

All Artists Are Equal, But Some Are More Visible Than Others
Institutional Logics and Artist Selection in Contemporary Art Museums

Thais Hollanda Maia G Pereira (42796), Jacopo Angeloni (25096)

Abstract: Museums increasingly articulate commitments to gender inclusion, yet significant inequalities in artistic representation persist. Existing research has documented these patterns extensively but offers limited insight into the organisational mechanisms through which they are reproduced. This study examines how professional logic maintains evaluative dominance within museum artist selection processes, and how this dominance shapes the conditions under which gender inclusion becomes institutionally possible. Drawing on the Institutional Logics Perspective, the study is designed as a qualitative single-case study of Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with a substantial proportion of the museum's curatorial team, supplemented by institutional documents and an empirical analysis of collection and exhibition representation across 88,860 digitised artworks and three current collection exhibitions. The findings demonstrate that professional logic does not operate as one institutional logic among others, but functions as a meta-logic structuring the evaluative terms under which market, state, and community demands become institutionally actionable. The study introduces two original concepts. Conditional inclusion describes the process through which diversity-related demands become institutionally actionable only when expressible within the legitimacy criteria of the dominant professional framework, producing forms of inclusion that are real but structurally bounded. Temporal layering describes how historically accumulated collections continue to structure present conditions of visibility and legitimacy independently of the evaluative intentions of current actors. Together, these findings suggest a reformulation of how institutional complexity operates within professional organisations: not as plural logics in tension, but as hierarchically ordered systems of legitimacy in which dominant professional frameworks define the terms of institutional possibility for all competing demands.

Keywords: *institutional logics, professional logic, museum studies, artist selection, gender representation, conditional inclusion, temporal layering, cultural organisations*

Supervisor: Filip Wijkström
Date Examined: May 27th, 2026
Discussants: Leah Gorosch & Charlotta Hallin
Examiners: Johan Berglund & Ricardo Coelho da Silva

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been both an academic and personal journey, and we are incredibly grateful to the many people and organisations who made it possible.

First and foremost, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Firestorm Foundation for supporting this project and for encouraging further research on women in the arts and questions of representation within cultural institutions. Their support made this research possible and reinforced the importance of continuing these conversations within both academia and the art world.

We are especially grateful to all of the interview participants who so generously shared their time, knowledge, experiences, and reflections throughout this process. Their openness, insight, and willingness to engage thoughtfully with the topic were invaluable to this study. It was a privilege to learn from each of them, and this thesis would not have been possible without their contributions.

We would also like to thank the SSE Art Initiative for the encouragement and inspiration to explore the intersection between business and the arts. The initiative played an important role in shaping our interest in cultural institutions and in giving us the confidence to pursue a topic that bridges these fields.

Our sincere thanks also goes to our supervisor, Filip Wijkström, for the guidance, constructive feedback, thoughtful advice, and encouragement throughout this process. His support continuously challenged us to strengthen the thesis and develop our thinking more critically and analytically.

Finally, we would like to thank our friends, partners and family for their constant support, encouragement, and patience throughout this journey.

Thais & Jacopo

Table of Contents:

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Background and Motivation.....	5
1.2. Previous Research and Research Gaps.....	6
1.3. Problem Discussion.....	6
1.4. Purpose and Research Questions.....	7
1.5. Expected Contributions.....	7
1.6. Structure of the Thesis.....	8
2. Literature Review.....	9
2.1. Institutional Fields, Legitimacy, and Organisational Complexity.....	9
2.2. Institutional Logics and the Problem of Competing Value Systems.....	10
2.3. Museum and Gender.....	11
2.4. Synthesis and Research Gap.....	13
2.5. Conceptual Framework.....	14
3. Methodology.....	17
3.1. Research Approach and Design.....	17
3.2. Research Context.....	17
3.3. Data and Sampling.....	18
3.4. Data Collection.....	20
3.5. Data Analysis.....	21
3.6. Quality and Trustworthiness.....	21
4. Findings.....	23
4.1. Dominant Logics in Curatorial Decision-Making.....	23
4.1.1. Professional Logic: Artistic Quality & Expertise.....	23
4.1.2. Market Logic: Audience, Visibility, Reputation.....	24
4.1.3. State Logic: Responsibility, Public Mission.....	25
4.1.4. Community Logic: Diversity & Inclusion.....	26
4.2. Empirical Patterns in Exhibition Representation.....	26
4.3. Tensions and Negotiations Between Logics.....	28
4.3.1. Professional vs Community Logic.....	28
4.3.2. Professional vs State Logic.....	28
4.3.3. Professional vs Market Logic.....	29
4.3.4. Temporal Tensions: Past Collections and Present Commitments.....	29
4.4. Patterns of Gender Inclusion and Exclusion.....	29
5. Discussion.....	31
5.1. Professional Logic as the Dominant Evaluative Framework.....	31
5.2. Negotiating Competing Institutional Demands.....	32
5.2.1. Professional and Market Logic.....	33
5.2.2. Professional and State Logic.....	33
5.2.3. Professional and Community Logic.....	34
5.3. Historical Collections and the Reproduction of Inequality.....	34
5.4. Conditional Nature of Inclusion.....	37
5.5. Concluding Discussion.....	39

6. Conclusion.....	40
6.1. Summary of Findings.....	40
6.2. Theoretical Contributions.....	40
6.3. Limitations and Future Research.....	41
7. Bibliography.....	42
8. Appendices.....	48
8.1. Email Template for Reachouts.....	48
8.2. Interview Overview.....	49
8.3. Interview Guide.....	50
8.4. Coding Framework.....	54
8.5. AI Usage Report.....	57

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Motivation

Women artists are not absent from the art world. Yet within major museums, they remain strikingly underrepresented. This imbalance is well documented. Across collections, exhibitions, and acquisitions, male artists continue to dominate (Topaz et al., 2019; Christensen, 2016), even in contexts where women are equally or more present within the broader population of practicing artists (Christensen, 2016).

At the same time, there are clear signs of change. In recent years, some women artists have gained increased visibility, from record-breaking auction results such as the works of Frida Kahlo, which sold for over \$54.7 million (Benzine, 2025), to major institutional shifts such as the Venice Biennale, which in 2022 presented a majority of female and non-binary artists for the first time in its 127-year history (Alemani, La Biennale di Venezia, 2022). As one of the most influential exhibitions in the global art world, often described as setting the agenda for contemporary art, this shift signals a broader institutional effort to address historical imbalances.

Yet increasing visibility does not necessarily resolve the institutional structures through which artistic recognition is produced. Feminist scholarship has long questioned whether representational change alone is sufficient to transform the conditions that shape artistic legitimacy. In her groundbreaking essay *"Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"* Nochlin (1971) argued that the absence of women from the artistic canon cannot be explained by a lack of talent, but must instead be understood in relation to the institutional conditions that structure artistic production and recognition. This marked a critical turning point in the discourse, shifting attention from individual artists to systemic exclusion. Building on this, Pollock (1988) further criticised attempts to simply add women into existing narratives, arguing that the criteria through which artistic value is defined must themselves be questioned. These critiques were echoed in activist interventions such as those by the Guerrilla Girls, who in the late 1980s famously highlighted that five percent of artists in the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) were women, while 85 percent of nude artworks depicted female bodies (Guerrilla Girls, 2020). When revisited decades later, these figures showed only limited improvement, reinforcing the persistence of structural inequality despite increased awareness (Guerrilla Girls, 2020).

Taken together, these developments point to a central paradox: while women artists have gained increased visibility and institutions have made explicit efforts to address inequality, significant disparities remain in both representation and valuation. This suggests that patterns of representation in art institutions cannot be understood solely as a legacy of historical exclusion, but must also be examined in relation to how artistic value is negotiated within organisational contexts shaped by multiple, and at times competing, institutional logics.

Museums play a central role in this process. Alongside displaying artworks, they actively shape which artists are seen, remembered, and canonised. Inclusion in a museum signals legitimacy, influences market value, and contributes to long-term visibility. In this sense, museums function as powerful gatekeepers, participating in the construction of artistic reputation and the institutional validation of cultural value (Becker, 1982; DiMaggio, 1982). As Becker (1982) argues, what is not selected and distributed through such institutional channels remains largely unseen, and therefore cannot become recognised as significant. Through exhibition-making and artist selection, museums actively construct

narratives of art history and participate in defining what is recognised as culturally relevant (Marontate, 2007; Zamora-Kapoor et al., 2019).

1.2. Previous Research and Research Gaps

A substantial body of research has documented patterns of gender inequality across museum collections, exhibitions, and acquisitions, consistently demonstrating the underrepresentation of women artists and the role of institutions in shaping artistic visibility and canon formation (Cruz, 2014; Christensen, 2016; Topaz et al., 2019).

These studies have been instrumental in establishing the scale and persistence of the problem. However, existing research has predominantly focused on documenting patterns of inequality rather than explaining the processes through which these patterns are produced. As a result, there is limited insight into how curatorial decisions are made in practice; how artists are evaluated, how different criteria are prioritised, and how competing demands are negotiated within the selection process.

This gap is particularly significant given that museums do not operate according to a single set of priorities. Rather, they are embedded within complex institutional environments shaped by multiple and often competing expectations, including professional evaluations of artistic value, pressures related to visibility and audience engagement, public responsibilities linked to cultural policy, and increasing demands for representation and inclusion (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012; d'Harnoncourt et al., 1991; Marontate, 2007). Within such contexts, artist selection cannot be reduced to purely aesthetic judgement, but instead reflects the interaction and prioritisation of multiple forms of value. Despite this, we still know relatively little about how these logics are mobilised, reconciled, or contested in the everyday practice of artist selection.

1.3. Problem Discussion

The coexistence of multiple institutional logics creates inherent tensions within museum practice. Professional judgments of artistic merit may conflict with pressures to attract audiences, secure funding, or enhance institutional visibility. At the same time, increasing expectations around diversity and inclusion introduce additional evaluative criteria that may challenge established norms of artistic value.

Artist selection can therefore be understood as a site where competing institutional logics intersect and are actively negotiated. Decisions about which artists to exhibit are shaped not only by considerations of artistic quality, but also by broader organisational, economic, and political dynamics. Understanding these processes is critical for explaining how patterns of inclusion and exclusion are reproduced within museums.

By focusing on artist selection as an organisational and relational process, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts of inequality to examine how different forms of value are mobilised, balanced, and legitimised within museum decision-making. To examine these dynamics, the study focuses on Moderna Museet as a theoretically relevant case through which tensions between professional, market, state, and community logics can be explored in the context of artist selection and exhibition-making.

1.4. Purpose and Research Questions

The preceding discussion suggests that artist selection is shaped by the coexistence of multiple institutional demands. However, while museums operate under conditions of institutional complexity, less is understood about how these competing demands are prioritised and negotiated in practice, and whether some forms of legitimacy exert greater influence over decision-making than others.

This study examines how professional logic maintains evaluative dominance within museum artist selection processes, and how this dominance shapes the conditions under which gender inclusion becomes institutionally possible. Rather than treating artist selection as shaped by a straightforward balance of competing demands, the study approaches it as a process structured by institutional hierarchies of legitimacy in which diversity-related concerns are selectively incorporated through, rather than alongside, dominant professional frameworks.

The study is guided by the following main research question:

How does professional logic maintain dominance over competing institutional demands in museum artist selection, and how does this produce conditional forms of gender inclusion?

To address this question, three sub-questions are explored:

SQ1: Through what processes, as articulated by practitioners, does professional logic maintain evaluative dominance within museum artist selection processes?

SQ2: How are competing institutional demands, related to public responsibility, market visibility, and diversity, incorporated into, or filtered through, professional evaluative frameworks?

SQ3: What are the implications of this logic hierarchy for the reproduction and limited transformation of gender inequality in museum collection and exhibition practices in this case?

By focusing on artist selection as an organisational and relational process shaped by historically embedded systems of legitimacy, the study moves beyond descriptive accounts of underrepresentation to examine the mechanisms through which institutional priorities are reproduced, selectively modified, and translated into exhibition and collection outcomes.

1.5. Expected Contributions

This study makes three main contributions. First, it contributes to research on museums and cultural institutions by providing a process-oriented account of museum artist selection, examining how selection decisions are negotiated within organisational contexts shaped by multiple and competing demands rather than focusing solely on representational outcomes.

Second, the study extends the Institutional Logics Perspective into the context of contemporary art museums, demonstrating how different institutional logics are mobilised, prioritised, and mediated in practice, and contributing to broader discussions within institutional theory concerning how organisations operate under conditions of institutional complexity.

Third, the study contributes to research on gender representation in cultural institutions by connecting patterns of inequality to organisational decision-making processes, examining how inclusion and exclusion are shaped through ongoing institutional negotiations surrounding artistic value, legitimacy, and representation rather than treating gender imbalance solely as a historical legacy.

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the research background, problem discussion, purpose, and research questions. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature and develops the theoretical framework, focusing on institutional logics and cultural production. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach and research design. Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings. Chapter 5 develops the theoretical discussion. Chapter 6 concludes by summarising contributions, limitations, and future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Institutional Fields, Legitimacy, and Organisational Complexity

Museums do not operate in isolation. Their decisions regarding which artwork to display and prioritise occur within institutional fields: structured environments composed of organisations, actors, and shared systems of expectation that collectively define what constitutes legitimate practice (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Within these fields, organisations are not primarily driven by technical efficiency but by the need to secure legitimacy from the actors and audiences upon whom their authority and resources depend (Scott, 2014). This perspective is foundational for understanding museum behaviour, because it shifts the analytical focus away from internal decision-making as purely rational and toward the external social conditions that make certain decisions appear appropriate, natural, or beyond question.

