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Architecture as Experience: Reimagining Heritage Interpretation through Situated Perception. The Case of the Barcelona Pavilion

This article proposes a new methodology for mediating architectural heritage grounded in the situated experience of space. In contrast to traditional heritage interpretation models—which tend to prioritize historical, symbolic, or conceptual readings—the article argues that architecture reveals itself not by means of external explanations but through attentive bodily engagement with space.
The proposal is articulated around the concept of the Diffuse Museum, understood not as an institution but as a pedagogical strategy that activates architectural and urban space as an open, distributed museum shaped by perception. In this framework, architectural sites become interpretive artefacts in their own right: they are encountered in situ, through movement, orientation, atmosphere and material presence. The city thus becomes a didactic landscape in which meaning arises from direct experience.
These ideas are examined through an experimental audio guide designed for the Barcelona Pavilion (Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, 1929). The device structures the visit through verbs, bodily positions and shifts in attention, encouraging visitors to perceive the architectural phenomena as they unfold. Rather than transmitting information, it activates perception as a mode of knowing, enabling a more reflective and intimate encounter with space.
The article invites a rethinking of how architectural knowledge is transmitted to the public, calling for forms of mediation that prioritise attentive presence and embodied perception. Altogether, this approach seeks to foster more inclusive and sensitive interpretations of the environment—interpretations that ultimately favour its preservation, transformation and revaluation as an essential component of our shared cultural existence and identity.

Keywords:
Heritage mediation; architectural experience; architectural museums; phenomenology of space; diffuse museum

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1. INTRODUCTION

The guided interpretation of our built heritage has traditionally not been undertaken by architects. As a result, a fundamental dimension of architecture —the experience of space through movement and time— has often remained unaddressed. The architectural events that emerge from this interaction are usually absent from interpretive narratives. Even today, heritage interpretation tends to rely on symbolic, conceptual, or historical discourse, accumulating a large amount of information while overlooking its phenomenological and experiential dimensions. Architecture still lacks a coherent and intelligible interpretive framework —one capable of presenting architectural works as perceptual, individual, and inherently unique encounters, in which meaning arises primarily through embodied engagement.

This article proposes a new methodology for public mediation with built heritage. Defined here as the Diffuse Museum, it establishes a direct relationship with architecture, in situ, interpreting it solely through the spatial and sensory phenomena it generates. The term refers to an alternative museographic condition in which architectural works themselves —and not their representations— become the object of interpretation. This approach envisions a different kind of architectural museum: one that unfolds in the real environment, is dispersed throughout the territory, and is activated through perception. In this model, the city becomes a museum, and architecture becomes both the medium and the message of interpretation.

The ideas presented here form the theoretical foundation of a new audio guide for the Barcelona Pavilion, designed by Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich in 1929. Through this specific case study —including excerpts from the script— we demonstrate how the Diffuse Museum approach enables a situated interpretation of architectural space. In doing so, built heritage becomes a pedagogical landscape in which the space itself acts as a powerful vehicle for transmitting architectural knowledge —one that is more meaningful, effective, and rooted in lived experience.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Architecture as embodied experience

John Dewey (2005) argued that "art is always the product, in experience, of an interaction of human beings with their environment." This implies that the essence of art does not lie in something physical or tangible, but rather in the encounter that arises between the human body and the work of art. Similarly, the reality of architecture does not reside in the architectural object, but emerges in relation to the subject who perceives it —through a concrete, spatial and temporal event. Using a compelling metaphor, Juan Navarro-Baldeweg compares a building to a resonance chamber: it is the instrument that allows music to be heard. However, what truly matters is the music itself— the phenomenon (Navarro-Baldeweg, 2009). In other words, the most authentic architectural dimension is inherently situated: it takes shape essentially through the bodily presence of the observer in a specific place and moment.

Finnish architect and writer Juhani Pallasmaa repeatedly critiques interpretations of architecture framed in purely visual or aesthetic terms. He advocates for a multisensory approach, in which architectural encounters are fundamentally embodied: "Architecture cannot be evaluated or understood without our experience of it (...) Architecture that endures in human history and in the memory of its occupants is inspired by, grounded in and shaped to human experience" (Pallasmaa & McCarter, 2012). Pallasmaa (2014) emphasizes that architecture is perceived as a whole through all the senses simultaneously. The most powerful architectural moments, he argues, are sensory encounters — such as the fundamental spatial act of passing through a threshold.

