Museology, Museography and Virtual Environment and Interaction Media Design
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"TalkWithMorandi" DESIGN BRIEF

"Si può viaggiare per il mondo e non vedere nulla.
Per raggiungere la comprensione è necessario non vedere molte cose, ma
guardare attentamente ciò che vedi".

(Giorgio Morandi)

INTRODUCTION

This design brief presents the **TalkWithMorandi** application, a project thought for Museo Morandi in Bologna.

Since the application was intended to be specifically tailored to this museum, a thorough investigation about the Museo Morandi's history, location, collections, assets, weaknesses, and ambitions preceded the actual design process.

Our idea is basically about creating an interactive guide that accompanies the visitors through Museo Morandi's rooms. Respecting the current exhibition project, we decided to propose both the installation of one digital totem for each thematic area according to which the collection is exposed, and a mobile application that can be downloaded with a QR code at the entrance of the museum.

The interactive guide we decided to develop is an unusual one, it is an animated version of a cartooned Giorgio Morandi that gets into a conversation with the user about the great master's art and its hidden secrets. This prototype we designed has a double function:

- On the one hand, as already pointed out, it serves as a guide;
- On the other hand, the TalkWithMorandi application represents a collector of information — an all-inclusive container of accessible data to get to know the museum and explore it — but also an engine full of stimulus for personal reflection.

CONTEXT

The museum: MAMbo and Museo Morandi

Museo Morandi is the largest and most significant public collection devoted to Giorgio Morandi's art.
The museum was born due to a sizeable **donation** to the Bologna Municipality **by Maria Teresa Morandi**, one of the artist's sisters, combined with an important group of artworks already part of the heritage of the Bologna's modern art gallery.
The museum has been in Palazzo d'Accursio since 27th October 2012, when, due to damages caused by the earthquake of the same year, it has been moved to the **MAMbo**.
Both MAMbo and Museo Morandi are part of the **Bologna Museums Institution**, that is divided into 6 disciplianry areas: archeology, ancient art, modern and contemporary art, history and memory, industrial heritage and technical culture, music. It proposes a model of an highly coordinated polycentric cultural system, in which museums' specificities express a clear identity and a specific sector of intervention, proposing themselves as points of reference and as cultural safeguards extended to the territory.

MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna – is located in Via Don Giovanni Minzoni 14, in the historic centre of Bologna.

The Morandi collection is housed in the Manica Lunga (a long hallway of the museum) alongside the Permanent Collection of MAMbo; it now comprises 62 paintings, 18 watercolours, 92 drawings and 78 etchings. The collection offers a unique opportunity for understanding the artist's development, encompassing every medium and illustrating every phase of his life and stylistic changes.

The exhibition project

"The exhibition project analyses the themes and phases characterising Morandi's activity and offers a fresh vision of his development through also the works of his contemporaries, who, in a new dialogue, emphasise the importance and extraordinary topicality of his work.

Giorgio Morandi's art escapes the classifications of modernism and of the historic avant-garde movements. Never comparable to Futurism, to Metaphysical painting and even less to informal painting, even when sharing goals and interests, his work today provides an opportunity for study for critics and artists from throughout the world in what has become a necessary history of global art."

In particular, the collection is exposed according to **different thematic areas**: the **early drawings**, **time and composition**, the **last years**, **focus on Casa Morandi**, the **engraved sign**, **Morandi's gaze between Bologna and Grizzana**.

First room

This is how Museo Morandi appears at the first sight

In this long room are exposed drawings belonging to the early phase and paintings belonging to the so-called "time and composition" area.

The Head of a Woman

In the first part of the room there are portraits and even anatomic details, studies that Morandi made between 1907 and 1910, when he was studying in the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. They are sheets of particular interest for the quality of the sign and the singularity of the cut. Between these "the Head of a Woman" suggests, due to its plasticity and powerfulness, the influence of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Tuscan masters.

From right to left: the part of the first room devoted to "time and composition"

In this part of the room the visitor can appreciate the formal rigour of Morandi's Still lifes, through which he gave a dignity to everyday objects: studying for hours compositions of elementary geometry made up of cubes, cylinders, spheres and triangles , Morandi caught the true nature, the essence of the objects.

Second room

The "last years"

As Giusi Vecchi, one of the museum's curator, said, during the pandemic, the exhibition project has been modified and a great importance was given to the last years' paintings of Morandi. In fact, the artist between the 1953 and the 1964 (his death's year), realized more than the half of his work. All the artworks suggest a great attention to the composition, the rythme and the colour.

All the elements of the mature Still lifes - colour, form, mass, light, space, shadow, and setting- become little more than suggestions. The outlines drift into each other in a fusion of light and colour. The object remains on the artist's canvas and in his memory as a stable form, the founding element of a poetic that never breaks away from reality.

Third room

This room is dedicated to Morandi's house of via Fondazza 36, in Bologna.
In this room is exposed a selection of 37 images that the belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon decided to donate to the Morandi Museum. He took this pictures in 1979, fifteen years after Morandi's death, in via Fondazza 36, the place where so much of Morandi's work had originated and that was intact due to the efforts of the Morandi's sister.

In this room there is also an ongoing documentary about Casa Morandi, that since 2009 has become a house-museum open to the public. The bedroom-studio where Morandi created is works of art is the heart of this new museum, that preserves some of its original features, but it is also a place that hosts exhiitions and the artist's library.