A central mechanism through which field-level pressures shape organisational behaviour is institutional isomorphism: the tendency for organisations facing similar environments to converge in their practices over time (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2017). Isomorphism operates through three mechanisms (Heugens and Lander, 2009). Coercive pressures arise from dependencies on funding bodies and regulatory frameworks. Mimetic pressures emerge under uncertainty, as organisations imitate those perceived as legitimate or successful. Normative pressures arise through professionalisation, as shared training and disciplinary socialisation produce common evaluative frameworks across organisations. Together, these mechanisms help explain why museums across different national contexts demonstrate strikingly homogeneous curatorial practices and collection patterns, even in the absence of direct coordination.

However, isomorphism explains convergence without adequately explaining internal conflict, variation, or the active processes through which organisations interpret and respond to competing demands. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) address this limitation by conceptualising fields as arenas of ongoing struggle in which differently positioned actors pursue their interests and interpretations of legitimate practice. Crucially, their framework treats organisations not as passive receivers of field-level pressures but as sites where those pressures are actively interpreted, negotiated, and contested by actors with different positions, interests, and resources. This provides a necessary counterpoint to isomorphism's relatively passive view of organisational behaviour, establishing that museums operate within institutional fields characterised by competing expectations and power relations, and that museums themselves function as organisational arenas where these pressures are interpreted and negotiated rather than simply absorbed.

Institutional complexity arises precisely because organisations embedded in such fields face multiple, and often conflicting, sources of legitimate expectation simultaneously. Path dependency further compounds this complexity, since previous institutional decisions establish relatively durable structural trajectories that constrain future possibilities for organisational change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Organisations do not encounter institutional fields as blank slates but as actors already shaped by accumulated prior decisions, whose legacies continue to structure the range of actions that appear possible or legitimate in the present. As the subsequent sections demonstrate, this is particularly consequential for understanding how museums navigate demands for diversity within evaluative structures historically shaped by very different priorities.

2.2. Institutional Logics and the Problem of Competing Value Systems

Actors within an organisation, such as curators in a museum, behave in accordance with inter-institutional systems comprising distinct institutional orders (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). Each order is governed by its own central logic, a set of material practices and symbolic constructions that dictate what constitutes legitimate behaviour, success, and rationality. Rather than assuming a single institutional rationality, this perspective recognises that contemporary organisations operate within environments structured by multiple institutional orders, each providing distinct and sometimes conflicting criteria for what is valuable, legitimate, and rational (Thornton et al., 2012).

This represents an important shift from earlier institutional theory, where DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) isomorphism framework emphasised homogeneity across organisations, the institutional logics perspective foregrounds heterogeneity within them. Rather than viewing organisations as passive recipients of institutional pressures, this perspective recognises that organisational actors interpret, negotiate, and sometimes exploit tensions between competing institutional demands. However, such agency operates within structurally constrained conditions: actors are not the authors of institutional logics but the sites through which these logics are reproduced, negotiated, and occasionally contested. It is at the organisational level, through institutional routines and decision-making processes enacted by embedded actors, that logic dominance is ultimately sustained or disrupted. In curatorial practice, at least four competing logics have been recognised to operate simultaneously in relation to the process of artist selection, and their coexistence generates persistent institutional tension.

A professional logic, rooted in the traditions of art history and curatorial practice, operates on the currency of prestige, peer validation, and artistic autonomy, prioritising the long-term formation of the art historical canon and the principle of art for art's sake (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007; Bourdieu, 1993).

A state logic binds publicly funded institutions to a democratic mandate, demanding broad public accessibility, educational value, cultural preservation, and adherence to principles of diversity, regional representation, and gender equality (Bennett, 1995; Gray, 2015).

A market logic, intensified by New Public Management reforms, foregrounds quantifiable metrics including foot traffic, media visibility, and financial viability achieved through blockbuster exhibitions and private donor appeasement (Alexander, 1996; Lindqvist, 2012).

A community logic, emerging as a critical counterweight to both the gatekeeping of the profession and the transactional nature of the market, views the museum primarily as a civic space and social catalyst, prioritising social inclusion, local relevance, and participatory practices that amplify marginalised voices (Simon, 2012; Sandell, 2002).

These logics provide distinct evaluative frameworks through which artist selection can be assessed and justified, meaning that curatorial decisions are not the product of a single criterion but emerge from the negotiation of competing institutional demands that regularly pull in contradictory directions.

Critically, these logics do not operate symmetrically within a museum's organisational context. Logics are not equally available to all actors and field-level conditions shape which logics carry greater authority in specific settings and moments (Thornton et al., 2012). Even in museums that are

heavily exposed to market pressures the professional logic maintains relatively superior weight, as it carries authority as the historically legitimate basis for cultural evaluation (Alexander, 1996; DiMaggio, 1982). Professional logic in a cultural field therefore generates self-explanatory doxa, taken-for-granted premises that fall outside the space of ordinary argument and do not require explicit justification (Bourdieu, 1990). This means that the most powerful form of logic dominance is not the form that wins arguments but the form that makes certain arguments unnecessary, invisible, or illegible as arguments at all.

Organisational actors with reflexive awareness of this power imbalance may be motivated to challenge the status quo, making critique a potential catalyst for transformation (Seo & Creed, 2002). However, where professional authority is institutionally primary and operates partly through taken-for-granted assumptions, reflexivity does not automatically destabilise dominance. This study proposes that actors may acknowledge the socially constructed nature of evaluative frameworks while simultaneously reproducing professional authority by retaining responsibility for evaluation. That is, by accepting diversity as a legitimate institutional demand while preserving curatorial judgement as the mechanism through which diversity is implemented, the professional logic reasserts itself through the very process ostensibly designed to challenge it.

The relationship between logic dominance and organisational change has also been theorised through hybridisation. Battilana and Lee (2014) argue that organisations facing competing institutional logics may develop hybrid forms that partially incorporate multiple logics into new evaluative structures. Meyer and Rowan (1977) identify a related but distinct mechanism: decoupling, in which organisations formally adopt the language of institutional demands while maintaining substantively different operational practices. Whether actual organisational responses to competing demands take the form of hybridisation, decoupling, or a different mechanism altogether is an empirical question that existing research has not resolved in the museum context, and one that this study directly addresses.

In the context of this study, the demand most directly in tension with professional logic is the expectation of gender inclusion, and it is through this specific tension that the mechanisms described above will be examined empirically.

2.3. Museum and Gender

The institutional dynamics outlined in the previous sections take on particular significance when examined through the lens of gender representation. Gender inequality within art museums is not an isolated empirical problem but a context in which tensions between competing institutional demands, field-level systems of recognition, and professional claims to artistic legitimacy become particularly visible. This section reviews how feminist scholarship has theorised these dynamics, identifies the explanatory limits of existing accounts, and positions the present study in relation to ongoing debates concerning institutional change within cultural organisations.

Feminist institutional critique fundamentally rejects supply-side explanations for the historical underrepresentation of women in the artistic canon. Beginning with Nochlin (1971), scholarship shifted the analytical gaze from the perceived deficits of individual female artists to the institutional conditions through which artistic recognition is produced. This reframing was foundational because it redirected attention away from the characteristics of excluded actors and toward the evaluative structures that actively shaped their exclusion. Pollock (1988, 1999) extended this argument by

demonstrating that additive strategies, whereby women are simply inserted into existing narratives, risk reproducing the evaluative criteria that made their exclusion possible in the first place. The canon, in this account, is therefore understood not as a neutral reflection of artistic merit, but as a historically constructed system of institutional recognition whose evaluative criteria themselves become the object of critical analysis.

These foundational arguments have subsequently been reinforced through empirical scholarship documenting the persistence of gender imbalance across museum contexts. Large-scale studies of museum collections demonstrate that gender disparities remain remarkably consistent across institutional settings. For example, approximately 87 percent of artists represented in major American museum collections are male (Topaz et al., 2019), and studies of European museums report comparable patterns (Christensen, 2016). Similar disparities are also visible within exhibition practices, as male artists account for between 81 and 89 percent of exhibited artists at the Art Institute of Chicago (Cruz, 2014).

Crucially, these patterns persist despite women being well represented within the broader population of practising artists and, in some contexts, forming the majority of professional artist associations (Christensen, 2016). The disconnect between artistic production and institutional recognition therefore cannot be explained through supply-side accounts alone. Instead, it points toward evaluative processes through which artistic significance becomes institutionally established, processes that feminist scholars argue are neither historically neutral nor easily separable from the conditions under which they emerge.

Reilly and Lippard (2018) further develop this argument by demonstrating that curatorial practices explicitly foregrounding underrepresented artists can alter institutional patterns of visibility, but that such interventions remain bounded by broader systems of artistic legitimacy within which they operate. Curatorial activism, in this account, is often most effective when it mobilises existing systems of professional recognition on behalf of underrepresented artists rather than attempting to displace professional evaluation entirely. This qualification is significant because it suggests that relationships between curatorial intention and representational outcomes are mediated by structural conditions extending beyond the control of individual curators or institutions.

This mediation occurs through multiple mechanisms. Kuntz and Vick (2023) demonstrate that female artists remain less likely to achieve representation in major galleries and museum collections even when controlling for qualifications and education, suggesting that disparities cannot be explained through differences in professional standing alone. Institutional recognition therefore functions as a cumulative process whereby prior visibility increases the likelihood of future visibility, producing self-reinforcing dynamics of advantage that disproportionately benefit already recognised actors.

Furthermore, gendered asymmetries operate within museum organisations themselves. Deepwell (2006) identifies patterns in which women are more frequently concentrated within educational and programme-oriented roles, while strategic and canon-shaping curatorial positions remain comparatively male dominated. Similar asymmetries also appear symbolically within museum spaces. The Guerrilla Girls (2020) document that while women remain underrepresented as artists, they are disproportionately represented as subjects of representation, particularly within historical collections. This suggests that gender inequality within museums operates not only through quantitative exclusion but also through qualitatively distinct positioning of women as objects of representation rather than producers of cultural value.

Despite the substantial body of empirical and theoretical work documenting these patterns, existing scholarship has focused primarily on representational outcomes rather than on the organisational processes through which such outcomes are produced. Historical exclusion (Nochlin, 1971), cumulative recognition processes (Becker, 1982), and field-level systems of advantage (Kuntz and Vick, 2023) provide powerful explanations for how inequality emerges and persists. However, they provide comparatively limited insight into how gender-related demands are negotiated within everyday curatorial decision-making, particularly within institutions that have publicly committed themselves to addressing historical imbalance.

2.4. Synthesis and Research Gap

Museum decision-making is neither the product of a single evaluative framework nor the outcome of equally weighted negotiation between competing demands, but is instead structured by hierarchical relationships between institutional logics whose relative authority is shaped by historically embedded systems of legitimacy. Within this structure, professional logic appears to occupy a particularly stable position, sustained through tacit expertise, organisational routine, field-level consensus, and the material legacy of prior institutional decisions. Demands originating in other logics, including demands for gender representation, become institutionally actionable through their relationship to this dominant evaluative framework rather than independently of it.

Despite the analytical coherence of this position, existing literature does not adequately examine how it operates in practice. Three specific gaps are evident.

First, while institutional logics scholarship has developed sophisticated accounts of how organisations manage logic plurality through hybridisation (Battilana and Lee, 2014), decoupling (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), or structural separation (Kraatz and Block, 2008), these accounts typically assume that competing logics operate as relatively equal influences whose tensions must be actively reconciled. Less attention has been given to organisational settings in which one logic functions as a dominant ordering framework that structures the terms on which other logics can make legitimate claims.

Second, feminist museum scholarship has produced extensive empirical documentation of gender imbalance and powerful structural explanations for its historical formation, but has paid comparatively less attention to the organisational decision-making processes through which contemporary institutions negotiate inclusion within existing evaluative frameworks. Where curatorial practice has been examined directly, the focus has often been on activist or interventionist curatorial work (Reilly and Lippard, 2018), rather than on routine institutional decision-making.

Third, existing literature has tended to treat the historical and the contemporary as analytically separable, examining either the historical formation of canonical exclusion or the present-day patterns of representation that result from it. Less attention has been given to how the material legacy of prior institutional decisions, embedded in collections, canonical hierarchies, and field-level recognition structures, continues to operate as a structural condition within present curatorial practice. This matters because it suggests that institutional change in representation cannot be understood solely through the analysis of current curatorial intention, but requires examination of how present decisions interact with accumulated institutional history.

Taken together, these gaps point toward a specific research opportunity. What is required is a process-oriented account of how museums negotiate competing institutional demands within

hierarchically ordered systems of legitimacy, with particular attention to how demands for gender representation are interpreted, prioritised, or filtered through dominant professional frameworks shaped by accumulated institutional decisions. Such an account would extend institutional logics scholarship in management studies by examining logic dominance rather than logic plurality, and contribute to feminist institutional critique by analysing the organisational mechanisms through which conditional inclusion is produced, connecting these literatures by demonstrating how patterns of representation are shaped by the interaction of present decision-making and accumulated institutional history.

The present study addresses this opportunity through an in-depth case study of curatorial decision-making at Moderna, a publicly funded contemporary art museum operating within the Swedish arm's-length governance model and with a documented institutional commitment to addressing historical gender imbalance. The case is theoretically generative because it presents conditions under which all four institutional logics identified in Section 2.2 are actively present, in which professional autonomy is formally protected by governance design, and in which institutional efforts toward gender inclusion have been pursued explicitly and over time. If professional logic maintains evaluative dominance within these conditions, and if gender inclusion takes conditional rather than transformative forms even within an institution actively committed to addressing imbalance, the findings carry implications that extend beyond the specific case to the broader conditions under which professional cultural organisations engage with demands for representational change.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

Building on the literature reviewed in the previous sections, the framework identifies four institutional logics as analytically relevant within contemporary museum practice. Professional logic centres on artistic merit as evaluated through curatorial expertise, peer recognition, and disciplinary judgement, and operates as the primary framework through which artistic significance is institutionally established. Market logic orients decision-making toward audience engagement, visibility, and financial sustainability, becoming particularly salient under conditions of resource scarcity or competitive pressure. State logic reflects public accountability, regulatory expectations, and the obligations attached to public funding, shaping museum behaviour through both formal mandates and broader expectations of cultural stewardship. Community logic encompasses demands for representation, inclusion, and responsiveness to constituencies historically marginalised within institutional space, including but not limited to gender representation.