Pallasmaa's emphasis on bodily awareness finds deeper theoretical grounding in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. His ideas resonate particularly with the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who conceptualized perception not as a passive reception of stimuli, but as a lived, corporeal mode of being in the world. Within this framework, Merleau-Ponty (1993) introduced the notion of the "flesh of the world", highlighting the interrelation between subject, body and place. According to this idea, being-in-the-world implies a constant entanglement between the body and its environment: we are made of the same material as the world we perceive, and consciousness is embodied, rather than abstract or purely intellectual.

2.2 Educational and affective dimensions of experience

This situated understanding of architecture has profound implications for how we learn about and relate to space. As progressive pedagogical theories have long demonstrated — at least since Dewey's Experience and Education (1997)— meaningful knowledge acquisition is fundamentally individual and rooted in direct involvement. It depends far more on attentive participation and personal construction of meaning than on passive data accumulation, stylistic classifications, or purely descriptive analytical exercises. Our world is a constantly changing reality that, as Dewey already stated in 1897, can only be truly understood through direct, lived experience —an experience that, in his view, requires conscious participation and the full presence of the individual in a meaningful activity (Castiñeiras, 2002). In educational contexts, this underscores the importance of fostering a spontaneous and sensory dialogue between individuals and reality.

This relationship, however, is never neutral nor isolated in the present moment: as Gaston Bachelard suggests in The Poetics of Space (2010), architectural encounter is not objective.

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It also involves affective and imaginative layers of consciousness. Architecture —particularly the places we inhabit— becomes an intimate container for memory, imagination, and reverie. These affective resonances contribute to how we internalize and make sense of our environment. Pallasmaa (2011) echoes this idea when he writes: "As we enter a space, the space enters us, and the experience is essentially an exchange and fusion of object and subject." Architecture, in this sense, is not only a place of perception, but also a vehicle of emotional and existential connection.

2.3 From theory to methodology: the Diffuse Museum

To apprehend a building, then, goes beyond understanding its history, conceptual foundations, or technical aspects: it means engaging with its spatial qualities, sensing its scales, textures and rhythms. It implies moving through space, noticing every corner, variation in height, or play of light as part of a meaningful dialogue with the place —allowing all of it to merge with one's own memories and lived impressions, forming a unique and deeply individual sensory whole.

These theoretical foundations not only challenge traditional forms of heritage mediation but also support the development of an alternative methodology: the Diffuse Museum. Far from presenting architecture as an object to be explained or deciphered, this approach invites us to relate to it as a lived reality. It is articulated as an in situ embodied practice, in which the city itself —its buildings and spaces— functions as the ultimate collection: living, open, and distributed. This paradigm shift —from conceptual interpretation to direct experience— entails significant pedagogical implications: knowledge does not derive from external discourses but emerges from the act of inhabiting itself.

The concept of a Diffuse Museum [Fig.1] is not entirely new. It can be situated within a broader museographic genealogy that, from its emergence at the turn of the twentieth century to the developments of the New Museology in the mid-twentieth century, challenged the centrality of the museum building as the primary container of cultural and pedagogical experience.

Figure 1: Diffuse Museum operating diagram: country / city, / space.
Q.Garriga, 2024 (Dwg: C. Marcos) .

Initiatives such as the early Scandinavian open-air museums, the French Écomusée (Rivière, 1980; de Varine, 2005), or the Italian formulations of the museum as a territorial system —from the early proposals of the museo diffuso in the 1970s by Fredi Drugman, to later territorialist approaches (Magnaghi, 2001)— contributed to conceiving heritage interpretation as an extended network of places, practices and relationships. Together, these approaches expanded the understanding of the museum as a landscape of dispersed experiences capable of activating meaning directly within the environment [1] .

The Diffuse Museum proposed here aligns with this genealogy insofar as it also shifts museum mediation toward in-situ experience. However, whereas these earlier models frame this shift mainly in contextual or territorial terms, the present proposal grounds it explicitly in embodied experience.

Here, "diffuse" refers not only to the spatially expanded nature of the museum —understood as a network of sites across the city— but, more fundamentally, to a mode of mediation anchored in bodily perception. Architectural experience is inherently corporeal, and therefore diffuse. Meaning emerges from a dispersed constellation of spatial, material and atmospheric phenomena that unfold through movement, attention and time. In this way, the architectural work itself becomes the museum.