Fourth room

Morandi RE-COLLECTING

The "engraved sign"

This room is now -from 27th May 2021 to 29th August 2021- devoted to the third and last part of the cycle of exhibitions "Giorgio Morandi RE-COLLECTING" created by Lorenzo Balbi in order to examine in depth some topics related to the area modern and contemporary art of the Bologna Museums Institution.
Moving from the question "what is an etching?", the museum tries to answer through this focus dedicated to this technique, of which Morandi was a master.

Fifth room

Morandi's gaze between Bologna and Grizzana

In this room, that is reachable from the first main long one, the visitor can see several landscapes in oils and watercolours that Morandi drew and engraved in the two places in which he spent the greatest part of his life, Bologna and Grizzana.

The view of "the Courtyard in Via Fondazza" became, from the 1930s onwards, the subject he depicted most often. Now it is an useful instrument to know how the perspective of Morandi changed going on through the time.

In general, the museum is minimalistic.

These rooms are all very big and, on the walls, there are just the artworks

with a basic description, containing the title, the author and the year of realization. For each section there is a green panel on the wall with some information about that thematic area, like the one on the side.
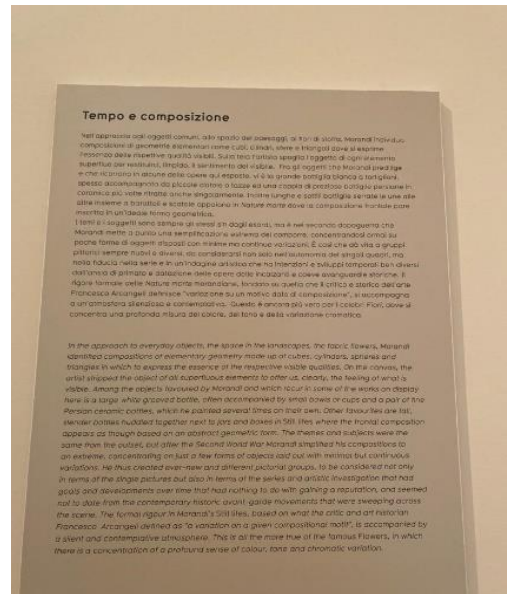
The visitors

Museo Morandi seems to be visited mainly by **modern art enthusiasts or connoisseurs** and **tourists**. The fact that now the museum is housed inside the MAMbo could be the reason for an increasing number of visitors, that came to visit the permanent collection, to see also Morandi's artworks.

The museum offers also individual visitors or groups of all ages the opportunity to take advantage of **guided tours managed by the MAMbo Educational Department**.

The Mambo Educational Department organizes also events inside the museum for kids, like the one entitled "Domenica al museo. Nell'atelier di Giorgio Morandi". This one took place the 24th of April and was thought for kids aged between 5 and 11; it was a laboratory for discovering the habits, the secrets and the poetic of Giorgio Morandi, moving from a luggage

full of objects and personal effects. Before talking about our project idea, we exploited a set of tools to help us in the design process.

Ideation Cards

As a first step, we decided to work on our context by making use of ideation cards, identifying — on the basis of our research — the **TalkWithMorandi's key audiences, its assets, and goals**.
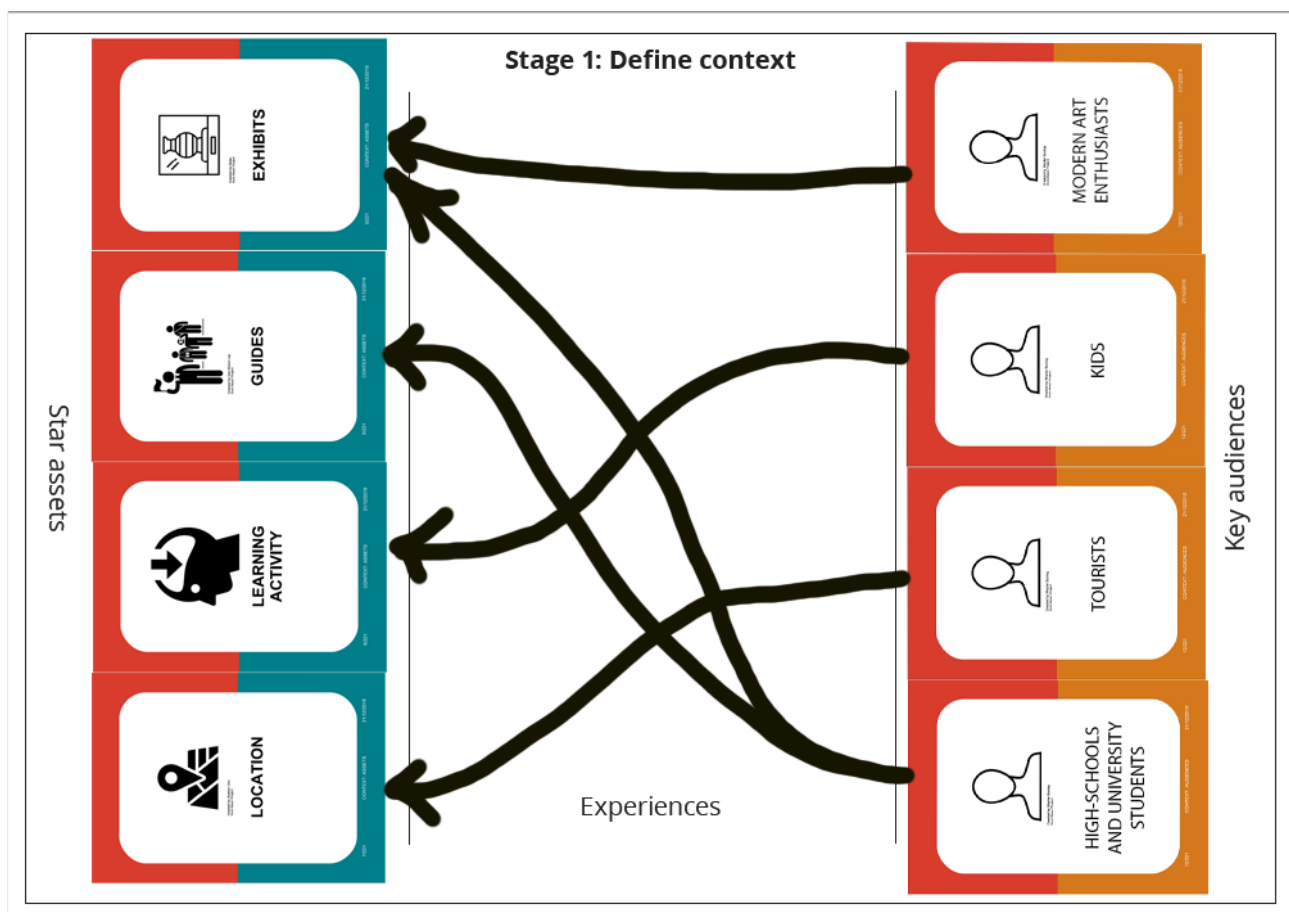
As one can see above, we identified four target users:

- **High-school and university students**: usually Giorgio Morandi is studied at school, at least in Italy, but it is not so appreciated by students, he is always overcame by other artists of international fame that lived in the same period;
- **Tourists**: the MAMbo and also Museo Morandi are visited by lots of tourists who are in Bologna for a trip; maybe lots of them don't even know who is Morandi and don't know anything of his art, so they can also be potential users of our application.

- **Kids**: as we have seen, the MAMbo educational department organizes activities and laboratories for kids and young people; the direction is indeed particularly keen on enhancing any educational activity.
- **Modern art enthusiasts**: they are casual customers, modern art lovers or potential users.

We proceeded to identify four of the related Museo Morandi's assets:

- Exhibits;
- Learning activities;
- Guides;
- Location

We then focused on the **institutional goals** that we gathered from our researches.
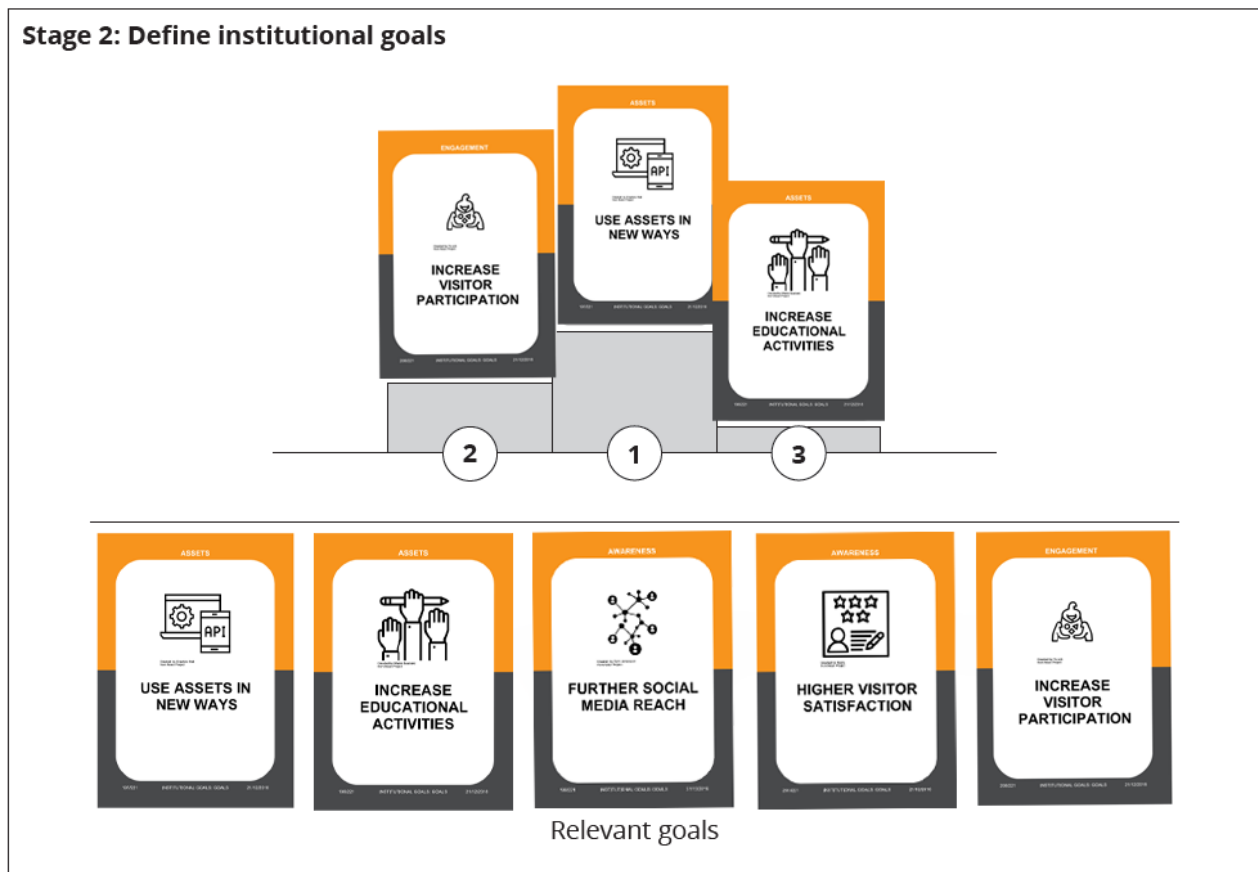
From the interview to the president Roberto Grandi (that you can see at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRX_ggG--1E&t=110s), we gathered that a very strong need for the MAMbo as well as for Museo Morandi is that of **using assets in new ways**, in