The framework does not treat these logics as equally weighted influences whose tensions are continuously renegotiated. Drawing on the literature reviewed in Section 2.2, the framework approaches professional logic as likely to function as a dominant ordering framework within cultural organisations, sustained through tacit expertise, organisational routine, and field-level consensus. However, the specific mechanisms and conditions of this dominance are treated as empirical questions to be examined in the analysis rather than as established premises. Demands originating in other logics are understood to become institutionally actionable primarily through their relationship to professional evaluation, though how this relationship operates in practice is what the empirical analysis seeks to demonstrate. This produces a hierarchical rather than pluralistic model of logic interaction, in which subordinate logics shape decision-making at the margins of professional judgement rather than displacing it.

This structure is represented visually in Figure 2.1:

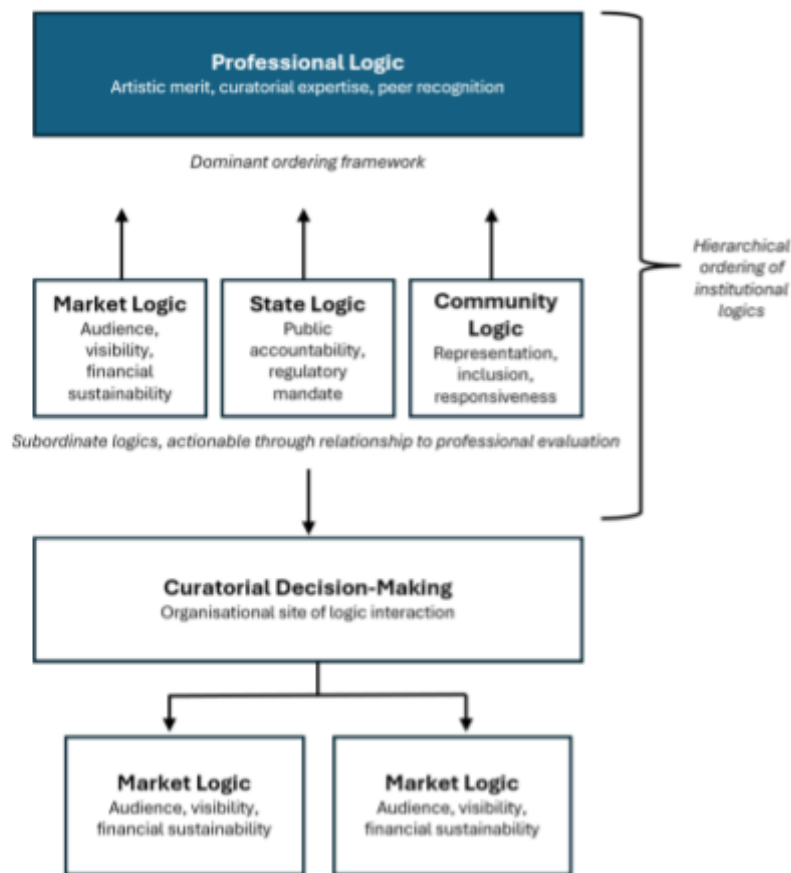


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for analysing curatorial decision-making under competing institutional logics

The framework directs analytical attention toward two specific organisational mechanisms through which this hierarchical structure shapes gender representation in practice. Conditional inclusion refers to forms of representational change that occur within the existing terms of professional evaluation rather than transforming those terms, with inclusion becoming possible when underrepresented artists can be made institutionally legible through dominant frameworks of artistic significance. Temporal layering refers to the persistence of historically embedded institutional decisions, particularly within permanent collections and canonical hierarchies, as structural conditions that constrain the scope of present curatorial change even where institutional commitment to change is explicit.

These concepts function as analytical sensitising devices rather than predetermined findings. Their role within the framework is to direct attention toward specific organisational mechanisms in the empirical analysis while their fuller theoretical development is reserved for the Discussion chapter, where they are elaborated in dialogue with the empirical findings.

The framework operates at the level of curatorial decision-making, which is treated as the organisational process through which competing institutional demands are interpreted, prioritised, and translated into representational outcomes. The empirical analysis examines how this process unfolds within the specific organisational context of Moderna, with attention both to how curators describe their evaluative reasoning and to how institutional structures shape the conditions under which such reasoning is exercised. The findings are interpreted through the framework outlined here, with the aim of contributing to institutional logics scholarship through the analysis of logic hierarchy, to feminist museum scholarship through the analysis of conditional inclusion, and to the connection between these literatures through the analysis of temporal layering.

Operationalising this framework requires a methodological approach capable of accessing how curators interpret and apply evaluative criteria in practice, how organisational structures shape these interpretations, and how the material legacy of prior decisions becomes visible in present representational outcomes. The following chapter develops such an approach through a qualitative single-case study of curatorial decision-making at Moderna.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach and Design

The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design, appropriate for research focused on how curatorial decisions are understood, justified, and negotiated in practice rather than on measuring outcomes or testing predefined hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis is guided by the Institutional Logics Perspective, which provides a framework for examining how competing institutional demands are interpreted, prioritised, and selectively incorporated within organisational decision-making processes (Thornton et al., 2012). In line with the study's analytical focus, particular attention is given to how professional evaluations of artistic legitimacy structure the incorporation of broader demands related to diversity, public accountability, and market relevance within museum practice.

An abductive approach is employed, allowing iterative movement between theory and empirical material (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Existing theoretical concepts inform the analysis while remaining open to patterns emerging from the data. This enables the study to examine how institutional logics are enacted, negotiated, and reproduced in practice rather than assuming their influence in advance.

The study is designed as a qualitative single-case study centred on Moderna (Yin, 2018). This enables an in-depth examination of how competing institutional demands are navigated within a specific organisational context. Rather than aiming for statistical generalisation, the study seeks to generate analytical insight into how institutional logics operate within contemporary museum practice.

The unit of analysis is the museum as an organisational actor. While data is collected through interviews with individual curators, these accounts are analysed as expressions of institutional processes, evaluative frameworks, and decision-making practices rather than as individual opinions. Interviews with curators and art professionals outside the museum are used as contextualising perspectives that situate the case within the broader contemporary art field, rather than as independent comparative cases.

3.2. Research Context

Rather than being selected on the basis of geographical convenience or accessibility alone, Moderna was chosen because it represents a theoretically critical instance of the phenomenon under investigation, one where, if the argument concerning professional logic's dominance holds, it is likely to hold across a wider range of comparable institutional settings.

Three specific features make Moderna theoretically generative for this study.

First, it operates under conditions of maximum institutional complexity. Unlike privately funded museums, where donor or market logics may structurally dominate, or community-based institutions, where social mission may take precedence over professional norms, Moderna operates simultaneously within a strong public governance framework, a rigorous professional curatorial tradition, an internationally competitive art world environment, and an explicit national equality policy context. This configuration means that none of the four logics identified in this study, professional, state,

market, and community, can be structurally absent. If professional logic maintains dominance even here, where all four competing logics are institutionally present and active, this finding carries significant implications for how professional authority operates in cultural organisations more broadly.

Second, the Swedish arm's-length governance model creates a theoretically distinctive institutional configuration. The Swedish Museums Act (SFS2017:563) formally separates political authority from artistic judgement while simultaneously embedding museums within a public accountability framework. This distinguishes the Swedish case from the American model, in which private funding creates direct donor influence over acquisitions, and from more interventionist state models in which cultural policy is directed more explicitly toward artistic content (Alexander, 1996). This governance structure makes Moderna a particularly useful case for examining whether arm's-length distance produces genuine professional autonomy or whether state logic infiltrates professional practice through indirect mechanisms, a question directly relevant to SQ2.

Third, Moderna's documented trajectory regarding gender representation makes it a theoretically relevant case. The institution has not only publicly acknowledged historical gender imbalance within its collection, but has also repeatedly attempted to address it through targeted acquisition initiatives. A particularly significant example is The Second Museum of Our Wishes in 2009 (Nilsson, 2010), which explicitly responded to the historical exclusion embedded within The Museum of Our Wishes (1963–64), where only three out of 176 exhibited works were by women artists and all acquired works were by male artists. More recently, the 2021 government acquisition initiative further positioned the museum as an institution actively attempting to reshape representation within existing professional and organisational frameworks (Moderna Museet, 2021). This makes the case particularly valuable for examining not only how inequality is historically reproduced within museums, but also how institutional efforts toward inclusion are negotiated within broader systems of artistic legitimacy, resource constraints, and curatorial evaluation. Consequently, the case makes visible both the conditions under which institutional change becomes possible and the constraints that continue to shape its scope, which is central to addressing SQ3.

The methodological implications of selecting Moderna as a single case study, including issues of access and sampling, are discussed in the following section.

3.3. Data and Sampling

This study employs purposive sampling, selecting participants based on their direct involvement in curatorial decision-making processes (Patton, 2002; Bell et al., 2019). The focus is on individuals who contribute to artist selection and exhibition development within the museum, as these roles provide direct insight into how institutional logics are enacted in practice. In line with qualitative research principles, the aim was not statistical representation but the inclusion of information-rich cases capable of providing detailed insight into the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002).

Access to curators in major art institutions shaped the final research design. Curators constitute a highly specialised and time-constrained professional group, and prior research highlights the difficulty of securing interviews with elite participants in organisational and cultural settings (Mikecz, 2012). In addition, curatorial departments are typically small and centralised, concentrating decision-making authority among a limited number of actors. While this places practical limits on sample size, it also increases the analytical value of each interview.

The study was initially designed as a comparative project involving museums across different European institutional contexts. However, access constraints significantly shaped the final research design. While initial contact was established with curators in several Scandinavian and Southern European institutions, practical limitations including language barriers, restricted availability, and the difficulty of securing sustained access to elite cultural professionals limited the feasibility of conducting in-depth comparative interviews. The research design was therefore refocused around Moderna as the primary case institution. Access to Moderna was facilitated through geographical proximity, institutional networks including the SSE Art Initiative, and subsequent snowball recruitment through professional referrals (Patton, 2002; Naderifar et al., 2017). In addition, attendance at public events created opportunities for informal contact that further supported participant recruitment.

The final sample consists of 10 semi-structured interviews, including a substantial proportion of the curatorial team at Moderna, representing approximately 70 percent of curators within the institution. Importantly, the sample includes curators directly responsible for the museum's current collection exhibitions, as well as senior curatorial leadership, including the chief curator. This provides access not only to general perspectives, but to those directly involved in the selection and presentation of the exhibitions analysed in this study. Given the small size and centralised structure of curatorial departments, this level of coverage offers in-depth access to organisational decision-making processes consistent with qualitative case study research (Yin, 2018). Rather than aiming for full representation, the sampling strategy prioritises access to information-rich and decision-relevant actors within the institution (Patton, 2002). This strengthens the alignment between empirical material and the research focus, as interview data is directly connected to the decision-making processes underlying the exhibitions analysed.

To complement this core case, additional interviews were conducted with curators and art professionals from other Scandinavian institutions, an independent curator and art historian, and a representative from the Swedish Ministry of Culture. These participants were selected to provide broader insight into field dynamics and professional norms shaping curatorial practice, supporting the interpretation of field-level dynamics rather than serving as independent comparative cases. In this sense, the supplementary interviews function as embedded field-level perspectives that contextualise institutional findings within broader professional norms and dynamics, consistent with Yin's (2018) argument that embedded analytical perspectives can strengthen and enrich single-case analysis.

Data collection proceeded until a point of thematic saturation was reached, where additional interviews did not generate substantially new themes relevant to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Saunders et al., 2018). Given the relatively small and specialised nature of curatorial teams, as well as the high level of overlap in participants' accounts, recurring patterns in how institutional logics were articulated and negotiated became evident across interviews. Specifically, no substantively new patterns concerning artistic legitimacy, diversity, or institutional negotiation emerged during the final interviews. While qualitative saturation does not imply completeness, it indicates that the data collected was sufficient to capture the key dimensions of the phenomenon under study within this specific context. In this sense, the sample provides depth rather than breadth, aligning with the study's focus on process-oriented and interpretive analysis.

3.4. Data Collection

Data was collected primarily through semi structured interviews with curators and independent experts. This method provides access to how curatorial decisions are articulated and justified in practice, offering insight into organisational processes that are not directly observable (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

An interview guide was developed based on the conceptual framework, focusing on artist selection, definitions of value, and the navigation of competing institutional demands. The semi structured format ensured consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes and follow relevant lines of inquiry (Kallio et al., 2016). Data collection was iterative, with insights from earlier interviews informing subsequent conversations.

Interviews were conducted in person and via Microsoft Teams depending on participant availability, and lasted between one and three hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using AI assisted tools, followed by manual verification to ensure accuracy (McMullin, 2021). Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymisation, and secure data handling (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

In addition to interviews, the study draws on institutional material from Moderna, including exhibition texts, acquisition publications, and statements from museum leadership. These sources provide insight into institutional priorities, formal processes, and patterns of representation not fully accessible through interviews alone, particularly regarding perspectives from senior leadership not directly interviewed (Bowen, 2009).

The study also includes a descriptive analysis of the museum's collection, recent acquisitions, and three current collection exhibitions (April 2026). Collection and acquisition data were obtained from publicly available records, including the museum's digital catalogue and acquisition documentation (Moderna Museet, n.d.), comprising 88,860 digitised artworks and 615 recent acquisitions. Gender classification is based on artist identification in the museum's records and is treated as indicative rather than definitive.