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3. METHODOLOGY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY APPLIED TO ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

3.1 Guiding principles

This methodology is grounded in the principles of phenomenology and sensory awareness. Rather than relying on external explanatory frameworks, it places the body and its perceptual capacities at the centre of the interpretive process. Architectural heritage is not approached as a closed narrative to be explained, but as a sensory reality to be experienced. The visitor is considered an active subject —not a passive receiver of information— whose engagement is inherently unique and personal. Interpretation is thus conceived as an open- ended process that unfolds in the present, through the body and place.

3.2 Strategies for embodied interpretation

In order to translate this methodology into an operational tool for heritage mediation, a set of specific strategies is proposed to foster an experiential relation to architecture. These strategies do not aim to reduce interpretation to the unidirectional transmission of information, but rather understand perception as a mode of knowing.

In this context, the audio guide is not conceived as a mere auditory device conveying a narrative along an itinerary, but as a catalyst for conscious spatial awareness and heightened attentiveness.

a) Suppression of prior information
Before the visit begins, the interpretation deliberately avoids providing historical, technical, or conceptual data, in order to encourage an unmediated, direct encounter with architecture. This strategy invites the visitor to suspend prior judgments —in a gesture akin to the Husserlian epoché— and to open themselves to what the place offers in the present moment, free from external mediation. By doing so, it activates a more receptive, situated, and phenomenological mode of attention, focused on perception rather than cognition: visitors are invited to respond to what the environment presents, rather than to what they already know about it.

b) Accessible and non-specialized language
The mediation deliberately avoids technical or academic language or specialized terminology. Instead, it is articulated in clear, plain, and accessible vocabulary, referring to everyday perceptual events recognizable to the visitor. This strategy decentralizes expert authority and reframes architectural interpretation as a shared, and participatory process. By referring to familiar sensory realities and spatial situations, it fosters trust in the visitor's own perceptual judgement and invites them to engage with space as a responsive subject. As such, it broadens access for general audiences and supports a more inclusive mode of interpretation.

c) Spatial Narrative structured around verbs
The journey is structured through spatial actions expressed as verbs (to arrive, to enter, to cross, to turn, to observe...). This strategy aligns with Pallasmaa's (2014) notion that architectural experience is not defined by formal or geometric properties, but rather emerges through embodied acts of inhabitation: "Basic architectural experiences have a verb form rather than being nouns. Authentic architectural experiences consist then, for instance, of approaching or confronting a building, rather than the formal apprehension of a façade."

d) Body positioning and orientation
Interpretation is grounded in the bodily experience of space, recognizing —as Pallasmaa (2016) suggests— that architecture choreographs our movements, perceptions, and emotions. In this sense, each audio segment is designed to be listened to from a specific location and bodily orientation, guiding the visitor's attention toward a particular architectural situation. Each point of interest —as if it were a gallery within a museum— invites the visitor to inhabit one or more spatial situations, treating these as distinct works of art.

e) Rhythm and pause as tools for attention
The interpretive sequence is organized as a lived temporal unfolding, in which rhythm —marked by pauses, silences, and changes of direction— accompanies the body's movement through space. The visitor does not receive an overall view of the site, but instead accesses a series of spatial situations that are gradually revealed along the route. This cadence modulates the intensity of attention and fosters a more conscious, slower, and sensory relationship with architecture.

f) Dialogic narrative and open-ended questions
Interpretation is structured as a sensory dialogue between space and visitor. Through open-ended questions —formulated without expecting a correct answer— the narration stimulates attention, observation, and the subjective construction of meaning. This strategy breaks away from traditional informative discourse — unidirectional, from the one who "knows" to the one who "does not know"— and proposes a horizontal relationship. The visitor is not led toward a closed conclusion, but rather accompanied throughout their process of awareness and reflection.

g) Ambiguity as value
During the visit, the aim is not to classify or definitively define the space, but to sustain its ambiguity as a source of meaning. The visitor is invited to relate to the place without needing to conceptually define or label it. Attentive presence is prioritized over intellectual explanation, allowing the visitor to embrace uncertainty and delve into meaning through direct experience.

3.3 The visitor as active subject: perception, interpretation and engagement

This methodology is grounded in the recognition of the visitor as an engaged subject in the interpretation of architectural heritage. This

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approach does not conceive of space as an image to be contemplated, nor of the visitor as a passive receiver of stimuli or information, but as an agent playing a central role in the construction of meaning. The interpretive process is understood as a dynamic relationship in which meaning emerges in a situated and singular way.

