in a dynamic figure- and ground-relationship (Boehm 2012; 2013). One could be, so to speak, the micro-level of the installation-sculptural part and the other the macro-level of the studio space with all its components. Or, to put it another way: on the one hand, we are dealing with the specific image of what can be considered the work of art, and on the other hand, with the overall image of Roth’s studio.

As far as the micro-level is concerned, the “actual” artwork, the *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm*, possesses a specific image that is in a constant state of flux and is shaped by the dynamics of the sugar and chocolate masses’ material changes, a material dynamic that is determined by decay and chance as well as material properties and textures. The expressive potential of this aesthetics of decay consists in the gradually new appearance of *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm* and is also shaped and significantly reinforced by the factor smell (Dobke 1997: 203-208, on smelly art cf. Shiner & Kriskovets 2007). In general, the processual quality of ar-

tistic works triggered by the rapidly decaying art material of food is momentous both on the level of production and on the level of reception aesthetics, because during the production and execution of art as well as the decay of the artworks, smells, for example, emerge from the organic materials and tastes unfold that can be physically experienced and actualized by the viewers, ultimately expanding the possibilities of reception and turning their “body into an epistemic organ” (Kunsthalle Düsseldorf/Galerie im Taxispalais Innsbruck/Kunstmuseum Stuttgart 2009: 6-7, 15-16).

As far as the macro-level of the studio is concerned, this image depends in turn on the respective perspective of the visitor in the space and on the relationship of his or her body and field of vision to the artwork and the spatiality encompassing it, which will always be a fragmentary one. The iconic field of the studio with *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm* is also constituted primarily by the spatial relationships between the viewer(s) and the towers: it is determined by how he or her are located or move, which is again determined from a certain spectrum of spatially determined possibilities. But also lighting conditions, etc. plays a role.

3. *Liminality and the Aesthetics of Transformation*

In connection with the controversially discussed question of whether the spatiality for immersivity must be hermetically enclosed or not (cf. § 2), an important point is the aspect of transition, which is too little addressed in research on immersivity.

Regardless of whether the space in relation to which one speaks of immersivity is hermetically enclosed or not, real or virtual, as a viewer one is unlikely to *suddenly* find oneself in it without having entered it through some kind of concrete threshold, or without having undertaken some kind of change (think of donning VR goggles, for example) or experienced a transition, be it on a cognitive or emotional level (on material and social spaces of transition cf. Augart, Kunze & Stumpf 2020; Krüger & Saviello 2017: 4, on spatial configurations at thresholds and the topic of motion cf. Kern 2004: 32-48). Along with the theme of transition, research in art studies is concerned with liminality, following approaches from theatre studies and anthropology.

According to the paradigm of an aesthetics of transformation that theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, following anthropologist Victor Turner, has developed over the years starting from the concept of liminality, from Latin *limen* = threshold (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 305-314; 2012: 46-48, 68; 2017: 15)³, transformational aesthetics means first of all taking a look at the liminal state into which the audience or viewers are placed when experiencing not only performative arts but every kind of art⁴. More recently, Fischer-Lichte (2017: 17) has related this liminal condition to the question of the relationship between viewer and image, referring to art historian David Freedberg (1989: XXII) who writes: “We must consider not only beholders’ symptoms and behaviour, but also the effectiveness, efficacy, and vitality of images themselves, not only what beholders do, but also what images appear to do”. At this point, Fischer-Lichte (2017: 17) speaks of the creation of an aesthetic distance through “auratisation”, which is able to withdraw the image from the viewer; at the same time, the viewer is put out of himself, but without having the possibility “to put himself into the image without any difficulty”.

This section highlights the aspects that reveal “the threshold character of aesthetic experience” (*Ivi*: 9) in connection with Roth’s studio. This threshold experience is conceived in our specific case study both literally as such, as a transition from the space outside the studio to its interior (and back), through the studio door via the entrance area, and figuratively as a transition from one state to another during its aesthetic experience. On the one hand, liminality could be considered as the prelude, perhaps even the precondition of immersion, on the other hand, a higher-level aspect that plays a significant role in shaping the immersive experience.

The condition for the possibility of immersivity in Roth’s studio is – first and foremost, literally and almost obviously – the crossing of a threshold (Figg. 5-6) that initiates the *process* of immersion in the first place and marks a difference between inside and outside the studio triggering visitor’s reorganisation of sensory perception and cognition as well (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 309-310; Grau 2003: 13). At this moment of transition through the door into the studio, the viewers are invited to suspend the pictorial boundary and to put themselves concretely, i.e., bodily, into Dieter Roth’s pictorial world (cf. on another context Kern 2004: 40-41), but also mentally. When one enters the room after opening the door, the olfactory nerves perceive a smell. This smell emanates mainly from the self- and lion-portraits made of chocolate and sugar masses that have been in decay for more than 50 years.