The exhibition analysis focuses on *Yet Another Morning*, *Drawing in the Collection*, *The Art of Collecting*, *Expanding the Collection*, and *The Subterranean Sky*. *Surrealism in the Collection*, selected to reflect different forms of engagement with the collection. For each exhibition, data was compiled on artworks and artists by gender and, where relevant, by time period (Moderna Museet, n.d.).

Together, these materials enable comparison between how diversity and representation are articulated institutionally and how they are reflected in exhibition outcomes.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which enables the identification and interpretation of patterns across qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis is guided by the Institutional Logics Perspective, focusing on how different logics are invoked, prioritised, and combined in curatorial decision-making.

An abductive approach is employed, combining theoretically informed and data-driven analysis (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). Institutional logics provide an initial analytical lens, particularly the distinction between professional, market, state, and community logics. At the same time, the analysis remains open to themes emerging from the data, allowing identification of dynamics that are not fully captured by existing theoretical categories.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, all transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the material and to identify initial patterns related to decision-making, evaluation, and justification. Second, the data was coded by assigning labels to segments of text that captured how participants described artist selection and how different criteria were prioritised. Third, codes were grouped into broader themes that reflect recurring patterns across the dataset.

Particular attention was given to identifying how institutional logics are mobilised in practice and how tensions between them are expressed and managed. This includes examining how decisions are justified, how different criteria are prioritised, and how competing demands are reconciled within the organisation.

The final stage involved synthesising themes into an analytical narrative examining how professional logic maintained evaluative dominance within artist selection processes, how competing institutional demands were selectively incorporated through professional frameworks, and how these dynamics shaped conditional forms of gender inclusion and exclusion within museum practice.

3.6. Quality and Trustworthiness

The quality of the study is assessed using criteria of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), alongside reflexivity.

Credibility is supported through in-depth interviews with participants directly involved in curatorial decision-making, providing access to organisational processes rather than general opinions. The inclusion of multiple data sources, combining interviews with institutional material from Moderna, further strengthens the robustness of the findings by enabling comparison between articulated practices and formal institutional frameworks.

Transferability is addressed through detailed description of the research context, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other settings. While the study focuses on a single case, the aim is analytical generalisation, generating insight into how institutional logics operate in similar organisational contexts (Yin, 2018).

Dependability is ensured through transparency in methodological choices and a clearly structured analytical process. The use of an abductive approach, combined with systematic coding and theme development, provides a consistent and traceable analytical procedure.

Confirmability is supported by grounding interpretations in empirical data and maintaining a close connection between data, coding, and analysis. Throughout the study, interpretations are derived from recurring patterns across interviews and supported by documentary material.

Reflexivity is maintained through ongoing critical reflection on how the researcher's assumptions may shape interpretation. Particular attention has been given to avoiding the imposition of predefined

expectations, especially in relation to gender and diversity, ensuring that findings remain grounded in the empirical material.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study. Section 4.1 examines how four institutional logics, professional, market, state, and community, operate within curatorial decision-making at Moderna, drawing primarily on interview material. Section 4.2 complements this analysis with quantitative patterns of gender representation across the museum's collection, recent acquisitions, and three current collection exhibitions. Section 4.3 examines how tensions between competing logics are negotiated within curatorial practice, including the temporal tensions generated by the museum's historically accumulated collection. Section 4.4 draws these strands together to identify the key empirical patterns of gender inclusion and exclusion that require theoretical explanation in Chapter 5.

4.1. Dominant Logics in Curatorial Decision-Making

This section examines how different institutional logics operate within curatorial decision-making at Moderna, focusing on how curators articulate the criteria through which artists are evaluated and selected. While the study focuses primarily on Moderna, external interviewees (R1, R2, R8) provide field-level context for how curatorial practices and understandings of legitimacy operate within the broader contemporary art sector. Their accounts are used to contextualise rather than evaluate Moderna's practices.

4.1.1. Professional Logic: Artistic Quality & Expertise

Across interviews with Moderna curators (R3-R7; R10), artist selection is consistently framed in relation to artistic quality, expertise, and art historical significance. Curators describe selection as grounded in interpretive judgement, often beginning with an intuitive response or *"gut feeling"* (R5; R6). At the same time, this intuition is reflexively understood as shaped by perspective. As one curator explains, *"there is no truth in one work of art"* (R3), emphasising that evaluation depends on how artworks are seen and interpreted.

This subjectivity is not described as arbitrary. Curators emphasise that judgement is shaped by training, exposure, and accumulated experience, noting that *"you are trained to see in a certain way"* (R6). Similarly, another participant described artistic quality as the institution's *"leading star"* while simultaneously acknowledging that *"quality is biased"* (R5), pointing to the historically constructed nature of evaluative frameworks. Professional logic therefore operates through tacit knowledge, where criteria are internalised rather than explicitly codified. This dynamic is further illustrated by a curator who acknowledged that *"there is no objective way"* to determine artistic value and that *"certain people would do it this way, others would do it differently"* (R10). Rather than undermining professional authority, this subjectivity was immediately reframed through expertise, with staff selected through *"thorough experience and scholarly work in their fields"* (R10) and trusted with evaluative responsibility on that basis. The acknowledgement of arbitrariness and the reassertion of legitimacy occur within the same account.

This emphasis is reinforced by external interviewees. As one curator outside Moderna notes, *"first and foremost, we are interested in artistic quality"* (R1), echoing the centrality of this principle across the field. Within Moderna, curators stress that artistic value cannot be reduced to external criteria such as representation alone, and that evaluation must remain grounded in the work itself (R3; R5).

Beyond evaluation, professional logic also encompasses the active production of meaning. Curators describe their role as constructing relationships between works, contexts, and audiences, with exhibitions understood as narrative structures in which they *"create connections"* (R4). External interviewees articulate a similar understanding, describing artworks as *"sources of knowledge"* that require interpretation (R2).

Professional logic is stabilised through shared conventions and formal organisational structures. According to Moderna's acquisition procedures, acquisition decisions are discussed jointly by the collection curators together with the directors of the Stockholm and Malmö locations, based on the institution's acquisition policy (Ørskou, 2021). Acquisition proposals may originate from curators, museum leadership, other museum staff, or external actors, but all proposals are discussed in acquisition meetings before decisions are made. Interview accounts reinforce how these structures operate in practice. Curators highlight the importance of collaborative evaluation, describing how decisions are discussed, refined, and aligned within the institution. As one participant notes, *"we are individuals, but we work closely together"* (R4), while others refer to processes of agreement and shared evaluation (R5; R7), including more formalised councils and group-based discussions (R7). External interviewees refer to a broader *"consensus culture"* within the museum sector (R2).

Professional logic is further reinforced through art historical positioning. Curators highlight the importance of selecting artists whose work is understood in relation to existing artistic trajectories. However, this reliance on established frameworks also introduces constraints. Certain canonical artists are described as almost unavoidable within specific exhibition contexts, as they are *"expected"* (R6). Curators describe their work as contributing to long-term processes of cultural recognition, with one participant noting that museums are *"places of record"* (R4).

Professional judgement was also described as institutionally structured while remaining open to interpretation. One participant acknowledged that *"certain people would do it this way, others would do it differently"*, while emphasising that legitimacy derives from selecting individuals with *"thorough experience and scholarly work in their fields"* (R10).

4.1.2. Market Logic: Audience, Visibility, Reputation

Considerations related to audience engagement, visibility, and institutional positioning shape how exhibitions are developed and communicated at Moderna, though these considerations are consistently framed as secondary to professional evaluations of artistic value.

Curators describe an awareness that exhibitions must engage visitors and remain publicly relevant. As one curator explains, exhibitions need to resonate beyond specialist audiences, requiring attention to how works are presented and contextualised (R7). Another participant notes that curatorial decisions are shaped by how audiences might encounter and interpret exhibitions, even if this does not directly determine which artists are selected (R5). Audience considerations therefore operate primarily at the level of mediation and communication rather than as explicit selection criteria.

Curators also recognise that they operate within a broader art world structured by visibility, reputation, and circulation. As one participant notes, curatorial work is inevitably shaped by *"the context we are in now"* (R6). Another describes how certain artists become more present within curatorial awareness due to repeated exposure across exhibitions and institutions (R3). However, across interviews there is a consistent effort to maintain distance from market-driven definitions of value. Curators explicitly

differentiate between artistic significance and external indicators such as popularity, price, or trend dynamics (R3; R4). External perspectives reinforce this pattern. As one curator outside the institution explains, *"it's impossible not to be affected by the world around you"* (R1), while another notes that institutions can become *"very trend-sensitive, just as other businesses"* (R2).

Market logic also operates through material and financial constraints. Curators consistently emphasise that acquisition decisions are limited by available resources, noting that *"we have limits in what we can acquire, and that affects what we acquire"* (R5). However, the process is structured such that evaluation precedes funding. When a work is considered important, curators describe actively seeking external support, indicating that the institution first defines what it wants to acquire and only subsequently mobilises financial resources (R5). Financial constraints also shape the institution's practical ability to address historical gaps in representation. As one curator outside Moderna observes, *"women artists are becoming very expensive now"* (R1), reflecting a perceived increase in the visibility and market value of previously overlooked artists.

Participants also emphasise that external funding does not come with direct influence over acquisition decisions. Donors support pre-identified works rather than determining what should be acquired, though one curator notes that works requiring significant effort and resources to acquire may receive increased exhibition attention, as *"more people are willing to show it because of the kind of time and effort it took"* (R5).

4.1.3. State Logic: Responsibility, Public Mission

State logic is less explicitly articulated in curatorial interviews than professional or market logics, yet it shapes the foundational conditions within which decision-making at Moderna occurs. Rather than operating through direct intervention in artistic selection, it functions as a structuring framework that defines the museum's public responsibilities, and institutional mandate.

This dynamic is particularly visible in the interview with the Ministry of Culture (R9), which emphasises that Swedish cultural policy operates through overarching objectives and governance structures rather than through substantive influence over artistic content. As described by the Ministry, the government defines broad cultural priorities and allocates funding, but assessments of artistic quality *"should be made by and within the cultural sector"* (R9). This reflects the Swedish principle of arm's-length distance between politics and culture, formalised in the Museums Act (Swedish Parliament, 2017), which establishes that museums should exercise decisive influence over their own operations. State museums are governed through agency instructions and annual appropriation directions, which define organisational objectives and financial frameworks rather than prescribing what art should be selected (R9).

Within the institution, Moderna is consistently positioned not only as a site of artistic evaluation, but as a public institution responsible for contributing to a shared cultural record (R3-R7; R10). Director Gitte Ørskou emphasises that artworks entering the collection are held *"forever"* on behalf of the public and cannot be sold (Ørskou, 2025). Similarly, in *Swedish Acquisitions 2021*, Ørskou describes the museum as responsible for building *"its version of a Swedish contemporary art history"* (Ørskou, 2021).

State influence becomes most visible through resource allocation and strategic initiatives. The 2021 government acquisition initiative, through which Moderna received approximately 25 million SEK to

support artists working in Sweden during the pandemic, illustrates this dynamic (Moderna Museet, 2021). While the funding introduced a broad national focus, the selection of individual artists and works remained under institutional control. As one curator explained, the additional funding did not change *"the foundational principles"* guiding acquisition decisions, but instead expanded the institution's ability to acquire artists who had previously been *"overlooked for different reasons"* (R10). The evaluative framework therefore remained intact while the museum's material capacity to act within it expanded. Curators describe these expectations as largely internalised rather than experienced as external constraints, with funding following curatorial priorities rather than determining them (R5).

4.1.4. Community Logic: Diversity & Inclusion

Community logic emerges as an increasingly present dimension of curatorial decision-making at Moderna, reflecting broader societal expectations that cultural institutions engage with questions of diversity, representation, and inclusion. Across interviews, curators demonstrate clear awareness of contemporary debates surrounding gender inequality and institutional representation.

Curators describe the importance of representation within the collection, the narratives constructed through exhibitions, and the relationship between the museum and its audiences. Several participants emphasise the importance of visitors being able to recognise themselves within the stories presented by the institution and of ensuring that the museum remains publicly relevant and socially responsive (R5; R7). Community-oriented concerns are not experienced by curators as purely external pressures. Rather, they appear largely internalised within institutional discourse and organisational practice. Curators repeatedly demonstrated awareness of broader societal expectations surrounding representation, while also identifying limits around how such concerns become institutionally actionable. One participant explained that diversity considerations are *"looked at in later phases after the artworks have been selected based on artistic value and topic"* (R5).

Rather than operating through formal quotas or explicit representational mandates, community logic appears to function through shifting expectations surrounding institutional legitimacy and public relevance. However, the findings also reveal clear boundaries around how community logic can be operationalised. Curators consistently emphasise that representation cannot function as a standalone basis for selection, and express discomfort with approaches perceived as overly instrumental or quota-driven (R3; R4; R5). Diversity is therefore recognised as institutionally important, but articulated by curators as inseparable from professional evaluations of artistic significance.

Curators also described concrete strategies for addressing historical gender imbalance within existing evaluative frameworks. One participant explained that the museum sought to acquire *"key works by female artists"* that are *"very frequently on display"* in order to *"change and impact the numerics and statistics of what is on view"* (R10). Representation was therefore approached through works already understood as institutionally significant, suggesting that diversity-related efforts were incorporated into rather than separated from existing professional frameworks of evaluation.

4.2. Empirical Patterns in Exhibition Representation

While the preceding section examined how curators articulate the criteria through which artists are evaluated, this section complements those interview findings with a quantitative analysis of representational outcomes across Moderna's collection, recent acquisitions, and three current

collection exhibitions (April 2026). The temporal breakdown across exhibitions constitutes the most analytically significant finding.

At the level of the overall collection, a significant gender imbalance remains. Of the 88,860 digitised artworks analysed, 69,062 are by male artists and 19,798 by female artists, meaning that approximately 22 percent of the collection consists of works by women. This figure is broadly consistent with documented patterns of gender imbalance within Western museum collections, where studies of major European and North American museums have found female artist representation in permanent collections typically ranging between 11 and 30 percent (Topaz et al., 2019).