The script does not convey data, but rather invites attentive presence: it is not about listening and retaining, but about observing, sensing, moving through, and discovering. This activation requires time, silence, and an open disposition.

The audio guide prioritizes the visitor's autonomy while respecting their subjectivity. It does not underestimate their capacity for observation or judgment; rather, it seeks to stimulate these faculties by trusting in their own gaze. It also acknowledges that each individual relates to the environment in unique ways —shaped by their body, attention, memory, and sensitivity. By avoiding a technical approach or a closed narrative, the voice-over leaves room for subjective interpretations and personal connections with the surrounding space.

4. CASE STUDY: THE BARCELONA PAVILION [2]

Designed in 1929 by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich as the German national pavilion for the Barcelona International Exhibition, the Pavilion is one of the most emblematic buildings of modern architecture. It is also one of the most analysed and studied in the world. For this reason, the creation of a new audio guide offered a unique opportunity to test the phenomenological methodology proposed in this study.

Access to the tool is provided via a QR code located at the entrance to the building. Through a web application on their mobile phone, visitors can explore the site independently. The digital format reinforces their autonomy and encourages a direct encounter with the architecture, without additional mediations that might condition it.

The audio guide is conceived as an open-ended exploration of the Pavilion. The script is organized as a non- linear sequence of key moments, each linked to different architectural actions along the route [Fig.2]. Each moment brings together various points of view from which to observe the building, highlighted in colour on the application's floor plans. At each point of interest, a voice-over accompanies the visitor in contemplating what is happening there. The itinerary between these points —as well as through the Pavilion— remains open and freely navigated.

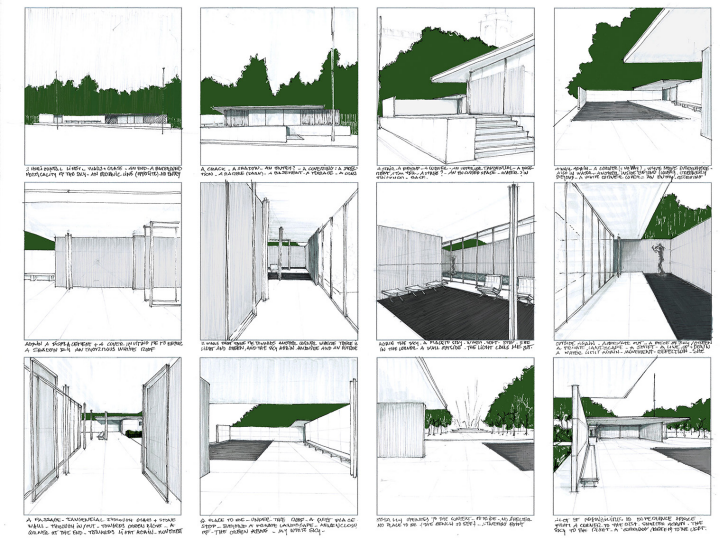
Before beginning the visit, the recording introduces the visitor to the methodological principles: they are invited to observe the space directly, to trust their own perceptions, and to adopt an open and attentive gaze towards the surrounding environment.

4.1 Narrative structure and spatial choreography

The script is structured around spatial actions formulated as verbs —to arrive, to enter, to walk through, to look, to pause— which activate the experience from the position of the body in space. Instead of offering external visual descriptions, at each point the narrative provides bodily-oriented indications: "go up", "turn", "stop", "look to your left", "observe what is in front of you", and so on [Fig.3,4,5,6]. The visitor's movement —their displacement, orientation, or rhythm— becomes an integral part of the process.

For example, in one of the first sections of the route, the voice-over states "The act of entering is broken down into different stages with a succession of perspectives, making the experience of entering the Pavilion richer", suggesting that even the entrance can become a spatial moment stretched over time. In another passage, it says: "From here, the visuals are deep", helping the visitor notice how their bodily

Figure 2: Barcelona Pavillion storyboard, Q.Garriga, 2022.



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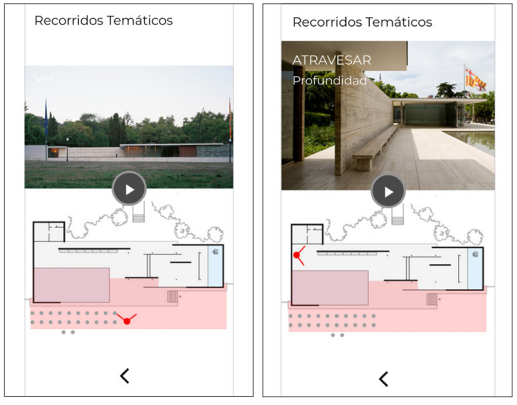

Figure 3: Audio guide screen display. Q.Garriga, Mies van der Rohe Foundation, MuseumMate, 2022.

position and orientation shape their sense of the place.