order to offer to the visitors always **new stimulating experiences** and **increase their satisfaction and participation**.

After that, we created our **design brief** choosing the main target audience for our project proposal, as well as the related star asset and the institutional goal to be enhanced.

It is important to specify that maybe the institutional goal more suitable for our project idea is increasing educational activities, but the implementation of that would for sure increase also visitors' participation and give a new face to the exhibits in general.
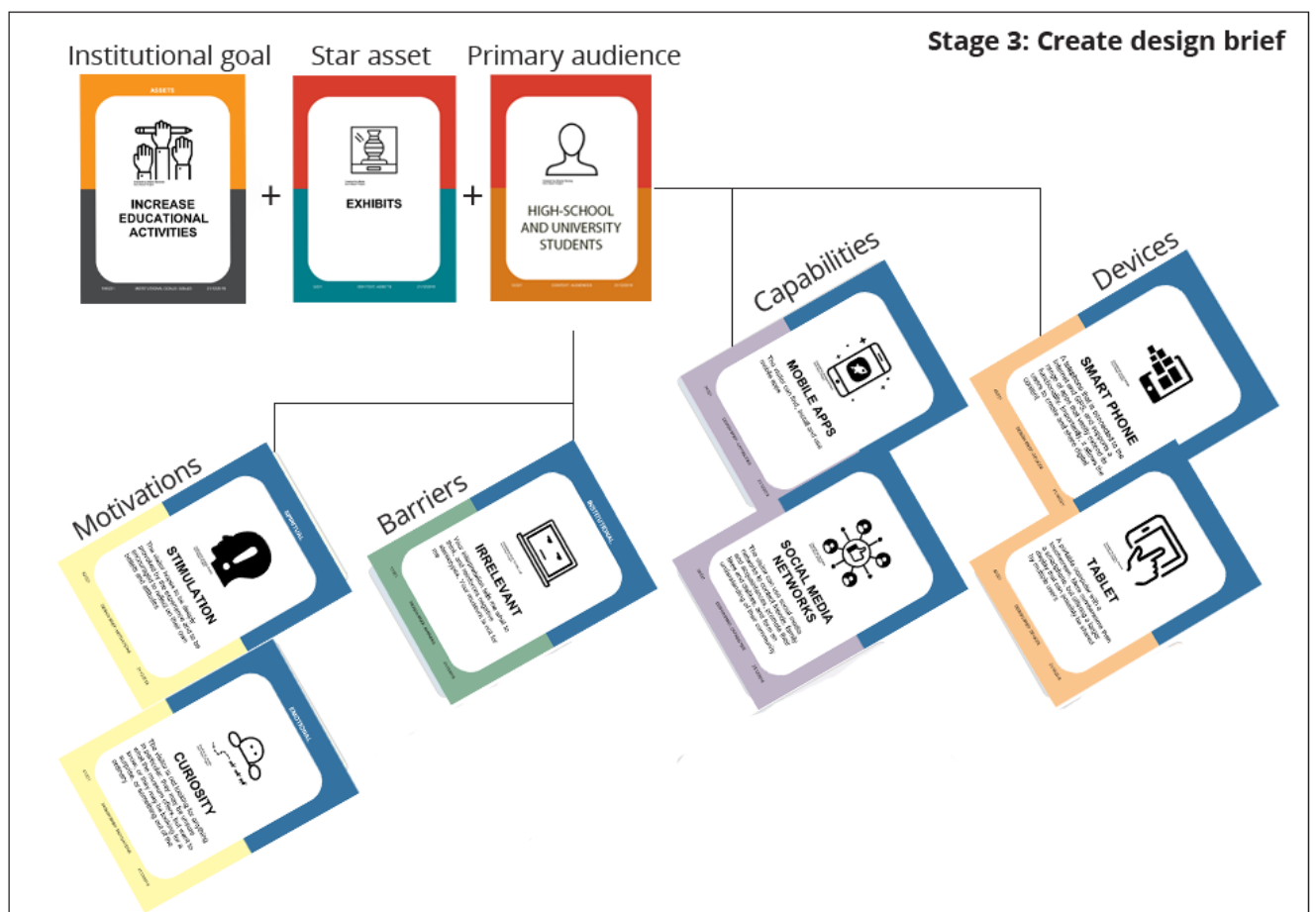
To this regard we identified also some motivations, a possible barrier, some potential capabilities and related technologies.