More recent acquisition patterns indicate a partial shift. Among 615 newly acquired artworks, approximately 32 percent are by female artists. However, when examined at the level of unique artists, women slightly outnumber men. This suggests that while more female artists are being included, male artists continue to be represented by a greater number of works per artist.

Table 4.1: Gender Representation Across Exhibitions

Exhibition	Artworks (Male)	Artworks (Female)	Artists (Male)	Artists (Female)
<i>Yet Another Morning. Drawing in the Collection</i>	92	48	61	26
<i>The Art of Collecting. Expanding the Collection</i>	49	18	15	20
<i>The Subterranean Sky. Surrealism in the Collection</i>	153	50	68	21

Table 4.2: Share of Female Artists by Period Across Exhibitions (%)

Period	Drawing Exhibition	Acquisition Exhibition	Surrealism Exhibition
Pre 1930	15%	—	11%
1930 to 1969	25%	—	18%
1970 to 1999	37%	—	28%
2000 to Today	50%	56%	67%

The most significant finding emerging from the exhibition data is the systematic relationship between the historical period of the works displayed and the share of female artists represented. Across both exhibitions where temporal breakdown data are available, female artist representation increases consistently and substantially with each successive historical period, rising from 15 percent and 11 percent respectively in works predating 1930, to 50 percent and 67 percent respectively in works produced from 2000 onwards. This pattern is not incidental to the specific exhibitions selected; it reflects a structural feature of the collection itself.

The contrast between the two historically grounded exhibitions is also informative. Across the three earlier historical periods, the Surrealism exhibition shows consistently lower female representation than the Drawing exhibition, with the gap widening over time (11 percent versus 15 percent pre-1930, rising to 28 percent versus 37 percent in 1970–1999). The Surrealism exhibition draws on a specific canonical movement with a particularly male-dominated historical composition, meaning that its thematic scope amplifies the constraining effect of historical collection structures during the periods when that movement was institutionally consolidated. The Drawing exhibition, organised around a medium rather than a movement, draws on a broader range of historical material, producing somewhat higher representation within equivalent time periods. In the 2000-to-present category this pattern reverses, with Surrealism reaching 67 percent female representation compared to 50 percent in the Drawing exhibition, suggesting that contemporary curatorial framing of historically male-dominated movements may involve more deliberate corrective inclusion than thematically broader exhibitions where representation is less explicitly contested.

The Art of Collecting presents a distinct pattern. Female artists outnumber male artists at the level of unique artists (20 female artists versus 15 male artists), but male artists continue to be represented by a significantly greater number of works (49 male artworks versus 18 female artworks). This discrepancy between artist-level and artwork-level representation suggests that the inclusion of female artists in recent acquisitions does not yet translate into equal depth of institutional representation.

4.3. Tensions and Negotiations Between Logics

While the previous sections examined each institutional logic individually, the findings also reveal that these logics interact dynamically within curatorial practice. While the logics described above are individually coherent, their interaction generates points of tension that must be actively managed within the organisation.

4.3.1. Professional vs Community Logic

The tension between professional and community logics is most visible in relation to gender representation. While considerations of diversity are clearly present within Moderna, curators consistently emphasise that artistic value remains the primary basis for selection decisions. Considerations related to representation and inclusion are acknowledged as institutionally important, but are introduced within processes already structured by professional judgement (R4; R5). This produces a pattern in which diversity-related concerns are neither rejected nor treated as independently sufficient, but instead enter curatorial deliberation in relation to existing evaluative frameworks. As a result, institutional commitments to diversity are more visible in some areas of practice than others, particularly within contemporary acquisitions and exhibitions where greater curatorial flexibility exists.

4.3.2. Professional vs State Logic

A second tension emerges between professional autonomy and the museum's role as a publicly funded institution. State logic structures the conditions under which decisions are made rather than directly influencing the selection of specific artists. Government regulations define the museum's mandate to collect, preserve, and make art accessible, while these frameworks are internalised rather than experienced as imposed (R3; R5). The 2021 acquisition initiative illustrates this dynamic: targeted government funding introduced a specific national focus, but the selection of individual works

remained under institutional control, with the museum using the opportunity to address priorities already internally identified.

4.3.3. Professional vs Market Logic

A third tension emerges between professional evaluation and market-related dynamics of visibility, reputation, and financial value. Artists who are repeatedly exhibited or discussed across institutions become more visible within the field (R3; R6), yet selection decisions are consistently framed as grounded in artistic evaluation rather than market validation. Market logic re-enters decision-making through material constraints. Acquisition processes are shaped by financial limitations (R5), but the museum maintains a sequence in which evaluation precedes funding. However, once acquired, works that required substantial financial investment may receive increased institutional attention in exhibition contexts (R5).

4.3.4. Temporal Tensions: Past Collections and Present Commitments

A further tension emerges through the temporal structure of decision-making at Moderna. The museum operates simultaneously with historically accumulated collections shaped by earlier acquisition practices and with present-day expectations surrounding diversity, representation, and social relevance.

Across interviews, curators consistently describe the collection as a structure that both enables and constrains present action. Existing holdings reflect earlier evaluative frameworks and historical patterns of recognition that cannot be retrospectively altered (R5; R6). Consequently, exhibitions drawing heavily on historical material continue to reflect the composition of the collection as it was assembled, including its gender imbalances. The empirical analysis reflects this clearly, with historically grounded exhibitions demonstrating substantially lower representation of women artists than exhibitions centred on contemporary acquisitions.

At the same time, the museum actively seeks to address these imbalances through new acquisitions, exhibition framing, and longer-term collection development strategies. Participants describe institutional change as gradual and cumulative rather than immediate, emphasising that representation evolves over extended periods of acquisition and curatorial practice (R6; R7). Institutional change was also described as unfolding across successive generations of curatorial practice. As one participant noted, *"the people who work here now will not be the people who work here in 20 years"* (R10), reflecting an understanding that future curators will continue to reinterpret and reshape the collection over time.

4.4. Patterns of Gender Inclusion and Exclusion

This section identifies the key empirical regularities that require theoretical explanation in Chapter 5. Curators consistently acknowledge that existing collections reflect earlier acquisition practices and art historical narratives that continue to shape present curatorial possibilities (R5; R6). The empirical analysis confirms this: historically grounded exhibitions demonstrate substantially lower female artist representation than exhibitions centred on recent acquisitions and contemporary works. While curators position artistic quality as the primary basis for selection, participants also acknowledge that evaluative frameworks are historically conditioned. One curator noted that artistic quality remains central while simultaneously recognising that quality itself *"is also biased"* (R5), while others

highlighted how earlier systems of artistic valuation had privileged particular forms of artistic practice over others. Broader field-level dynamics also shape what enters curatorial consideration, as artists who are repeatedly exhibited and institutionally validated become more visible within the field, increasing their likelihood of further recognition (R6).

Curators consistently acknowledge the importance of diversity and gender representation, while also identifying significant practical constraints. Representation alone cannot justify selection, and acquisitions must remain grounded in professionally recognised understandings of artistic significance (R4; R5). Institutional capacity for change is also materially constrained, with acquisition decisions shaped by what the museum can realistically afford within limited budgets (R5). The 2021 acquisition initiative illustrates how expanded resources can materially shift outcomes: the initiative resulted in acquisitions from 100 women artists compared to 60 men, with 113 out of 169 artists entering the collection for the first time (Moderna Museet, 2021). Under ordinary acquisition conditions, this scale of representational shift would not have been achievable. Contemporary acquisitions and recent exhibitions also demonstrate substantially higher female artist representation than historically grounded exhibitions, suggesting that areas of practice less constrained by inherited collections offer greater scope for shifting representational patterns.

5. Discussion

5.1. Professional Logic as the Dominant Evaluative Framework

Professional logic emerged as the dominant source of legitimacy within curatorial decision-making at Moderna. Although the museum operates within institutional environments shaped by demands related to accessibility, diversity, public accountability, and audience engagement, artistic legitimacy remained the primary framework through which these competing expectations became institutionally actionable. Rather than functioning alongside other institutional logics as equally weighted influences, professional logic structured the boundaries of acceptable evaluation and determined how alternative demands could be incorporated into curatorial practice.

This dynamic aligns with Thornton et al. (2012) understanding of institutional logics as systems that shape legitimate forms of behaviour and valuation within organisations. However, the Moderna case complicates more pluralistic understandings of institutional complexity by demonstrating that competing logics do not necessarily operate as equally weighted influences within organisational settings. Where existing literature has tended to model organisations as spaces of logic pluralism, in which multiple logics coexist, create tension, and are negotiated through compromise or hybridisation (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Kraatz and Block, 2008), the Moderna case suggests that pluralism may be more institutionally stable when one logic functions as the primary ordering framework. Rather than balance, institutional complexity within professional organisations may be managed through hierarchy: professional logic does not compete with other logics on equal terms, but sets the terms on which other logics can compete.

The dominance of professional logic was closely connected to the role of expertise within the museum context. Curators consistently described artistic evaluation as grounded in specialised forms of knowledge developed through disciplinary training, curatorial experience, and long-term engagement with art. Judgement was frequently framed as intuitive or interpretive, yet simultaneously legitimised through professional competence and institutional authority. Artistic value therefore operated less through objective or codified criteria than through socially recognised forms of tacit expertise capable of establishing legitimate cultural judgement within the field (Collins, 2001; Thornton et al., 2012).

This has a specific implication for institutional logics theory. Thornton et al. (2012) identify professions as one institutional order among several, distinguished by their claim to specialised knowledge and credentialled authority. However, the Moderna case suggests that within cultural organisations, professional logic does not merely coexist with other logics as one ordering principle among several. It operates as the meta-logic through which the legitimacy of other logics is assessed. Expertise functions not only as a resource for artistic evaluation, but as the institutional mechanism that determines which external demands are recognisable as legitimate in the first place. This extends Thornton et al.'s framework by demonstrating that professional logic can function as a boundary-setting device rather than simply as one competing value system within a pluralistic field.

This finding complicates existing accounts of how institutional logics reproduce themselves under conditions of critique. Seo and Creed (2002) argue that reflexive awareness of institutional contradictions is a precondition for institutional change, as actors who recognise the constructed nature of dominant arrangements are positioned to challenge them. The Moderna case suggests a different dynamic: reflexivity can function as a mechanism of reproduction rather than a catalyst for

transformation. When curators acknowledge bias while simultaneously retaining evaluative authority, reflexive awareness becomes incorporated into the legitimization of professional judgement rather than destabilising it. R5 described representational considerations as entering practice *“only in later phases after the artworks have been selected based on artistic value and topic”*. Diversity is incorporated, but only after professional evaluation has established the candidate set, leaving the hierarchical ordering of logics intact. A similar dynamic appeared in relation to inherited collection structures. One curator explicitly recognised that *“from a post-colonial perspective, this is a white Western exhibition”*, while immediately adding that *“I personally can't change that because I can't change what they bought”* (R4). Personal reflexivity is present and explicit, yet agency is framed as constrained by institutional inheritance. Reflexivity therefore becomes incorporated into the explanation of existing arrangements rather than destabilising them.

Professional logic operated most powerfully through what remained institutionally taken for granted. While participants reflected openly on subjectivity and bias within evaluation, there was considerably less discussion of how dominant standards of artistic legitimacy become established in the first place. This dynamic is consistent with what Bourdieu (1990) terms *doxa*: assumptions so deeply embedded within a field that they fall outside ordinary argument. The most stable form of logic dominance is therefore not the form that wins arguments, but the form that determines which arguments are available to be made. However, the Moderna case allows this concept to be specified within an institutional logic framework. Professional logic maintained dominance not only through explicit normative consensus, as DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) normative isomorphism would predict, but through the production of a taken-for-granted evaluative order that structured which concerns could be raised as legitimate questions in the first place.

Professional authority was further stabilised through organisational routines and field-level consensus structures. Acquisition decisions were discussed collaboratively through formal meetings involving curators and museum leadership, while participants repeatedly described decision-making as consensus-oriented and grounded in shared evaluative understandings. These dynamics reflect processes consistent with normative isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), in which professional socialisation contributes to convergence in organisational practice and evaluative standards. External interviewees' descriptions of a broader consensus culture within the museum sector further suggest that evaluative convergence is reinforced not only organisationally within Moderna, but across the museum field itself.

Professional logic consequently performed an important gatekeeping function. Rather than excluding competing demands outright, professional authority structured the terms through which external concerns could become institutionally legitimate. Diversity, accessibility, and public relevance were not rejected as irrelevant concerns, but became actionable only when translated into professionally recognised forms of artistic significance. This helps explain why museums may simultaneously engage with demands for inclusion and public accountability while continuing to preserve relatively stable evaluative structures rooted in professional and art historical legitimacy.

5.2. Negotiating Competing Institutional Demands

If professional logic functions as the dominant evaluative framework within curatorial decision-making, the question becomes how competing institutional demands are negotiated in relation to it. The negotiation of market, state, and community logics within curatorial practice each illustrates how this hierarchical structure operates in distinct ways. Market logic shapes the conditions

of institutional visibility and feasibility within which professional evaluation occurs; state logic establishes the governance framework that protects professional autonomy while embedding broader public accountability; and community logic generates demands for representation that become institutionally actionable only when expressible in professional evaluative terms. Across all three, the filtering mechanism is translation: external demands must be rendered legible within the dominant evaluative framework before they can shape curatorial outcomes.

5.2.1. Professional and Market Logic

Considerations related to visibility, circulation, reputation, and audience engagement clearly shaped curatorial awareness and institutional positioning, yet they rarely operated as legitimate criteria for artistic selection in themselves. Curators consistently differentiated between artistic significance and external indicators such as popularity, market price, or trend visibility, reinforcing professional evaluation as the dominant source of legitimacy. Curators actively engaged in boundary work (Lamont and Molnár, 2002) intended to preserve this distinction, repeatedly reaffirming the importance of maintaining professional autonomy from short-term trends and external valuation systems.