At each point along the route, the narrative reinforces this bodily awareness by formulating open-ended questions that prompt the visitor to reflect on the sensory consequences of each spatial situation: "Consider the fact that you are on an elevated plane (...) more than one meter above the ground. Why do you think the designers decided to place it atop a base instead of directly on the ground?", "The pavilion isn't entered from the front but by a tangential entrance", "The sculpture (...) is placed, not by coincidence, diametrically opposed to your position (...)". These questions activate situated reflection, aligned with the principle of phenomenological suspension of judgement. After each question, the voice-over offers a plausible —though not definitive— interpretation, emphasising that all answers are valid and that no single reading is possible. The voice-over also incorporates intentional silences that promote contemplation and encourage inner dialogue, fostering deeper, slower, and more spontaneous observation.

The device accompanies movement by proposing an experiential tempo —a cadence in observation that intensifies the visitor's sense of place. In this way, the visitor becomes more aware of the spatial choreography produced by the architecture and perceived through thresholds, turns, changes in scale, light, direction, and materiality. The Pavilion is not presented as a collection of isolated objects, but as a system of material, visual, auditory, and sensory relationships, revealing the rhythm through which architectural situations unfold.

"The route through the German Pavilion is made of long and short visuals which are linked together through our movement", "The architectural elements in buildings lead us and guide our steps. Be aware of how your steps are guided here in the Pavilion", "There is no physical separation between the different spaces in the Pavilion. The spaces are interwoven, creating a unique, continuous environment. There is permanent visual connection among the different areas and with the exterior" —together, these excerpts articulate the idea of spatial fluidity, guiding the visitor's attention toward kinetic sequences and reinforcing the notion of a tempo shaped by direct encounter.

At various points along the route, the device also highlights the architectural transitions, which articulate the lived progression through space —compressions, openings, changes in direction, or visual interruptions— transforming the Pavilion into a continuous flow of sensory situations: "Here the architecture offers you a new experience. The space is compressed on each side and later widens and fully opens up to the outside", "At this point, the space seems to become compressed, to embrace you, to usher you inside", "The architecture has shifted the direction of your route and placed you in front of a specific spatial situation that is totally unlike the previous one", "On your left and right (...) two vertical planes interrupt and limit the visual".

This rhythmic and bodily accompaniment not only structures the visit but also blurs traditional architectural elements and categories. Through questions and suggestions, the guide invites visitors to reconsider assumptions that are often taken for granted —such as the distinctions between interior and exterior, wall and window, boundary and continuity— which in the Pavilion are either blurred or even reversed. This ambiguity is not meant to confuse, but rather to awaken a way of looking capable of interrogating what might otherwise seem too familiar. The goal is to open the visitor's perception to sensory and phenomenological richness: "Would you say that the space you are in is an open space? Why? (...) There is no clear boundary between what is indoors and what is outdoors", "You are no longer in an interior space, even though you are still indoors. What elements let you know that you're in an exterior space? Which ones lead you to think that you're still indoor? (...) Here the architecture totally separates you from the environment. Yet at the same time, it places you in direct relationship with the outdoors: you perceive the sounds, the wind and the temperature; you see the sky and the tree canopies."

4.2 Situated perception, materials and sensory experience

The audio guide places the body and its perceptions at the centre of the interpretive process, emphasizing throughout the visit how spatial phenomena affect the encounter. The visitor does not simply move through the building, but inhabits it consciously, becoming aware of the influence of light, reflections, textures, sounds, proportions, and changes in brightness.

For example, before entering the Pavilion, the guide invites the visitor to observe their own reflection in the glass wall that serves as an

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enclosure: "Do you see the glass wall in front of you? We encourage you to try to look inside. [long pause] If you look at the multiple reflections glancing off the glass, you will see different layers of reality that appear on this transparent wall (...) As you see, the different images are superimposed upon each other in a multiple, complex whole. The reflections thus turn into yet another material in the Pavilion, along with glass, marble, steel and water". The focus shifts toward architectural situations generated by the elements of the space itself and the relationships they establish with one another, with the surroundings, and with the visitor.