CONCEPT

Conceptual Map
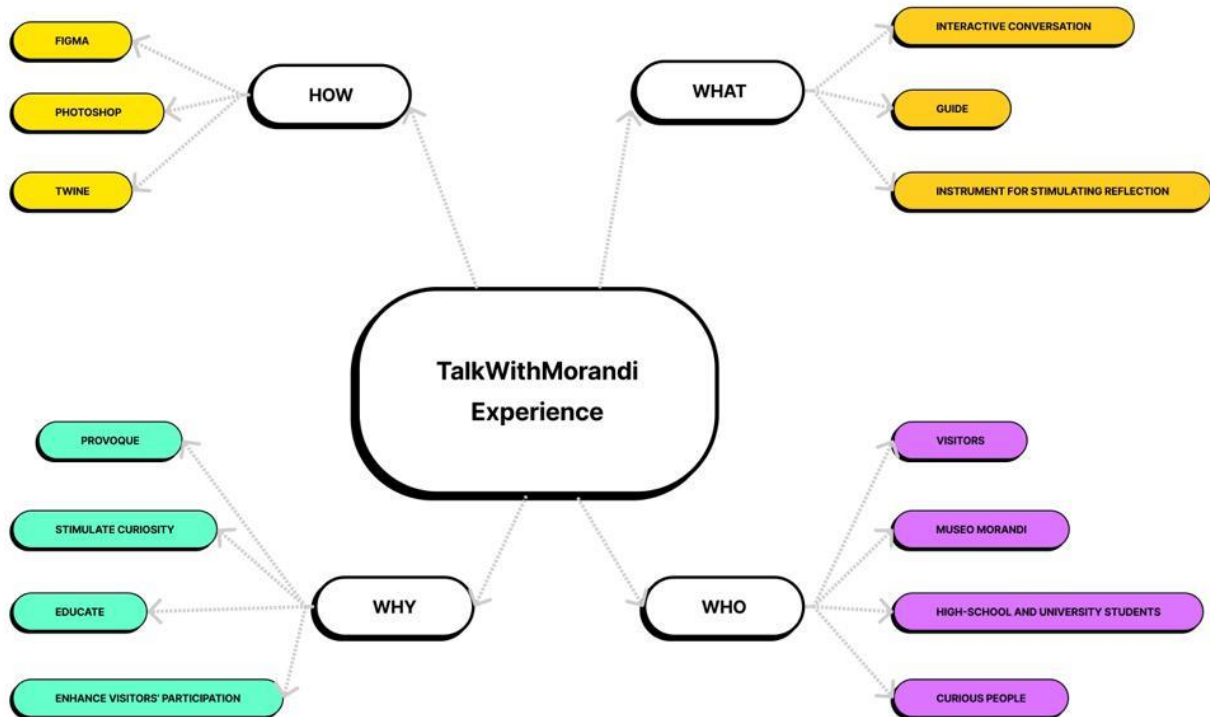
Museological approach

The next step was to reflect on the museological approach we intended to adopt and implement in our application.

The purposes of our project adapt perfectly to the goals of a museum in general: to **educate**, **entertain** and **stimulate the reflection**. ICOM has defined the museum as "a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment".

But it is important to point out that our application has been thought specifically for Museo Morandi; in fact **our project began as an inductive process**: we tried to investigate as

thoroughly as possible the museum's peculiarities, assets, lacks, and needs and tried to design an application that was as more as possible tailored for them.

The museum exposition, as we have pointed out in the "Context" section, is already enough informative: it offers guided tours and it is organized according to a thematic path. Anyway, **informativity** is a necessary but not sufficient condition for **education**.

"In a more specifically museum context, education is the mobilisation of knowledge stemming from the museum and aimed at the development and the fulfilment of individuals, through the assimilation of his knowledge, the development of new sensitivities and the realisation of new experiences". In our opinion, is hard for the visitors to reach "the development of new sensitivities" as well as "the realization of new experiences" simply by watching the artworks on the walls and reading few information about them. That is the reason why we decided to design an impactful experience in which visitors could feel **emotionally involved**.

Our goal is that is that of transmitting the message that the paintings that the visitor can admire on the Museo Morandi's walls haven't been always there, but each of them has its own history and profound meaning. To do this, we developed an interactive application that accompanies the users throughout their visit. This interactive path, the details of which will be discussed in the "Development" section, has **education** as its primary object and can be classified according to the parameters and categories from the taxonomy designed by Simona Caraceni:

Need	Education
Interaction	Open
Space	Closed
Content	Selected objects
Virtual/real	Real with Virtual
Visitors Contributions	Not allowed

According to the taxonomy depicting the possible combinations of virtuality and reality developed by Beltramini and Gaiani, the application will be considered to be part of the 'real with virtual' category, since «this corresponds to all the museums mixing real exhibitions of real objects with interactive systems such as sensitive tables, sensitive walls, sensitive floors, and interactive multimedia.»

