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Higher Things in Life:
Artists' Information Seeking of the Aesthetic

Master's thesis in Governance of Digitalization

Master's Programme

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ABSTRACT

ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY – Faculty of Social Sciences, Business and Economics, and Law

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Title: Higher Things in Life: Artists' Information Seeking of the Aesthetic	
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Information needs of practicing artists have been widely neglected in information behaviour studies. Arts and literature, which are considered among the higher things in life in the aesthetic domain, is a context of information-seeking behaviour that requires more qualitative, empirical research in abundance in order to bring the higher and lower contexts of information phenomena into a holistic balance in the field of information science. Now more than ever before, as artificial intelligence is taking over the more mundane tasks in the lower contexts, increased attention should be given to the higher sphere, enabling human beings to not only survive, but to thrive with information. The current master's thesis explores artists' information-seeking behaviour – the information needs, forms of seeking, as well as the uses and outcomes of information – in the aesthetic domain from their subjective, phenomenological perspective. Special attention is paid to the positive perspective and the affective dimension in information seeking. The aim of the study is to unearth novel insights for the purpose of supporting the fulfilment of human self-actualisation needs and creative endeavours.</p> <p>The underlying philosophy of research was interpretivism, characterised by a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research methods were employed in the study, the idiographic nature of which provided individual, unique, and practical perspectives to the information phenomena under investigation by way of relatively in-depth semi-structured interviews. The inductive reasoning in the interpretation of the interviews via the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis allowed for novel insights to emerge from the collected data.</p> <p>The findings suggest that leisure-time information seeking of arts and literature is integral to the lived experience of artists and, thus, connected to their self-care and creative work especially in terms of synthesising aesthetic experiences. It is of such significance to the artists that it could be called a form of serious leisure. Arts and literature are perceived as potentially pleasurable and profound, indicating the higher nature of the information phenomena, although the height is dependent on the context and state of being of the experiencer. The information needs of artists stem from more fundamental needs such as self-actualisation needs and aesthetic needs. These information needs are extremely varied, characterised most often by a positive interest, and motivated by both cognitive and affective factors. The informational value of aesthetics is bolstered by the findings. It is concluded that many of the novel insights discussed warrant further study in the field, especially with a positive perspective and in the affective dimension for the benefit of practicing artists.</p>	
Keywords: higher things, aesthetic dimension, arts, literature, information seeking, positive perspective, affective dimension, artists	
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1 INTRODUCTION

‘Aesthetic’ as a term is attributed to philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, who lived in the eighteenth century. He used the term to first refer to sensuous knowledge, i.e. cognition by way of the senses. Baumgarten later expanded the definition of the aesthetic to describe the perception and appreciation of beauty, particularly in art. Another philosopher, Immanuel Kant, applied the term also to judgements of beauty, both in art and nature. Presently, besides beauty, and the judgements of beauty, the aesthetic concept is understood to cover a wide range of perceivable aesthetic characteristics, such as attitudes, properties, pleasure, experience, and value. (Goldman, 2001)

The current master’s thesis sets out to explore the information-seeking behaviour of artists in the aesthetic domain from a phenomenological individual’s perspective. The context of higher things in life, including the aesthetic dimension of arts and literature – as well as the information needs of practicing artists – have been widely neglected in information behaviour studies (Hemmig, 2008; Kari & Hartel, 2007). The concept of higher things in life is expanded upon in the section 2.1 Higher things below.

The article by Kari and Hartel (2007) is a call to action for information scholars and scientists to concentrate their research efforts more in the sphere of higher things, and effectively works as a blueprint and motivation for the research at hand. The authors define higher things in life as “usually positive human phenomena, experiences, or activities that transcend the daily grind with its rationality and necessities” (p. 1133). They illuminate that lower things, in contrast, are experienced as neutral or even negative phenomena: problem-solving and the mundane. These are the contexts an overwhelming majority of information science research has been focused on. Similarly to Abraham Maslow (1968) in the framework of his theory of *hierarchy of needs*, Kari and Hartel (2007) argue that the higher and lower spheres should be brought to balance for the benefit and holistic understanding of human life.