Consequently, the aesthetic crossing of boundaries between “here and there” occurs in Roth’s studio environment not only visual-spatial, but accordingly thanks to the multisensory perception that is triggered by the decaying food and which enables viewers to take note of the transforming “aesthetic threshold experience”



Fig. 5 - The studio door.



Fig. 6 - A visitor is about to enter the studio; Photo: Nathalie Noorlander.

(Fischer Lichte 2001) directly on his or her own, imperatively: phenomenologically conceived, body. Fischer-Lichte (2004: 307, Fischer-Lichte 2012, 135-185) writes that it is above all the collapse of opposites (for example, of art and reality) that puts those involved in a threshold state. So, the crossing of the door of Roth's studio marks the threshold and makes first and foremost the *border* between here and there transparent; then the audience visiting Roth's studio is *between* these levels (Fig. 6), in the sense of Victor Turner's (1964) "betwixt and between" art and reality. Furthermore, Turner emphasizes that: "In liminality, new ways of acting, new combinations of symbols, are tried out, to be discarded or accepted" (Turner 1977: 40).

How does this state in-between relate to the theme of presence, in the sense of consciously being there, which is central to the immersive experience? Is there a contradiction, are these levels mutually exclusive? First of all, I refer once again very banally to the temporal sequence of action that it takes, in the case of Roth's studio, for a person to be in the environment at all: He or she has to pass from the outside to the inside through a threshold and meanwhile, in this in-between, a reorientation sets in, which also affects sensory perception. The transformations Fischer-Lichte refers to are of a temporary nature and concern, for example, changes in affective, energetic and motor states of the audience (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 313). In explaining the possible manifestations of transformation that viewers can experience, Fischer-Lichte (2004: 313) also notes:

Whether the experience of destabilization of self-perception, world-perception, and perception of others, of the loss of valid norms and rules actually leads to a re-orientation of the subject concerned, of his perception of reality and of himself, and in this sense to a lasting transformation, can only be decided in individual cases⁷.

4. *Quality and Dynamics of the Immersive Experience in Dieter Roth's Studio*

It has already been emphasized that immersion and the constitution of presence that goes along with it is largely achieved by addressing the senses of the viewer (Grau 2003: 13-23). Also in connection with the evaluation of Fischer-Lichte's above mentioned "respective experience" and the question of the transformation that has taken place or failed to take place, and in order to get closer to the phenomenologically-based mode of appearance of the space of representation mentioned in § 2, which gives the immersive experience a framework in the first place, I insert now some reflections of a methodological and interdisciplinary nature, dealing with the possibilities and the challenges of fruitfully incorporating subjective perspectives from the field of conservation documentation in the art historical analysis.

It is still a methodological challenge for art historians to describe sensory perception and aesthetic experience related to artistic works that go beyond its own (especially for works of contemporary art, when there are not yet historical sources or further documents about it), i.e., with at least a more representative character. This, of course, does not aim at supposedly objective statements, but is about perceptions and meanings of the artistic work. Rather, it is a matter of methodologically meaningful statements that might be useful from a direct lived aesthetic experience related to the artwork at issue, in order to gain a broader base of infor-

mation regarding, for example, ephemeral and performative works, or multisensory functioning artistic works (apart from and beyond neuroscientific analyses, if at all: I follow here the thoughts by philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels 2010: 10 about neuroaesthetics) to rather understand how the multisensory dimension contributes to *the artworks' meaning generation*.

In order to obtain precise and differentiated answers to these questions, one would have to conduct a kind of field study in which the reactions of the public are recorded, or the public is questioned about them and their answers documented. Bruna Casagrande, a conservator/restorer of new materials and media (Bern University of the Arts, Switzerland) is currently developing a conservation documentation method with a focus on multisensoriality, based on reports from the audience, especially experts from disciplines relevant to the artwork in question (because of complementary professional backgrounds), as part of the research project *Lebensmittel als Material in installativen und partizipativ-performativen künstlerischen Arbeiten – Dokumentation, Analyse, Rezeption* funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (for a preliminary study on the topic, Casagrande 2017; on the research project Senkpiel 2018-2022). Casagrande is generating a source base for researchers who can include this information in their analyses⁸. This conservation documentation can in future contribute as a methodological approach in addition to art historical analyses to show for example scopic regimes and statements concerning multisensory perception on the basis of concrete case studies.