The chosen cognitive focus

Meaningfulness-Emotions-Empathy
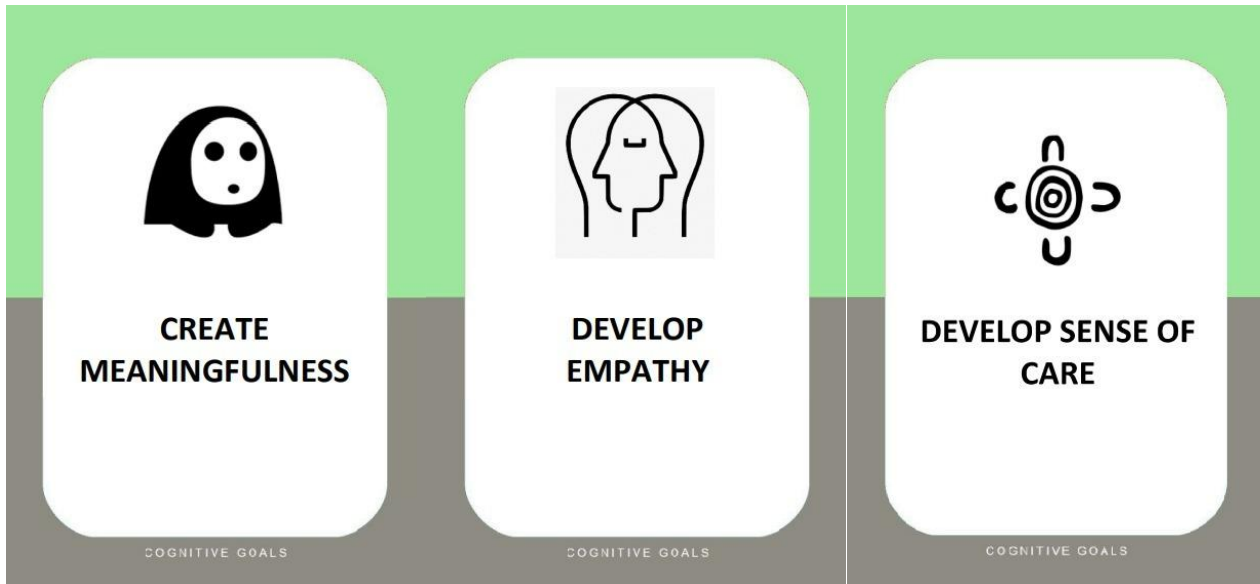
It's appropriate to specify that the cognitive focus has not been chosen later but it imposed itself as natural consequence to the choice of the project's topic. The painter doesn't stand above the spectator, does not hold the reins or is elected as a spiritual and artistic guide. The artist is a man among many, capable of experimenting with a unique but universal language in which every man recognizes himself and can feel his own. In the solitude of one's own cognition an incarnate sense of general significance and belonging to a single but shared experience develops.

Lines and shapes represented by Morandi are charged with meaning (like the cuttlefish bones of Montale) and inspire memories, roots, emotions.

Giorgio Morandi was able to make simplicity noble, to fill it with meaning. In a society where everything is noise, distraction, superficiality, we return to Morandi, to his silence, to the warmth of the hearth, to the purity of simple things.

Through the question-answer mode the user is mentally and empathically involved. Since he is constantly asked to interact and is left the choice to be part of the experience or not, being able to choose at any time. Moreover, **the deeply intimate and not superficial themes require a full concentration in reflection**.

Goals

➢ Culture and education

The initial objective of our project is to focus on the figure of a great Italian artist, whose works are the legacy of the city of Bologna, where the latter is not only born but has tailor-made his own personality. Giorgio Morandi was a bully protagonist of the twentieth century painting of which he defined his own norms.

To understand the nature and inspiration, it is necessary and possible to rediscover the spaces of the birthplace, Casa Morandi located in Via Fondazza 36 and its inspired collections. It is equally relevant to immerse oneself in the historical and artistic context, in the cultural ferments of the time, in the political situation and in social evolution, in his feelings and fears.

➢ Cognition

Our project aims to interrogate, stimulate and turn the user's attention on the themes dear to Morandi, on his interpretation of small things, on his inner reflection made of simplicity but consistency. Through the museum, place of knowledge and acquisition, allows the user to immerse themselves in the experience and unknowingly become a protagonist and not just a spectator.

The goal is to provoke the empathy of the user, involving him in the feeling of the artist who is not unattainable hero but living person and full of truth. Its lines, shapes and colors have something immediately familiar, primordial, in which you can recognize yourself.

➢ Management

The project aims to involve more users through the introduction of new tools and strategies for knowledge management and visibility of the exhibition.

It is necessary to provoke curiosity and increase participation through various communication and advertising maneuvers: social media, MAMbo, Casa Morandi and Cultura Bologna webpages, posters around the city of Bologna.

DEVELOPMENT

TalkWithMorandi: Presentation

This is the Morandi's character that we have personally drawn through the use of a graphic tablet.

The tools used for the presentation of this experience are:
- **Figma**, to draw Morandi's character, the Totem and to create the mockup for mobile's application
- **Photoshop**, to overlap Morandi's character on one of his paintings.
- **Twine**, to create the prototype of the experience.