For instance, the phrase "A thin sheet of water on a bed of pebbles reflects and doubles the walls and sky, while preventing you from going in that direction," or "The long bench... reminds you that you have left behind a view that is worth sitting and contemplating" shows how architectural situations modulate the visitor's behaviour in space. Similarly, the observation "Thus, one space imperceptibly carries you to the next one in a continuous sequence" emphasizes how the architectural elements are articulated to generate a dynamic rhythm of spatial relations.

In this way, the script proposes a mode of exploration aimed at discovering the sensory effects of the place, emerging from the visitor's bodily presence and conscious attention. Its aim is to summon the visitor into the present moment —real, not conceptual— and to foster a more refined awareness.

Materials are not presented as technical data, but as lived phenomena. Emphasis is placed both on their physical qualities and their sensory effects, as well as on the ways in which they configure the environment. Visitors are invited to observe how these materials shape spatial perception —not only through their form or properties, but also through the interplay they create with one another, with light, with time, and with bodily movement. Their reflections, textures, tonalities, roughness, and colours are highlighted throughout the script: "Stop for just a moment and appreciate the materials around you —their qualities, colours and textures", "How many types of glass can you see? What are the consequences of their different features?", "The planes are opaque and translucent, transparent and tinted, hard and soft. Some of them are superimposed on others to create darker or more shaded tones", "Here, the materials directly shape the space without the need for additional decoration."

Natural light and its variations throughout the day and the year are also a source of reflection: "The natural light and shadows confer with yet another layer of materiality on the Pavilion. Can you perceive it? The textures, reflections and colours inside change constantly as the hours go by and the light changes". Thus, architecture is not explained —it is perceived, felt, and inhabited.

4.3 Open interpretation and corporeal subjectivity

The Pavilion's audio guide adopts a horizontal communicative model: instead of explaining, it poses questions, invites observation, and leaves room for silence. The voice does not instruct but suggests; it helps the visitor see. Rather than imposing a discourse, it stimulates reflection.

The place no longer functions as a mere visual backdrop, but becomes a dynamic articulation of sensory encounters. Questions such as "Do you see any entryway into the interior space?", "Do you notice anything telling you where the entrance is?", "What do you think distinguishes this spatial situation from the other spaces in the Pavilion?", "Sometimes it's difficult to distinguish where the interior begins and ends," and "Why do you think they placed this building here, off the beaten path?" are not meant to elicit correct answers, but to activate reflection. Far from leading to a closed conclusion, these questions encourage a singular and open perception, fostering the personal construction of meaning.

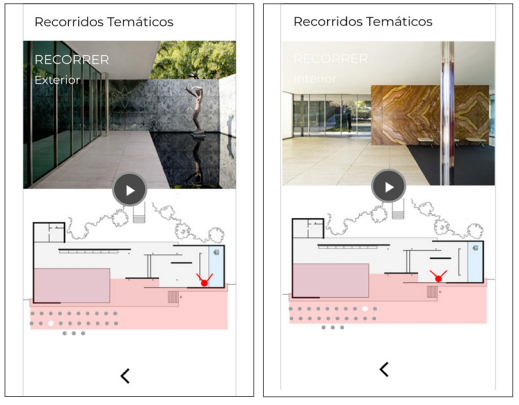

Figure 4: Audio guide screen display. Q.Garriga, Mies van der Rohe Foundation, MuseumMate, 2022.

The building is not presented as an object to be analysed, but as a phenomenon to be experienced. This encourages an intimate relationship with the place —one based not on prior knowledge, but on openness to the architectural events.

This methodology makes it possible to move beyond descriptive, abstract, or contextual readings, revealing those subtle spatial dimensions that usually go unnoticed, as they form part of the habitual background of attention. The encounter thus becomes an intimate engagement, in which a sensitive connection is established between place and subjectivity, between presence and memory. The ultimate aim is to redefine the relationship between subject and place, fostering a heightened awareness of the space one inhabits.

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5. PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Since its launch in March 2022, the audio guide has been used by nearly 20,000 visitors from around the world [3] . Over this period, in addition to its open use by the general public at the Pavilion, several educational workshops have been conducted with undergraduate and master's students in architecture and design. In both cases, different assessment tools were implemented to analyse the approach: short post-visit surveys (integrated into the web app itself) and direct observations from participants.