In the aforementioned research project, an experimental application of the mentioned conservation method to Roth's studio took place in November 2019. An art historian, a conservator-restorer, a nutrition and environmental sociologist and two experts in the linguistic communication of sensory perceptions in relation to food took part in the experiment. These experts were each able to enter the space alone and spend about half an hour in the studio, accompanied only by the supervisor who oversees the space on behalf of the institution. Casagrande asked the experts to describe their impressions, with a focus on multisensory perception, orally immediately during the visit to the studio: this was tape-recorded. After everyone had visited the studio and reported in this way, a so-called focus group discussion took place (following a method from the social sciences), in which the participants discussed their experience in the studio together. The conservator moderated the conversation, trying to hold back with comments or questions in order to influence the course of the conversation as little as possible. Excerpts from visit and witness reports concern the directly lived experience during the visit in Roth's studio and bring up the topics mentioned associated with immersivity, i.e., sensory perception and liminality. One possible approach in our case study is now to critically question the reports from the audience on Roth's studio in order to gain more differentiated insights: How can the directly experienced immersive experience be captured from the visitors' point of view? How can the immersive experience in the space of representation be described, how the interaction between visitor's body and the space? Do we find echoes of the theoretical discourses concerning aspects of immersivity, space of representation, liminality and transformation aesthetics in it? Do they substantiate the theory or contradict it? As far as witness statements that go beyond one's own direct multisensory perception are concerned, for instance, as an art-historian, one must be careful to maintain a critical distance from what the audience is saying: For ex-

ample, some of the witnesses knew more about Roth's studio due to their professional practice than others who had not heard of it and were asked to report due to other aspects of their expert knowledge. Some made statements that almost sound like art historical interpretations of the work, probably because they have prepared themselves or drawing on their own knowledge base. The statements concerning multisensory perception can rather be traced back to a pre-verbal level (now linguistically mediated), subject-specific and for this very reason are more meaningful with regard to a lived aesthetic experience.

In the following, quotations from the aforementioned audience reports are used, which on the one hand concern the perception of the artistic work and the multi-sensory experience, and on the other hand refer to the meaning of the artwork. With regard to the description of the environment in relation to the topic of immersivity, the following statements let that "disposition of the observer" shine through, which Grau (2003: 13) mentions as a prerequisite for immersion. The first sensory expert speaks of "walking around" the room (MPWR-S1: #00:38:01-7#), his gaze repeatedly moving from the bottom to the top. He attributes a haptic quality to the air, emphasizing that you have to go in through this dense air (FGD: #00:10:03-6#). He notes that it is something personal and has to do with body awareness whether one really dives into it (FGD: #00:37:57-3#). The second sensory expert also attributed a density to the atmosphere in the room and said that you have "to bux into it" (FGD: #00:13:43-0#) and that she does not walk with "a whole openness in this room" (MPWR-S2: #00:07:57-2#).

Regarding the smell, the first sensory expert emphasizes that the cocoa-chocolate note appears again and again in combination with an inorganic-chemical note (MPWR-S1: #00:36:44-6#). The nutrition and environmental sociologist notices the smell more strongly when she approaches the towers (MPWR-NES: #00:00:39-6#). She further does not dare to go too far around the towers (MPWR-NES: #00:03:05-0#) and stays on their left side because the smell is not so strong for her there (MPWR-NES: #00:06:38-6#). She then wants to move to the right side but says she can't (MPWR-NES: #00:07:25-2#), probably because of the presence of the supervisor or maybe because of the smell. The conservator-restorer wonders whether it is possible to measure or document the smell and asks about the distribution of the smell in the room as well as the state of the smell over time (MPWR-CR: #00:14:43-0#), whether the smell is intentionally part of the artistic work (MPWR-CR: #00:03:30-8#) and what exactly triggers "the stench" (MPWR-CR: #00:10:12-9#).