This is how we imagine the physical structure of each digital totem. According to our idea in all the museum's rooms should be put a totem devoted to deepen the corresponding exhibits' thematic area. So there will be two totems in the first room, one devoted to "the early drawings" and another one to the section "time and composition", one totem in the second room devoted to "the last years", one totem in the third room about "Casa Morandi", another one in the fourth room for the section "the engraved sign", and, a last one in the fifth room to explore the section "the gaze of Morandi between Bologna and Grizzana".
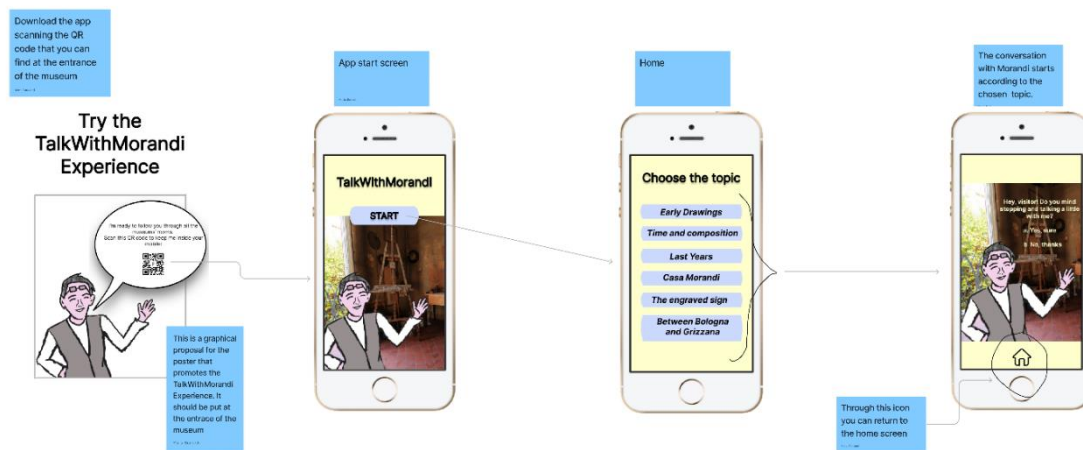
User's Interaction Diagrams

The project is designed to be used both on personal devices (e.g., smartphones) and inside the museum itself. People can choose if they want to enjoy the experience on their own, walking through the rooms or stand in a particular area of the museum, near the collection that Morandi's character will talk about in the experience.

As it can be seen below, we present two diagrams that describe the user's interaction as we imagine it with the device that we call "Totem" and the one that describe the user's interaction with the application, which the user can download using the QR code positioned at the entrance of the museum.
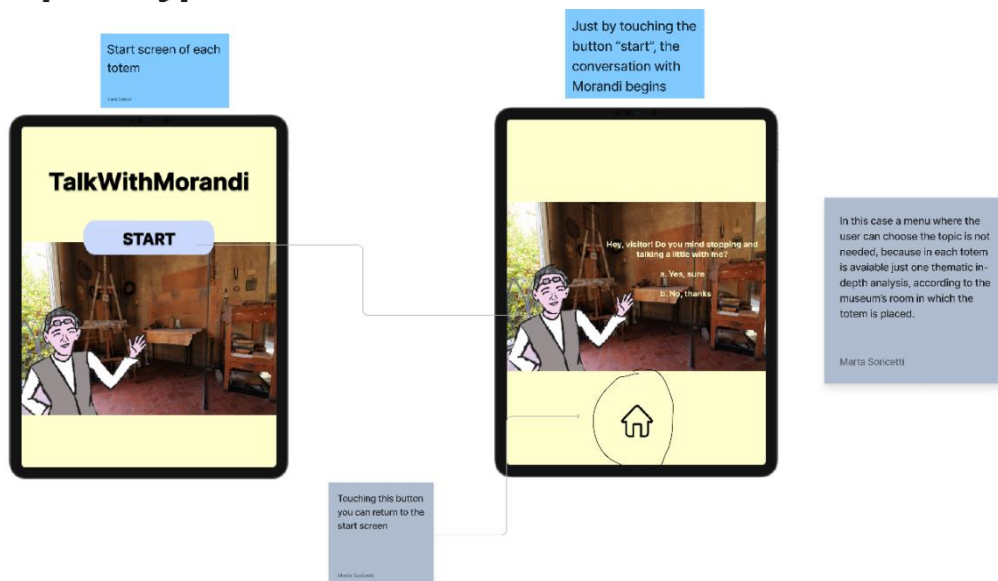
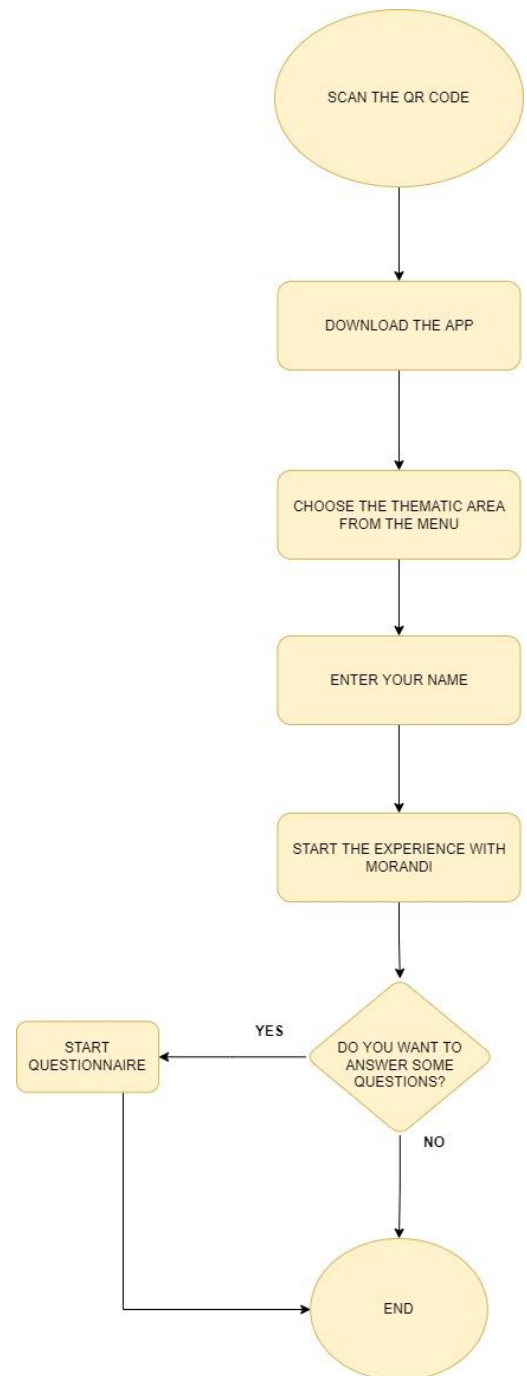Diagram that describes the users' interaction with the Totem