At the same time, market dynamics shaped the conditions under which curatorial decisions became possible. Visibility within the contemporary art field influenced which artists entered institutional awareness, while financial conditions affected which works could realistically be acquired and exhibited. Market influence therefore operated indirectly rather than overtly, shaping the horizon of institutional visibility and feasibility surrounding curatorial action rather than determining artistic value itself.

This dynamic can be understood through Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) conception of strategic action fields, in which organisations operate within broader systems of mutual observation, recognition, and legitimacy. Within the contemporary art field, institutional visibility accumulates cumulatively: artists repeatedly circulated across museums, galleries, biennales, and critical discourse acquire forms of recognition that increase their likelihood of future institutional inclusion (Bourdieu, 1993). However, the Moderna case also qualifies Fligstein and McAdam's framework in one important respect. Their account of strategic action fields emphasises the contestability of positions within fields, with skilled actors able to challenge incumbents and reshape field hierarchies over time (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). The museum case suggests that where professional logic functions as the dominant evaluative framework, field positions may be considerably more durable than this account implies. Visibility within the art world does not simply accumulate as a resource available for redistribution; it accumulates through systems of professional legitimacy that determine whose visibility counts as institutionally significant. Field-level change is therefore not only a strategic challenge but a legitimacy challenge: new actors must be recognised as artistically significant before their visibility can translate into institutional inclusion.

5.2.2. Professional and State Logic

Moderna operated within institutional structures shaped by public funding, cultural policy objectives, and expectations surrounding accessibility and democratic relevance. Yet state influence primarily structured the organisational conditions within which decisions occurred rather than directly determining artistic outcomes. The Swedish arm's-length governance model functioned as a

mechanism through which public accountability and professional autonomy could coexist simultaneously.

This finding speaks directly to debates within institutional logics literature about the relationship between the state and professional institutional orders (Thornton et al., 2012). Where state logic is typically characterised by redistribution, regulation, and democratic accountability, and professional logic by expertise, peer evaluation, and disciplinary authority, these two orders are often theorised as potentially conflicting. The Swedish arm's-length governance model represents a specific institutional resolution of this tension: the state establishes the conditions of operation, including funding structures, public accountability frameworks, and broad cultural mandates, while professional actors retain authority over substantive content decisions (Vestheim, 1994). Importantly, this is not simply a division of labour. It is an institutionalised hierarchy in which the professional order's evaluative authority is protected by the state order's own design. What appears as professional autonomy from the state is, in part, a product of state logic itself, a finding that complicates straightforward accounts of professional and state logics as inherently competing orders.

The findings further suggest that state expectations were largely internalised within institutional practice rather than experienced as overt political pressure. Curators described accessibility, representation, and public responsibility as part of the museum's own institutional role rather than as obligations externally imposed upon the organisation (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Institutional stability was therefore maintained not through the absence of external demands, but through the ability of professional actors to absorb and reinterpret these demands within existing curatorial frameworks.

5.2.3. Professional and Community Logic

The relationship between professional and community logics reveals the clearest example of selective incorporation. Diversity and inclusion were consistently recognised as legitimate institutional concerns, yet representation did not emerge as an autonomous evaluative principle detached from artistic legitimacy itself. Instead, diversity-related demands became actionable primarily when they could be translated into professionally legitimate forms of artistic value.

This finding has a specific implication for how community logic is theorised within the institutional logics framework. Thornton et al. (2012) characterise the community institutional order as organised around collective identity, solidarity, and boundary maintenance through familial or communal membership. In the museum context, community logic appears as demands for representation, public relevance, and democratic cultural access. The Moderna case suggests that community logic cannot function as an autonomous evaluative system within a professional organisation unless its demands can be expressed in the evaluative language of the dominant logic. The content of community demands, concerning who should be represented, on what basis, and in what proportions, is not determined by community logic alone, but is filtered through the professional logic's definition of artistic legitimacy. Community logic therefore operates less as an independent institutional order within this setting and more as an external pressure that must be translated before it can become institutionally actionable. This translation process is precisely the mechanism through which conditional inclusion is produced, and is developed further in Section 5.4.

5.3. Historical Collections and the Reproduction of Inequality

The Moderna case demonstrates that institutional inequality within museums is also reproduced through historically accumulated systems of valuation, embedded materially within collections themselves. Museums therefore function as sites of ongoing cultural selection shaped by earlier processes of canon formation, artistic recognition, and acquisition priorities that continue to structure contemporary possibilities for visibility and inclusion.

The empirical findings presented in Chapter 4 reflect this dynamic directly. Historically grounded exhibitions demonstrated substantially lower representation of women artists than exhibitions focused on recent acquisitions and contemporary material. Across both exhibitions where temporal breakdown data were available, female artist representation rose consistently and substantially with each successive historical period. It should be noted that the temporal pattern in representation may reflect both historical access barriers and historical evaluative bias within acquisition practice; the present analysis does not fully disentangle these mechanisms, and future research drawing on historical acquisition records would allow greater precision. Curators did not present this unevenness as the result of current exclusionary intention, but as a consequence of inherited collection structures that continue to shape contemporary curatorial possibilities. This helps explain why increasing institutional awareness surrounding diversity does not necessarily translate into immediate transformation in exhibition representation.

These dynamics can be understood through path dependency, in which earlier institutional decisions establish relatively durable trajectories that constrain future possibilities for organisational change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). One curator described how textile-based practices had historically been treated as *"something less, something like craft"* rather than art (R5). Once institutional legitimacy becomes attached to particular artists and movements, these systems of recognition become self-reinforcing through ongoing exhibition, scholarship, and circulation.

However, the Moderna case allows path dependency to be specified more precisely within an institutional logic framework. This thesis introduces the concept of temporal layering to describe a more specific dynamic than path dependency captures alone. Temporal layering is defined here as the process through which historically accumulated institutional decisions, specifically the material outcomes of past evaluative practices embedded in organisational artefacts such as collections, continue to structure present conditions of visibility, legitimacy, and institutional possibility, independently of the evaluative intentions of current organisational actors.

Curators' own accounts tend toward an optimistic reading of this dynamic. R10 described a self-correcting system in which generational succession produces gradual correction over time. The concept of temporal layering helps complicate this account by suggesting that corrective intentions do not automatically transform the material conditions within which those intentions must operate. Each generation inherits the material legacy of the evaluative frameworks that preceded it, and changing what curators intend does not change what the collection makes visible.

Viewed through the lens of temporal layering, the evaluative logics of prior historical periods persist as active structural conditions within the present. Through exhibition selection, canonical reference, scholarship, and field-level recognition, the existing collection continues to determine what is institutionally visible and what remains foreclosed, regardless of how current curators understand or intend their own practice. Past institutional judgements therefore operate as a form of structural constraint on present institutional possibility, even where those judgements are no longer consciously endorsed by current actors.

Temporal layering is related to but distinct from path dependency as theorised in historical institutionalism. Path dependency describes a process in which early institutional choices create self-reinforcing mechanisms, such as increasing returns, sunk costs, and network effects, that make alternative paths progressively more difficult to adopt (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Temporal layering additionally points towards a more specific mechanism: historical collections institutionalise prior evaluative logics materially, continuing to operate through exhibition selection, canonical reference, and interpretive framing in ways that constrain present institutional possibility independently of lock-in effects. Changing the evaluative logic, for example by adopting more inclusive criteria for artistic significance, does not automatically transform what the collection makes visible.

Temporal layering is also distinct from institutional memory approaches (Walsh and Ungson, 1991), which focus on how knowledge and experience are cognitively retained through organisational routines and personnel. Temporal layering is a material rather than cognitive account: it concerns how the artefacts of past evaluative practices structure present conditions independently of what current actors remember, believe, or intend.

The concept adds analytical value to existing institutional logics literature in a specific respect. It identifies material artefacts as a mechanism of logic reproduction that operates independently of ongoing normative consensus or current organisational practice. Existing institutional logics research tends to locate the reproduction of dominant logics in shared schemas, organisational routines, and professional socialisation (Thornton et al., 2012). These are mechanisms that require active participation by current actors. Temporal layering suggests a reproduction mechanism that does not. Historical collections continue to structure conditions of visibility and legitimacy regardless of whether current curators endorse the evaluative logics that produced them. Diversity-related institutional change focused solely on modifying current practices and attitudes will therefore remain structurally limited as long as the material legacy of prior logics continues to operate.

Temporal layering may be particularly useful for understanding organisational settings where institutional practice produces durable material artefacts, such as collections, archives, built environments, and canonical texts, that continue to structure present evaluative conditions. It is particularly relevant where the organisation's current institutional identity is partly constituted by its accumulated material legacy, such that artefacts produced under prior logics cannot simply be set aside without threatening the organisation's current institutional standing. In the museum context, this condition is clearly satisfied: the historical collection is simultaneously a record of past acquisitions, a claim to institutional authority, and a condition of present curatorial possibility.

These dynamics extend beyond the institution itself. Curators repeatedly described how visibility across galleries, biennales, and critical discourse shapes which artists become institutionally legible. Within the museum field, visibility functions cumulatively: artists repeatedly recognised across institutions become increasingly legitimate candidates for future inclusion, reinforcing existing hierarchies of artistic recognition. Institutional change within any single museum is therefore necessarily partial, as the evaluative structures it seeks to modify extend beyond its own boundaries into the field.

This extends existing institutional logics literature by demonstrating how institutional reproduction within cultural organisations operates materially as well as normatively. Dominant evaluative systems

are not reproduced solely through professional beliefs or organisational routines, but through historically accumulated collections that continue to structure present conditions of institutional visibility and legitimacy.

5.4. Conditional Nature of Inclusion

This thesis conceptualises inclusion within contemporary museum practice as a form of conditional inclusion, defined as an organisational process through which diversity-related institutional demands become actionable only insofar as they can be expressed within, and evaluated according to, the legitimacy criteria established by the dominant institutional logic. Under conditional inclusion, the expansion of representation does not require revision of evaluative standards; instead, it requires identification of candidates who satisfy existing standards and who additionally meet diversity-related criteria. Inclusion is not extended on the basis of representational need or democratic accountability alone, but is conditional upon prior recognition within the evaluative framework the dominant logic defines as legitimate. This conceptualisation extends existing institutional logics literature in a specific way. Where Battilana and Lee (2014) and Besharov and Smith (2014) have examined how organisations manage competing logics through hybridisation, creating new organisational forms that partially incorporate multiple logics, conditional inclusion describes a different process. Rather than hybridisation, the Moderna case demonstrates that diversity-related demands are absorbed into the existing professional framework on its own terms, without altering its evaluative criteria. The dominant logic does not change its criteria; it selectively extends their application. This distinction matters theoretically because it implies that the appearance of institutional responsiveness to diversity demands may coexist with the structural preservation of the evaluative hierarchy that produced historical exclusion in the first place.

Conditional inclusion is also distinguishable from decoupling as theorised by Meyer and Rowan (1977). Decoupling describes a process in which organisations adopt the formal structures and symbolic language of institutional demands while maintaining substantively different operational practices, a ceremonial adoption that buffers the technical core from external pressure. At Moderna, diversity demands were not ceremonially adopted and then operationally ignored; they were genuinely incorporated into decision-making processes. The constraint operates within the evaluative logic itself rather than between formal policy and operational practice. Conditional inclusion is also distinguishable from tokenism (Kanter, 1977), which describes numerical outcomes rather than the institutional mechanism that produces them.

Importantly, conditional inclusion does not imply that diversity concerns are treated as insignificant or merely symbolic within the institution. Curators demonstrated substantial awareness of historical gender imbalance and frequently described active efforts to expand representation. However, these efforts consistently remained mediated through professional systems of evaluation that continued to define artistic significance as the primary basis for institutional legitimacy. Representation alone was rarely described as sufficient justification for acquisition or exhibition decisions. Inclusion therefore functioned less as a replacement of professional logic and more as an expansion of the boundaries through which professional legitimacy could be interpreted and enacted.

The empirical exhibition analysis provides direct evidence of conditional inclusion in practice. The Art of Collecting demonstrated that female artists outnumbered male artists at the level of unique artists, while male artists continued to be represented by a significantly greater number of works. This discrepancy between artist-level inclusion and artwork-level depth is consistent with the dynamics

described by conditional inclusion: female artists are incorporated into the collection, but on terms that reflect the structural asymmetry of the evaluative framework they enter. The institutional strategy described by R10 reinforces this reading. By targeting historically significant female artists whose work is likely to be frequently displayed, the museum pursues representational change on terms fully compatible with existing professional evaluative criteria. Inclusion is real but bounded: it proceeds through the dominant logic rather than alongside it.

The findings further demonstrate that institutional change depends not only upon evaluative willingness, but also upon material and structural conditions that shape what forms of inclusion are practically achievable. Financial constraints significantly influenced which works the museum was realistically capable of acquiring, particularly in relation to historically overlooked artists whose market visibility and financial value increased alongside growing institutional recognition. As one external curator observed, increasing visibility of women artists within the contemporary art field may simultaneously improve representation while also increasing market prices, creating new acquisition barriers for publicly funded museums. Processes of inclusion may therefore generate contradictory dynamics in which greater recognition does not necessarily translate into easier institutional correction of historical imbalance.

The 2021 acquisition initiative provides a particularly important illustration of how institutional change becomes possible when multiple conditions align simultaneously. Expanded government funding substantially increased Moderna's ability to acquire works by previously underrepresented artists, creating conditions under which institutional priorities surrounding representation could be pursued more extensively than would normally be possible within ordinary acquisition budgets. R10's account confirms this directly: the initiative did not alter the museum's evaluative structures but expanded the institution's capacity to pursue existing curatorial priorities within established frameworks of professional legitimacy.