Significant are some statements that show interferences in the immersive experience: In these cases, elements of acoustic and spatio-temporal nature cause the audience a moment of irritation in the process of immersion in Roth's studio, thus throwing them out of a comprehensive immersion back into their own present. The first sensory expert and the conservator-restorer notice the sound of water running into a pipe while they are in the room (MPWR-S1: #00:09:04-8#, MPWR-CR: #00:10:27-8#), and the art historian suddenly misses the sound of the air conditioner kicking in at regular intervals (MPWR-AH: #00:24:43-3#). The conservator-restorer wonders which elements in the room have been placed afterwards (MPWR-CR: #00:17:48-9#, #00:18:41-5#). At the same time, further variations of the topic of the "unity of time and place" characteristic for immersion (Grau 2003: 13, 27, 31) plays an important role: the art historian, for example, emphasises how she feels in a "time capsule in the nineties" (FGD: #00:35:00-8#)

and highlights the contrast between the temporality of busts' decay process and the impression of standstill in the aforementioned era (MPZB-AH: #00:04:25-4#; #00:15:12-8#).

In connection with the theme of transformational aesthetics, the art historian is strongly concerned with the lighting conditions: "dark [...] semi-dark" (MPWR-AH: #00:01:17-5#), whereby the acclimatization of the gaze to the new lighting conditions when entering probably flows directly into the description here. She notices that after a while the smell is no longer perceptible to her (MPWR-AH: #00:05:05-4#): moments of sensory reorganisation shine through here. The second sensory expert notices the cool draught in the entrance area immediately upon entering and detects the smell of old chocolate (MPWR-S2: #00:01:06-4#).

Concerning the minimised distance between subject, body, artwork and environment as well as presence constitution the statements of the nutrition and environmental sociologist stand out: at the beginning of her report, she mentions the panic-stricken expression of the figures/bust as well as their appearance (dogs/men? MPWR-NES: #00:03:05-0#); in the focus group discussion she then adds with a laugh that she felt observed by the many "heads" of old men (FGD: #00:10:49-0#). She also expresses herself as follows: "glad when I am allowed out again from my own feeling, how I feel now" (MPWR-NES: #00:07:27-3#). The art historian notes: "I am thrown back on myself too much" (MPWR-AH: #00:24:49-9#). The conservator-restorer also senses the feeling of wanting to get out of the room and has the impression of "the presence of the artist underneath the ruinousness [...]" as if he had just stopped being active" (MPWR-CR: #00:02:07-8# [...] #00:02:43-6#). The first sensory expert also emphasises the simultaneous impression of the presence of the artist and the abandonment of the space (MPWR-S1: #00:37:10-6#).

Interesting for the question of the space of representation and the question of the image in the immersive experience is the movement pattern of the art historian, who lingers in the entrance area and first of all gets an overview of the room with all its components: from here she first goes to the size of room and to the lighting conditions as well as the acoustic and olfactory elements in order to then go to the desk on the right, to the towers and then to the left into the cooking area, before leaving the studio. Her gaze is first directed upwards, then increasingly from the bottom to the top (at the towers). She emphasises the difficulty of "grasping everything" (MPWR-AH: #00:03:26-1#), says it is "the whole that is perceived" (MPWR-AH: #00:10:07-5#) and asks what role the studio plays in relation to the artwork (MPWR-AH: #00:16:40-7#). In this context, she also asks about arrangement, staging and the traces of what has really been (MPWR-AH: #00:14:03-4#). The nutrition and environmental sociologist explains that she could see everything from the left side of the towers (FGD: #00:14:22-2#).

Regarding the meaning of the artistic work as a space of artist-self-representation, the nutritional and environmental sociologist clearly states that what is around *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm* is "functional staging" (FGD: #00:37:10-3#). The conservator-restorer immediately speaks of a "mausoleum" in the entrance area (MPWR-CR: #00:01:33-0#), then wonders what is part of the workshop and what is part of the installation, noting that of course everything should be considered as one (MPWR-CR: #00:12:58-1#). The first sensory-expert describes the studio as "an archive of the self with the infrastructure necessary for it" (MPWR-S1: #00:27:56-4#- #00:28:07-2#). The latter statements, however, have a somewhat

different, I would say indirect, significance for me, because they probably touch on already existing bodies of knowledge and do not concern the immediate multi-sensory experience.

Concluding remarks: A Small Phenomenology of the Visit

As is well known, Dieter Roth has added a new dimension to the use of food as an art material by leaving these organic materials to the passage of time: from this, a peculiar form of liveliness has unfolded, manifesting in *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm*, as the decaying sugar and chocolate masses develop odours and the dynamic relationship between material and form causes an image that changes over time. The ephemeral is directly visible to visitors in Dieter Roth's studio and can be bodily experienced in a multi-sensory way.

The interdisciplinary approach proposed here, which incorporates data from the conservation documentation into the art historical analysis, unlike other studies on immersivity, can draw on first-hand data (audience reports) regarding the direct visitation and can in this way differentially illustrate the quality and dynamics of the immersive experience in Dieter Roth's studio.