Diagram that describes the users' interaction with the mobile app

The cognitive focus

The implementation of the prototype concerns just one of the thematic areas that characterize the structure of the Morandi's Museum, "Tempo e composizione".
In this area, the focus is on the approach with the common objects of the daily life and the Morandi's ability to find in them a geometrical composition and a well-studied sense of space. The first goal of the prototype (but, generally, of the whole experience) is to allow the user to

understand the point of view of Morandi through the explanation of his artworks. The possibility to dialogue directly with Morandi enables the user to step into his art, empathizing with his world's idea and reasoning about the value of the things that surround the user.

The dialogue, which is not too long in order to keep the attention up, intrigues the user to go on with a simple click on the answer and discover more about Morandi without, actually, any effort and in an original fun way. The final questionnaire, that the user can choose whether do or not, is designed for understanding the level of user's satisfaction, for inducing the user to think but also it can be used by the museum as a hint to improve its artworks presentation's methodology.

Foreseen workflow

In order to actually implement the experience (both on the Totem and the application), we identified some professional figures:

- a software developer, also in charge of the construction of an algorithm that allows the museum to analyze the data of the questionnaires;
- a graphic designer that can take care of the user experience and the visualization's aspects;
- an expert of Morandi's art and life, in order to give the user accurate information about the artist;
- a game designer and developer to improve the possibility for Morandi's character to talk to the user while walking through his house's rooms, in 2D or 3D;
- a voice actor (for at least three languages) who can dub Morandi's characters and allow the user to enjoy also a hearing experience.

Further development and maintenance issues

This project and the whole experience can be enriched with the addition of the other thematic areas that are present in Museo Morandi. Each conversation can also easily be modified according to potential changes in the museum's exhibition project.

Also, it could be possible to implement a better version of the application with the creation of a real gameplay based on the artworks and the thought of Morandi.
For the section about "Casa Morandi", for instance, we thought that it could be a good idea to make available through the totem a virtual tour of the house in Via Fondazza 36, in order to bring the user directly into the environment in which Giorgio Morandi lived the greatest part of its life and produced the most part of his artworks.

Moving our attention towards possible maintenance issues, we think that the maintenance costs would be not so high. They are all on the physical maintenance of the totems.

Team Roles

Marta the Explorer: despite the scorching heat, our heroine has reached the museum providing the necessary information and photos.

Mirna the Thinker: her favorite word is "why?", finding ideas, focus and goals.

Sara the Sketcher: taken an old graphic tablet, with a bit of imagination she has rediscovered herself as a development designer.

From the theoretical point of view, each of us is responsible for developing and drafting a specific part of the design brief, based on their skills and affinities.

Marta has edited the part about the Context, especially with regard to the institution, the museum, and the target audience.

Mirna took care of the Concept, in particular searching information about Morandi, the historical period and his poetics, founding the appropriate cognitive focus and project goals.

Sara managed the Development part, writing the storytelling and imagining the structure of the interaction between the project and the users.

Instead, from a practical point of view the team worked effectively and coherently, comparing day after day sharing ideas, reflections, improvements to be made to the project.

References

❖ Beltramini, G. and Gaiani, M. Palladio Lab. Architetture palladiane indagate con tecnologie digitali, Vicenza, Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio, 2012.

❖ Caraceni S. Designing a taxonomy for virtual museums for the use of AVICOM professionals, Plymouth University, 2015.

❖ ICOM. Key Concepts of Museology, edited by André Desvallées and François Mairesse, Armand Colin, 2010; available online at the following link: https://icofom.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2022/01/2010_key_concepts_of_museology_english.pdf.

❖ http://www.museibologna.it/documenti/70925

❖ https://youtu.be/PRX_ggG--1E: at this link you can see the complete interview made to the president Roberto Grandi, and the curators Giusi Vecchi and Uliana Zanetti.

❖ https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/

❖ https://www.finestresullarte.info/arte-base/giorgio-morandi-vita-opere-poetica

❖ https://www.finestresullarte.info/mostre/bologna-giorgio-morandi-racconta-il-fascino-dei-suoi-fiori

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❖ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giorgio_Morandi

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❖ Giorgio Morandi, un pittore fuori dagli schemi, https://www.focus.it/cultura/arte/giorgio-morandi

❖ https://www.finestresullarte.info/arte-base/giorgio-morandi-vita-opere-poetica