This has a direct theoretical implication for how institutional change is understood within logic-dominant organisations. Meaningful change in representation requires the alignment of three conditions simultaneously: institutional willingness to expand representation, field-level visibility of previously underrepresented artists, and substantially expanded material resources. When only one or two of these conditions are present, change remains marginal. Conditional inclusion can therefore be understood not simply as a normative constraint, a matter of institutions not being willing enough to change, but a structural condition shaped by the interaction of evaluative authority, material capacity, and field-level recognition systems. Institutional change in logic-dominant organisations therefore depends not on displacing the dominant logic, but on creating conditions under which the dominant logic's scope of recognition can be expanded.

Conditional inclusion may be particularly relevant in organisational settings characterised by three features. First, a dominant institutional logic with well-established, internalised evaluative criteria treated by professional actors as legitimate and largely non-negotiable. Second, external institutional demands for greater representation that are recognised as legitimate at the normative level but do not carry sufficient coercive force to override professional evaluative authority. Third, a governance structure, such as the arm's-length public funding model described in this case, that formally protects professional autonomy while also establishing broader public accountability expectations. Where these three conditions are present, conditional inclusion is the likely mechanism through which organisations manage the tension between professional authority and diversity demands. Where

coercive pressure is sufficiently strong to mandate representational change independent of professional judgement, as in legally enforced quota systems, different dynamics may apply.

5.5. Concluding Discussion

Taken together, the findings from Moderna advance a specific theoretical argument about how institutional complexity operates within professional organisations. Existing institutional logics literature has tended to characterise organisational complexity as a condition of logic pluralism, in which multiple institutional orders coexist, generate tension, and are negotiated through compromise, hybridisation, or structural separation (Thornton et al., 2012; Battilana and Lee, 2014; Kraatz and Block, 2008). The Moderna case complicates this account in three ways: through the hierarchical ordering of logics rather than their plural coexistence, through the material as well as normative reproduction of dominant frameworks, and through the conditional rather than transformative nature of institutional responsiveness to diversity demands.

The concepts of conditional inclusion and temporal layering are analytically distinct but institutionally connected. Conditional inclusion describes the present mechanism through which diversity-related demands are selectively incorporated within professional evaluative frameworks. Temporal layering is used here to describe the historical mechanism through which prior evaluative decisions continue to structure the conditions within which conditional inclusion operates. Together, they identify why institutional change in representation within professional organisations tends to be simultaneously real and structurally limited: real, because conditional inclusion does allow for genuine expansion of who is recognised as institutionally legitimate; limited, because the evaluative framework within which that recognition is extended, and the material legacy that defines what is institutionally visible, both remain structured by accumulated professional logics whose historical development produced the exclusions that diversity demands now seek to address. Change under these conditions is possible but bounded, and its bounds are set not by the intentions of current actors but by the institutional architecture they have inherited.

These three arguments together suggest a respecification of how institutional complexity should be theorised within professional organisations: not as plural logics in tension, but as hierarchically ordered systems of legitimacy in which dominant professional frameworks define the terms of institutional possibility for all competing demands.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Findings

This study examined how professional logic maintains dominance over competing institutional demands in museum artist selection, and how this dominance produces conditional forms of gender inclusion. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with curators at Moderna and external art professionals, institutional documents, and empirical analysis of collection and exhibition representation, the study found that curatorial decision-making is structured by a hierarchical ordering of institutional logics in which professional evaluative authority defines the terms on which market, state, and community-oriented demands become institutionally actionable. Diversity-related concerns were genuinely incorporated into curatorial practice, but consistently on terms compatible with existing professional frameworks rather than as autonomous evaluative principles. Historically accumulated collection structures were found to reproduce earlier patterns of recognition independently of current curatorial intentions, producing uneven conditions for representational change across different areas of museum practice. The theoretical and empirical implications of these findings are developed in the contributions and limitations sections that follow.

6.2. Theoretical Contributions

This thesis contributes to institutional logics literature by demonstrating that competing logics within cultural organisations may operate through hierarchical rather than pluralistic structures of legitimacy. While institutional logics research has often emphasised the coexistence and negotiation of multiple organisational logics (Thornton et al., 2012; Battilana and Lee, 2014), the findings from Moderna suggest that these logics do not necessarily function as equally weighted evaluative systems within organisational practice. Instead, professional logic operates as a filtering mechanism through which market, state, and community-oriented demands are interpreted, translated, and selectively incorporated into curatorial decision-making. This argument extends beyond internal organisational dynamics: drawing on Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) strategic action fields perspective, the analysis demonstrates how field-level processes of visibility, canon formation, and professional authority reinforce rather than disrupt the hierarchical ordering of logics within individual institutions.

The thesis also contributes to research on museums and cultural production by conceptualising gender inclusion as a process of conditional inclusion. Rather than operating as an autonomous evaluative principle, diversity-related demands become institutionally actionable primarily when compatible with existing systems of professional legitimacy and artistic recognition. Inclusion therefore emerges as negotiated, selective, and structurally constrained rather than linear or fully transformative.

In addition, the thesis introduces temporal layering as a new analytical concept within institutional logics literature, identifying historically accumulated material artefacts as a mechanism of logic reproduction that operates independently of current organisational actors' intentions or beliefs. This extends existing accounts of institutional reproduction, which have focused primarily on normative consensus and professional socialisation (Thornton et al., 2012), by demonstrating that material legacies of prior evaluative frameworks constrain present institutional possibility regardless of whether current actors endorse them. Historical collections function not only as cultural archives but as durable materialisations of the evaluative logics that produced them, continuing to structure conditions of visibility and legitimacy in the present.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focuses on a single case institution within the Swedish arm's-length governance model, which may produce a configuration of professional and state logic that does not transfer directly to museums operating under more interventionist or more market-dependent governance structures. The analysis also centres on curatorial and institutional perspectives rather than audience or artist perspectives, and focuses specifically on gender representation rather than other dimensions of inclusion.

Three directions for future research follow. First, comparative studies across museum systems with different governance structures would test whether conditional inclusion operates similarly under more interventionist or more market-dependent conditions. Second, research examining artist and audience perspectives would extend the institutional analysis developed here. Third, applying the framework to other dimensions of inclusion, including race, class, and geography, would test the generalisability of conditional inclusion as an institutional mechanism.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that museums navigate institutional complexity not by equally balancing competing societal, political, and market demands, but by filtering these demands through dominant systems of professional legitimacy. Professional logic therefore functions as the central organising framework through which curatorial actors define artistic value, preserve institutional authority, and negotiate the boundaries of legitimate inclusion within contemporary museum practice. While contemporary museums increasingly engage with demands surrounding diversity and representation, institutional change remains shaped by historically accumulated collections, field-level systems of recognition, and material constraints that produce uneven and conditional forms of inclusion over time.

7. Bibliography

Aleman, C. (2022, June 9). Biennale Arte 2022 | Statement by Cecilia Alemani. La Biennale Di Venezia. <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2022/statement-cecilia-alemani>

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2007). Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *The Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1265–1281. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159366>

Alexander, Victoria D. (1996) Pictures at an Exhibition: Conflicting Pressures in Museums and the Display of Art. *American Journal of Sociology*, 101 (4). pp. 797-839. ISSN 0002-9602

Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., Casey, M. G., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using Zoom Videoconferencing for Qualitative Data Collection: Perceptions and Experiences of Researchers and Participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596>

Battilana, J., & Lee, M. (2014). Advancing Research on Hybrid Organizing – Insights from the Study of Social Enterprises. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 397-441.

Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2019). *Business Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Bennett, T. (1995). *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge.

Benzine, V. (2025, December 2). Who Are the 10 Most Expensive Women Artists at Auction? | Artnet News. Artnet News. <https://news.artnet.com/market/10-most-expensive-women-artists-2722693>

Besharov, M. L., & Smith, W. K. (2014). Multiple institutional logics in organizations: Explaining their varied nature and implications. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(3), 364–381. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0431>

Bocart, F. Y. R. P., Gertsberg, M., & Pownall, R. A. J. (2021). An empirical analysis of price differences for male and female artists in the global art market. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-020-09403-2>

Borchorst, A., & Siim, B. (2008). Woman-friendly Policies and State feminism: Theorizing Scandinavian Gender Equality. *Feminist Theory*, 9(2), 207–224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700108090411>

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production*. Columbia University Press

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40

Boxenbaum, E., & Jonsson, S. (2017). Isomorphism, diffusion and decoupling: Concept evolution and theoretical challenges. *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446280669.n4>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Cassady, D. (2025, November 19). The Most Expensive Artworks Sold at Auction, From Warhol to Da Vinci. [ARTnews.com](https://www.artnews.com/list/art-news/market/most-expensive-artworks-ever-sold-at-auction-1234736898/andy-warhol-shot-sage-blue-marilyn-1964-195-million-christies-new-york-may-2022/). <https://www.artnews.com/list/art-news/market/most-expensive-artworks-ever-sold-at-auction-1234736898/andy-warhol-shot-sage-blue-marilyn-1964-195-million-christies-new-york-may-2022/>

Christensen, H. D. (2016). A never-ending story: the gendered art museum revisited. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 31(4), 349–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2015.1120682>

Collins, H. M. (2001). Tacit Knowledge, trust and the Q of sapphire. *Social Studies of Science*, 31(1), 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030631201031001004>

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cruz, E. (2014, Summer Issue). Still a man's world: Gender and the Art Institute. *CUSP Magazine*, 28-33.

Deepwell, K. (2019). Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices Since the 1970S. *New Museum Theory and Practice*, 64–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776230.ch2>

d'Harnoncourt, A., DiMaggio, P. J., Perry, M., & Wood, J. N. (1991). The museum and the public. In M. Feldstein (Ed.), *The economics of art museums* (pp. 35–60). University of Chicago Press.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>

DiMaggio, P. (1982). Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: The creation of an organizational base for high culture in America. *Media, Culture & Society*, 4(1), 33–50.

Duelund, P. (2003). The Nordic Cultural Model. In *The Nordic Cultural Model* (pp. 601). Nordisk Kultur Institut.

Edmondson, A. C., & McManus, S. E. (2007). Methodological Fit in Management Field Research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1155–1179. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20159361>

Eikhof, D.R. and Haunschild, A. (2007) 'For art's sake! Artistic and economic logics in creative production', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28(5)

Fligstein, N., & McAdam, D. (2012). A Theory of Fields. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199859948.001.0001>

French, J. (2020). Inclusive Curating in Contemporary Art. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv15d7zjc>

Friedland, R., & Alford, R. R. (1991). Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices, and institutional contradictions. In W. W. Powell & P. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 232–263). University of Chicago Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 22(4), 2–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.1966.11454918>

Gombrich, E.H. (2023) *The Story of Art*. 16th edn. London: Phaidon. (Original work published 1950)

Gray, C. (2015). *The Politics of Museums*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Guerrilla Girls : The art of behaving badly. (2020). Chronicle Books.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, Reflexivity, and “Ethically Important Moments” in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>

Heartney, E., Posner, H., Princenthal, N., & Scott, S. (2013). *The reckoning : women artists of the new millennium*. Prestel.

Hessel, K. (2022). *The story of art without men*. Hutchinson Heinemann.

Heugens, P. P. M. A. R., & Lander, M. W. (2009). Structure! Agency! (and other quarrels): A meta-analysis of institutional theories of organization. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(1), 61–85. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2009.36461835>

Holstein, J., & Gubrium, J. (1995). *The Active Interview*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986120>

Howard Saul Becker. (1982). *Art worlds*. Univ. Of California Press.

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.-M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic Methodological review: Developing a Framework for a Qualitative semi-structured Interview Guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954–2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>

Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the Corporation*. Basic Books.

Kraatz, M. S., & Block, E. S. (2008). Organizational Implications of Institutional pluralism. *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, 243–275. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849200387.n10>

Kuntz, M., & Vick, B. (2023). Education, Gender, and Blue-Chip Gallery Representation: The Importance of Educational Prestige in a Male-Dominated Art World. *Empirical Studies of the Arts*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02762374231192942>

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews : Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Lamont, M., & Molnár, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the Social Sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28(1), 167–195. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141107>

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Marontate, J. (2007). Museums and the Constitution of Culture. 286–301. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996744.ch19>

Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2009). A theory of gradual institutional change. *Explaining Institutional Change*, 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511806414.003>

McMullin, C. (2021). Transcription and Qualitative Methods: Implications for Third Sector Research. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 34(1), 140–153. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00400-3>

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340–363. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226550>

Mikecz, R. (2012). Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(6), 482–493. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800412442818>

Moderna Museet. (n.d.). Collection database. Retrieved April 2026, from <https://sis.modernamuseet.se/en/start>

Moderna Museet (2021), in *Swedish Acquisitions 2021*. Stockholm

Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>

Nilsson, J. P. (2010). *Det andra önskemuseet = the Second Museum of Our Wishes*. Steidl ; Thames & Hudson distributor.

Nochlin, L. (1971). Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? *ArtNews*, 69(9), 22–39. <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-62847/>

Ørskou, G. (2021) 'Introduction', in *Swedish Acquisitions 2021*. Stockholm: Moderna Museet.

Ørskou, G. (2025). Gitte Ørskou on The Art of Collecting [Audio guide]. Moderna Museet Guide. <https://guide.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/collection/the-art-of-collecting/introduktion-av-gitte-orskou/>

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, 1(3), 261–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325002001003636>

Pollock, G. (1988). *Vision and Difference : Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*. London New York Routledge.

Reilly, M., & Lippard, L. R. (2018). *Curatorial activism: Towards an ethics of curating*. Thames et Hudson.

Sandell, R. (2002). *Museums, society, inequality*. Routledge.