The main aspect of the immersive experience in Roth's studio is the specific challenge of sensory perception in the combination of visual, olfactory and acoustic stimuli, whereby in particular the combination of seeing and smelling is determining, for example for the respective movement pattern in space.

Above all, the nature of the air plays an important role: the smell in particular, which is distributed differently in the space, shapes the state of mind and the pattern of movement and thus the penetration of the spatiality on the part of the visitors. Elements of a spatio-temporal nature also interfere in the immersive exploration of the studio, so the atmosphere of the studio, which consists of objects and elements from the artist's past and develops a special "aura", and the bodily presence of the visitors, who perceive sounds from the immediate surroundings, for example, grate. This is characterised by the fact that the visitors are to some degree immersed in a space of artist (self-)representation due to the tension and the coincidence of the professional and the private as (not least) a result of curatorial decisions and staging strategies of its owning institution. Thus, the artist has a kind of *absent presence* or *present absence* in the immersive experience in his studio. The materials he chooses for the towers, which give the atmosphere that special touch that so decisively shapes the multisensory experience of immersion, work now on their own, so to speak, over time.

Regarding the scopic regime of the visitors, it can be stated that most of them choose some kind of vantage point from which they try to gain an overall view of the studio. This point can be at the entrance, whereby a kind of frontal view is aimed at, or in the middle of the studio, near the towers, so that an overview is attempted from inside the environment, and require a 360° rotating movement of the person. Both possibilities testify to the irreducible fragmentary view of the surroundings and of the immersive experience. The infrastructure of the studio framing the towers, its overall imagery, depends on the perspective of the visitors in the space and on the relationship of their bodies and fields of vision to the tower of itself to *Selbstturm*; *Löwenturm*, which is determined by a limited spectrum of movement and will therefore always be fragmentary. Logically, the distance

between subject and object (the towers) cannot disappear completely, already because of the museum-like conditions, which do not allow for too much proximity to them, nor for a haptic contact that would establish a continuous connection. The crucial point of the small phenomenology of immersive experience in Dieter Roth's studio is that immersion does not completely resolve itself, is not an absolute one, since some of the involved visitors repeatedly experience moments of distance and resistance during the visit. In their immersive experience in Roth's studio there are so to speak friction surfaces, with their own inner and the outside world as well.

1 <https://schaulager.org/en/activities/research-projects/dieter-roth>

2 Between 2007-2015, the room was not accessible to the public in order to carry out some stabilising measures for conservation reasons. In Hamburg there is a comparable installation, which is affiliated with the Dieter Roth Foundation. The two installations differ in that Roth combined the materials chocolate and sugar in the Basel towers, whereas he kept them separate in the Hamburg towers (on the museum in Hamburg, of which the "unique icon of 20th century (decaying) art", i.e., the *Schimmelmuseum* [= *Mould Room*, demolished in 2004] was an essential component, cf. <https://www.dieterrothmuseum.org/>, Dobke 2002: 204-210).

3 The title *Löwenturm* (also called *Löwen Selbstturm*) presumably derives from the zodiac sign of the lion, under which the artist's partner at the time, Dorothy Iannone, was born (Kunz 2001: 6; Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel 1997: 63).

4 The English translation of the quote comes from the author of the present article.

5 The concept of liminality goes back to the anthropologist Victor Turner (1964; 1977), who developed it in describing threshold experiences and phases of transformation of social status in rites of passage, again starting from Arnold van Gennep (1909).

6 The aesthetic experience of visiting Roth's studio is also characterised by the eventfulness that Fischer-Lichte (2004: 305) postulates as constitutive of her aesthetics of the Performative.

7 "Ob die Erfahrung der Destabilisierung von Selbst-, Welt- und Fremdwahrnehmung, des Verlustes gültiger Normen und Regeln tatsächlich zu einer Neuorientierung des betreffenden Subjekts, seiner Wirklichkeits- und Selbstwahrnehmung führt und in diesem Sinne zu einer andauernden Transformation, wird sich nur im Einzelfall entscheiden lassen". English translation by the author of the present article.

8 At the end of the mentioned research project, the data collected in this way (audience/witness reports) will be deposited in a publicly accessible data repository in accordance with the specifications of the funding institution, the SNSF, and in line with OA publication strategies, so that other researchers can also include these data in their analyses. The following is quoted from the multi-perspective witness (reports and the focus group discussion with these abbreviations: MPWR and FGD, each with time reference for tracking).