Likewise, at the end of 2022, the Mies van der Rohe Foundation conducted a survey with a random sample of 77 Pavilion visitors. Participants were asked whether they had used the audio guide (31% responded affirmatively), about their prior knowledge of architecture and of the Pavilion itself, as well as their views of what they had learned and their level of satisfaction with the visit.

The results indicate that the tool was well received: 75% of those who used it reported having greatly enjoyed the process. Moreover, the data show that these visitors spent more time in the Pavilion than those who did not use it.

In terms of demographic profile, the audio guide was used primarily by visitors between 31 and 65 years of age (64% of users). It was used both by visitors with specific knowledge of architecture (47%) and by those without formal training or background in the field (53%). Among all users of the guide, 52% stated that they had no prior knowledge of the Pavilion. These data support the hypothesis that the phenomenological approach facilitates more inclusive access to architectural heritage, as it does not require prior knowledge or specialised mediation.
The pedagogical dimension of the device was also evaluated very positively: 94% of those who used the tool reported having gained new insights during the visit, and the majority (69%) indicated that they had stayed in the building for more than

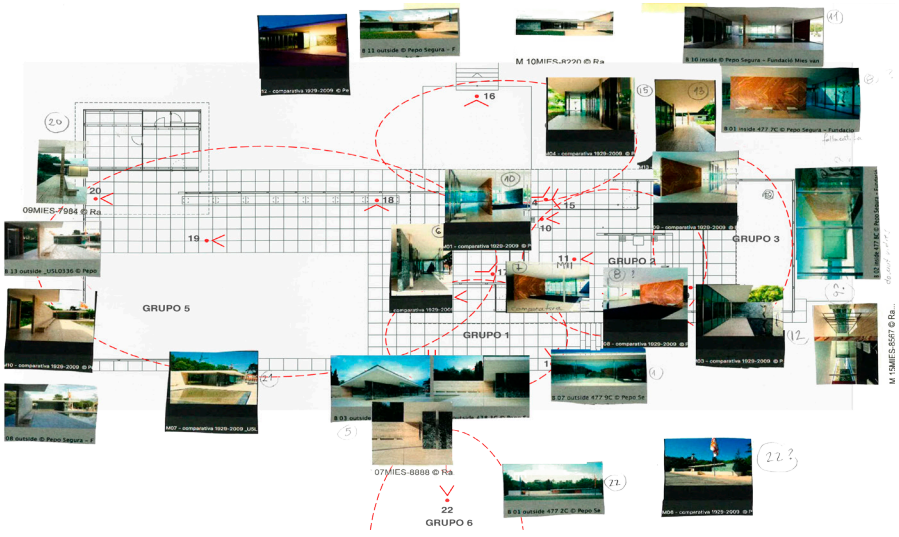

Figure 5: Collage work during the creation of the audio guide script, indicating the different points of interest along the tour. Q.Garriga, Mies van der Rohe Foundation, 2022.

half an hour [3]. This suggests a deeper relation with the space and a more focused and sustained attentiveness throughout the visit.

Among the students who participated in the workshops, a large majority (80%) reported having developed a greater appreciation of the spatial encounter, as well as increased awareness of the architectural phenomena observed. Some spontaneous testimonials shared by visitors on social media also point in this direction, highlighting the key role of the audio guide in shaping their perception of the Pavilion [4].

Although the evidence is still limited [5], and a more extensive and systematic investigation would be needed to accurately assess its impact, the data and testimonials collected allow us to affirm that the proposal has been positively received by the public and has significantly influenced their way of perceiving architecture. Preliminary results strongly suggest that conscious attention profoundly enriches the direct engagement with the environment. We would like to think that, after their visit, these visitors feel a little closer to architecture —not because they have understood it in a theoretical sense, but because they have perceived it in a more attentive and embodied way.

Despite its positive reception, the implementation of the guide also revealed certain limitations in the evaluation tools used, which will need to be reconsidered. In particular, it became clear that better alignment is needed between these tools and the phenomenological methodology applied, so they can better capture the subjective and sensory dimensions of the encounter. To this end, a qualitative section could be incorporated, in which visitors are invited to describe how they physically experienced the space, what sensations

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they felt, or how their relationship with the place evolved throughout the visit.

In addition, in keeping with the inclusive and accessible spirit of the initiative, it would be desirable to develop a version of the device adapted for blind and deaf users, thereby ensuring equitable sensory interaction and access for all audiences.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this article, it has been argued that the interpretation of architectural heritage requires a profound transformation: a shift from models focused on the transmission of information and conceptual analysis to approaches grounded in contextual perception and direct experience. The Diffuse Museum proposal responds to this need through an expanded museography that recognises the city as a living archive and architectural works as lived encounters. This methodology restores architecture to its phenomenological condition, promoting a form of knowledge that is not only intellectual or historical, but sensory, embodied, and lived.