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in Qualitative Research: Exploring Its Conceptualization and Operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>

Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2013). *Interpretive Research Design*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203854907>

Scott, W. R. (2014). *Institutions and Organizations : ideas, interests, and Identities*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Seo, M.-G., & Creed, W. E. (2002). Institutional contradictions, praxis, and institutional change: A dialectical perspective. *The Academy of Management Review*, 27(2), 222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4134353>

SFS2017:563. Museilag. Kulturdepartementet.

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/museilag-2017563_sfs-2017-563/

Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting Qualitative Data. A Guide to the Principles of Qualitative Research*. ResearchGate; Sage. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261554924_Interpreting_Qualitative_Data_A_Guide_to_the_Principles_of_Qualitative_Research

Simon, N. (2012, September 19). Open thread: Is the gender imbalance in the arts a problem? Museum 2.0. <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2012/09/open-thread-is-gender-imbalance-in-arts.html>

Sundberg, M. (2011). Innanför och utanför tullarna: Moderna museet. In A. Tellgren & J. Werner (Eds.), *Representation och regionalitet: Genusstrukturer i fyra svenska konstmuseisamlingar* (pp. 26–53). Statens kulturråd.

The Burns Halperin Report Articles | Artnet News. (2017 - 2022). Artnet News. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/burns-halperin-report>

Thornton, S. (2008). *Seven Days in the Art World*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W. (2008). Institutional Logics. *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, 99–128. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849200387.n4>

Thornton, P. H., Lounsbury, M., & Ocasio, W. (2012). *The institutional logics perspective : a new approach to culture, structure, and process*. Oxford Univ. Press.

Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory Construction in Qualitative research: from Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275112457914>

Topaz, C. M., Klingenberg, B., Turek, D., Heggeseth, B., Harris, P. E., Blackwood, J. C., Chavoya, C. O., Nelson, S., & Murphy, K. M. (2019). Diversity of artists in major U.S. museums. *PLOS ONE*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212852>

Vestheim, G. (1994). Instrumental cultural policy in Scandinavian countries: A critical historical perspective. *The European Journal of Cultural Policy*, 1(1), 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286639409357969>

Walsh, J. P., & Ungson, G. R. (1991). Organizational memory. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258607>

Yanow, D., & Schwartz-Shea, P. (2015). *Interpretation and Method* (D. Yanow & P. Schwartz-Shea, Eds.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315703275>

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Zamora-Kapoor, A., Godart, F., & Zhao, Y. (2019). Networks on the walls: Analyzing “traces” of institutional logics in museums’ permanent exhibitions. *Poetics*, 101387. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2019.101387>

8. Appendices

8.1. Email Template for Reachouts

Subject: Interview Request: Master's Thesis on Curatorial Decision-Making

Dear [Name],

I hope you are well.

I recently came across [Exhibition], and was particularly interested in [specific exhibition element, curatorial approach, or institutional issue]. I found this especially interesting in relation to how museums decide what becomes visible within exhibitions and collections, and how these decisions are shaped by broader institutional priorities and questions of representation.

I am currently completing my Master's thesis at the Stockholm School of Economics, supported by the Firestorm Foundation, where I am researching how museums navigate curatorial decision-making processes surrounding artist selection, acquisitions, and exhibition development.

Given your role in [the exhibition / institution], I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to hear more about how these decisions are approached in practice. If you would be open to a 60 minute conversation, it would be incredibly valuable for my research.

Of course, participation would be fully voluntary, and all responses would be anonymised and used solely for academic purposes unless otherwise agreed.

Thank you very much for considering it. I would really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you.

Best regards,
Thais & Jacopo

8.2. Interview Overview

Interview #	Institution	Role	Interview Date	Duration (minutes)	Location
1	Louisiana Museum of Modern Art	Curator	24/03/2026	60	Digital
2	Independent	Curator	24/03/2026	60	Digital
3	Moderna Museet	Curator	26/03/2026	120	In person at Moderna
4	Moderna Museet	Curator	01/04/2026	160	In person at Moderna
5	Moderna Museet	Curator	05/03/2026 & 08/04/2026	105	In person at Moderna & Digital
6	Moderna Museet	Curator	15/04/2026	96	In person at Moderna
7	Moderna Museet	Curator	16/04/2026	60	In person at Moderna
8	Bonniers Konsthall	Curator	21/04/2026	60	In person at Bonniers
9	Swedish Ministry of Culture	Policy Representative	06/05/2026	60	Digital
10	Moderna Museet	Curator	11/05/2026	60	In person at Moderna

8.3. Interview Guide

Prior Clarifications

Recording and transcription: Is it okay to record this interview for transcription purposes? The recording will only be used for transcription and analysis and will be securely stored and deleted following completion of the research project.

Confidentiality and anonymity: All interviews will be anonymised. Neither interviewees nor specific roles will be identifiable in the final thesis unless explicit permission has been provided. You are welcome to review quotations if needed.

Answer phrasing: We understand that some aspects of curatorial work may involve internal discussions or sensitive institutional information. Please feel free to answer in broad terms. General experiences, reflections, and examples are highly valuable. If any question feels too detailed, you may answer more generally or skip it.

Research purpose: As introduced previously, we are currently conducting a Master's thesis at the Stockholm School of Economics examining how museums navigate competing institutional demands within artist selection and exhibition-making processes, with particular attention to how these processes shape representation and gender inclusion.

Interview type: This interview follows a semi structured format. We have prepared guiding questions, but the conversation is flexible and we may follow relevant themes emerging from your responses.

Section 1: Professional Background and Role

Personal background

- Could you briefly describe your current role and responsibilities?
- How long have you worked within curatorial practice?
- What is your involvement in exhibition development, acquisitions, or artist selection?

Possible probes:

- How are responsibilities distributed?
- Who is typically involved in decisions?
- How collaborative is the process?

Section 2: Artist Selection and Curatorial Decision-Making

Selection processes

- Could you describe how decisions about which artists to exhibit are typically made?
- Which factors are usually considered when selecting artists?

Possible probes:

- Artistic significance
- Collection relevance
- Institutional priorities
- Practical considerations
- Audience considerations

Artistic value and quality

- How would you define artistic quality or significance?

Possible probes:

- Is artistic quality objective or subjective?
- How do you recognise important work?
- Do these understandings change over time?

Negotiating priorities

- Are there situations where different considerations pull decisions in different directions?

Possible probes:

- Difficult choices
- Trade-offs
- Competing priorities

Section 3: Institutional Environment and Organisational Influences

Institutional pressures

- To what extent do broader organisational or institutional considerations influence curatorial decisions?

Possible probes:

- Public responsibility
- Funding
- Audience expectations
- Institutional reputation
- Museum strategy

External influences

- Are there external actors or institutions that influence curatorial decisions?

Possible probes:

- Government
- Funding bodies
- Other museums

- Galleries
- Art market
- Public expectations

Section 4: Diversity and Representation

Representation

- How do questions of diversity or representation enter curatorial discussions?
- How important do you think representation is within exhibition or acquisition decisions?

Possible probes:

- Gender
- Cultural diversity
- Historical underrepresentation

Changes over time

- Have conversations around representation changed during your time working in museums?

Possible probes:

- Institutional changes
- Sector developments
- Personal observations

Examples

- Can you recall situations where representation influenced a decision?

Possible probes:

- Opportunities
- Challenges
- Trade-offs

Section 5: Historical Structures and Institutional Change

Collections and historical legacies

- To what extent do existing collections influence current curatorial possibilities?
- Do you think museums can actively address historical imbalances?

Possible probes:

- Constraints
- Opportunities
- Financial resources
- Institutional initiatives

Institutional change

- Have you observed changes in institutional priorities over time?

Possible probes:

- Acquisitions
- Exhibitions
- Diversity initiatives

Closing Questions

- What do you think shapes museum decisions most strongly?
- Is there anything important regarding artist selection or representation that we have not discussed?
- Are there any individuals you would recommend we speak with?

Thank you very much for your time and participation. If interested, we would be happy to share the final thesis upon completion.

8.4. Coding Framework

This appendix presents the coding framework used during thematic analysis. In line with the abductive approach adopted in this study, coding combined theoretically informed concepts from the Institutional Logics Perspective with openness to patterns emerging from the empirical material (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Initial coding focused on how participants described artist selection processes, evaluative criteria, organisational priorities, and decision-making practices. Codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes and interpreted through the institutional logics framework.

Initial codes	Description	Illustrative examples	Theoretical interpretation	Final themes
Artistic quality	References to artistic significance, merit, originality, or importance	“quality”, “important artist”, “artistic significance”	Professional logic	Professional logic as dominant evaluative framework
Curatorial expertise	References to professional judgement, specialist knowledge, or curatorial responsibility	“professional judgement”, “curatorial responsibility”	Professional logic	Professional logic as dominant evaluative framework
Trained ways of seeing	References to intuition, tacit judgement, or socially learned evaluation	“trained to see in a certain way”	Professional logic / tacit expertise	Professional authority and legitimacy
Shared norms	References to agreement, consensus, or sector-wide practices	“consensus culture”, “shared understanding”	Field-level professional norms	Professional authority and legitimacy

Visibility and recognition	References to artist visibility, international attention, or circulation within the art world	“biennales”, “visibility”, “recognised artists”	Market and field dynamics	Negotiating competing institutional demands
Budget limitations	References to acquisition costs or financial constraints	“too expensive”, “limited resources”	Market logic	Negotiating competing institutional demands
Public responsibility	References to public obligations, accessibility, or institutional responsibility	“public mission”, “responsibility”	State logic	Negotiating competing institutional demands
Diversity and representation	References to inclusion, gender balance, or representation	“representation”, “diversity”	Community logic	Negotiating competing institutional demands
Historical imbalance	References to exclusion, canon formation, or inherited inequalities	“historically overlooked”, “male-dominated histories”	Historical structures	Historical collections and reproduction of inequality
Collection constraints	References to limitations imposed by existing collections	“limited by the collection”	Path dependency	Historical collections and reproduction of inequality
Inclusion initiatives	References to targeted efforts to increase representation	“Museum of Our Wishes”, “government initiative”	Institutional change mechanisms	Conditional inclusion

Selective incorporation	References to diversity becoming relevant only through artistic legitimacy	“representation matters, but artistic significance comes first”	Interaction between competing logics	Conditional inclusion
Uneven institutional change	References to different rates of change across collection areas	“historical collections change slowly”	Temporal dynamics	Temporal layering

During later stages of analysis, relationships between codes and themes were examined to identify broader organisational mechanisms through which institutional demands were interpreted and prioritised. Through iterative movement between theory and empirical material, the concepts of conditional inclusion and temporal layering emerged as analytical mechanisms explaining how gender inclusion and exclusion were negotiated within museum practice.

8.5. AI Usage Report

Purpose and Scope of AI Use

Generative AI tools, primarily ChatGPT, were used in selected stages of this thesis as a supporting tool throughout the research and writing process, in accordance with the Stockholm School of Economics guidelines on responsible AI use. AI served as an aid for language refinement, and structural feedback, rather than as a substitute for independent academic work. Throughout the process, AI was used to support:

- improving grammar, readability, and academic writing style
- identifying repetition and reducing redundancy across chapters
- refining structure and logical flow within sections
- discussing alternative formulations and conceptual clarity
- reviewing alignment between research questions, methodology, findings, and discussion sections

Importantly, AI-generated outputs were not copied directly into the thesis. Suggestions provided by AI were treated as prompts for reflection and discussion rather than content for direct inclusion. Any ideas, formulations, or recommendations generated through AI were critically reviewed, manually rewritten, and adapted by the authors before being incorporated into the thesis. The purpose of AI use was therefore to support thinking, editing, and refinement processes rather than to generate substantive academic content.

AI was not used to independently generate theoretical arguments, conduct literature reviews, analyse empirical material, code interview data, interpret findings, or formulate the substantive conclusions of the thesis. These tasks remained entirely the responsibility of the authors.

In addition, AI-assisted transcription software (TurboScribe) was used to support the transcription of recorded interviews. The tool was used solely to convert audio recordings into text and did not perform analytical or interpretive functions. All transcripts were manually reviewed and compared against the original recordings to verify accuracy and correct potential transcription errors, omissions, or misinterpretations before use in the analysis. The final transcripts used for coding and interpretation therefore reflected researcher-verified rather than automatically generated material.

Identified Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The use of AI introduces several potential risks which were considered throughout the project.

Risk of inaccuracies and fabricated information: AI systems may generate incorrect or unsupported claims. To reduce this risk, all AI-generated suggestions were critically reviewed and independently verified before inclusion. Academic sources and empirical findings were never accepted solely on the basis of AI output.

Risk of unintentional plagiarism or loss of originality: AI-generated text can resemble existing sources or unintentionally influence writing style. To mitigate this risk, no AI-generated text was copied directly into the thesis. All outputs were critically reviewed and manually reformulated, ensuring that the final text reflected the authors' own reasoning, interpretation, and writing.

Risk of confidentiality breaches: The use of AI tools creates potential risks regarding sensitive information. No identifiable interview material, personal information, or confidential data was entered into AI systems at any stage of the research process.

Example Prompt Types

Examples of prompts used during the thesis process include:

- "Please improve the academic clarity and flow of this paragraph while preserving the original meaning and argument"
- "Review this section and identify repetition, redundancy, or areas where the argument could be strengthened"
- "Assess whether the methodology, findings, and discussion sections are logically aligned"
- "Identify potential weaknesses, inconsistencies, or circular reasoning in this argument"

Ethical Considerations and Data Protection

Interview recordings and transcripts were handled in accordance with ethical guidelines and confidentiality requirements. Care was taken to ensure secure storage and responsible handling of interview data throughout the transcription process.

Reflection on AI Use

The use of AI primarily supported mechanical and structural aspects of the writing process, allowing greater focus on interpretation, theory development, and analytical work. Interacting with AI often functioned as a form of iterative feedback that encouraged repeated review and revision of arguments. However, all substantive intellectual contributions, including research design, literature interpretation, coding, analysis, and conclusions, remained the independent work of the authors.