The case study of the Barcelona Pavilion has shown that an audio guide can function not merely as an informative channel, but as a powerful pedagogical device —one capable of intensifying the visitor's relationship with the space and transforming their journey through it into a form of active knowledge. The environment ceases to be an object of passive contemplation and becomes an interlocutor, awakening a mode of attention that deepens the bond with the place and fosters a more situated understanding of heritage.

This approach, however, presents certain challenges: it requires time, presence, and an open disposition on the part of the visitor. It also entails a shift in the traditional logics of cultural mediation by proposing a more horizontal, inclusive, and participatory relationship.

Nonetheless, its potential as an educational and cultural tool is significant: it not only broadens access to the built environment, but also contributes to the development of a more conscious and engaged urban sensitivity. This form of attention makes it possible to establish an intimate relationship with architecture —beyond formal admiration or expert knowledge. When applied to other heritage buildings, this approach can awaken new forms of civic insight and, at the same time, extend into the everyday practice of dwelling.

Ultimately, the phenomenological mediation proposed here radically redefines the relationship between subject and place, making direct experience the true driver of knowledge and of heritage appreciation. In this sense, the Diffuse Museum is not merely a methodological alternative, but an invitation to inhabit the city and architecture with a renewed awareness of body, time, and place.

To interpret architecture, then, is not so much to understand it from the "outside" as to surrender to it from "within". It means being physically present, perceiving with all the senses. It means being in space not as a spectator, but as an inhabitant. And it is precisely this sensitive, attentive, and situated way of being-in-the-world that can profoundly transform our relationship with the built environment.

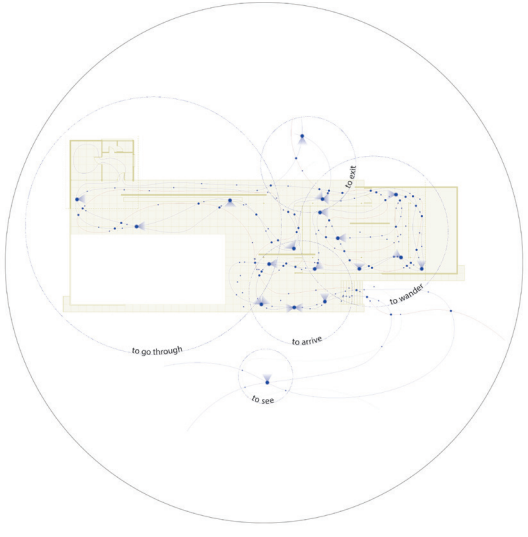

Figure 6: Plan of the pavilion indicating the verb families and the different points of interest on the audio guide throughout the tour. Q.Garriga, 2024 (Dwg: C. Marcos).

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NOTE

[1] Additional precedents that situate heritage interpretation in the lived experience of place include the Museo Diffuso della Resistenza (Turin), F. Careri's Walkscapes and subsequent practices of urban exploration, as well as sensory-based approaches developed within research groups such as CRESSON (ENSA Grenoble), embodied and situated practices explored at The Bartlett (UK), and spatial analysis and mapping research conducted at KU Leuven.

[2] The Barcelona Pavillion Audioguide credits: Queralt Garriga-Gimeno (concept, texts and drawings); MuseumMate (appweb); Mies van der Rohe Foundation, Barcelona, 2022.

[3] 33% English-speaking, 22% Spanish-speaking, 14% German-speaking, 10% Italian-speaking, 9% French-speaking, 4% Catalan-speaking, and 8% in other languages.

[4] Among other comments, the following messages from audio guide users were posted on Google: "fantastic audio guide"; "visiting the space with the audio guide enhances the experience"; "the hour I ended up spending there [with the audio guide] was one of my favourite parts of the week in Barcelona"; "the audio guide greatly contributes to the understanding of this major architectural work"; "great audio guide"; "don't miss the audio guide"; "a unique place, especially with a guided visit"; "surprising, especially if you use the audio guide and live the experience as it is narrated to you"; ...

[5] It is important to take into account factors such as the limited size and diversity of the group studied, the specificity of the Pavilion case, and the difficulty of generalising these results more broadly.

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