Maslow (1968) posits that higher things imbue life with authenticity: being fully human, in essence. In hierarchical fashion, once an individual’s lower needs (e.g. physiological) have been satisfied, one looks to higher things, all the way to the top of the pyramid: self-actualisation needs. At this stage, information needs could instead be called *information*

wants (Line, 1974), for these higher information needs are reinforced by desire of an intrinsic nature (Spink, Ozmutlu, & Lorence, 2004).

Bates (2002), in her theoretical article on information seeking, illustrates seven “layers of understanding” to be considered in research. These layers span from *understanding of physical things* all the way up to a *quest for meaning*. The second highest layer, the dimension of the *Aesthetic (arts and literature)*, which Kari and Hartel (2007) consider of the higher sphere, is the domain which the current thesis focuses on. The target group, artists, offers an intriguing starting point to study information phenomena in this higher context within their own area of expertise, in their “leisure time”, from their subjective viewpoint.

Kari and Hartel (2007) argue that the dominating problem-solving emphasis in information science is inadequate to address human information behaviour as a whole, and further debate that specific contextual research in the dimensions of the higher sphere, including the aesthetic, would prove fruitful in facilitating information scientists to support the society – communities and individuals – not merely to survive, but also to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), therefore, prompt us to ponder grander, fundamental questions, such as “how humanity can achieve what is best in life” (p. 13), also within the study of information phenomena.

The timeliness of research into information phenomena in the context of higher things is heightened by the reality that artificial intelligence, hereinafter AI, in the twenty-first century has been and is enabling a vast collection of mainstream technologies, which have a considerable impact on the lives of people (Stone, et al., 2022). Lee (2018) claims that the true value of AI lies in creation – if it is realised and utilised properly, AI may help the human race prosper on a level never seen before. Social and economic instability are forthcoming, however: AI has the potential to disrupt labour markets and social systems, in a manner that makes higher things more relevant to the occupations of the future (Lee, 2018). He shares an example: craftsmanship and routine work activities can be elevated into the higher sphere by the pursuit of mastery, which transcends them into forms of human expression and artistry. According to Lee, even the measurements of progress may take different forms in the future, such as the key development indicator *Gross National Happiness* already adopted by the country of Bhutan. Now more than ever before, information scientists too should focus their efforts on exploring the intricacies of

information phenomena in the higher contexts and strive to answer questions such as “What makes life worth living?” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

The research gap directing the research questions (see section 1.1 Research aim, objectives, and questions below) of the thesis, then, is the lack of contextual research in areas of interest to artists (i.e. arts and literature). Information-seeking behaviour, hereinafter ISB, of artists has not been adequately studied before in the specific context of aesthetics, nor with a research model focused on context with various information processes (as opposed to the traditional research model of information behaviour in various contexts). The field of ISB can be defined as the determination of users' information needs, searching behaviour, and the consequent use of information (Julien, 1996). The contextual research front outlined by Kari and Hartel (2007) requires qualitative, empirical research in abundance in a multitude of different contexts of the higher sphere. The current thesis undertakes the challenge of exploring information phenomena in the fundamental context of higher things in life, in the aesthetic layer of understanding.

Based on the study of the research domain, earlier studies in the field (Hemmig, 2008; Lee & Haddow, 2017; Munro, Ruthven, & Innocenti, 2022), as well as the author's personal experience of interacting with artists of various fields of expertise, it is speculated that for artists and all creatives, the influence of leisure time information seeking of the aesthetic is inseparable from the three other types of activity one's typical day may consist of: paid work, unpaid work, or self-care (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Moreover, it is postulated that artists' information seeking in the creative domain (arts and literature) could be in fulfilment of self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1968), as well as a form of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Stebbins' serious leisure are elaborated on in the section 2.1 Higher things below.

1.1 Research aim, objectives, and questions

The aim of the research is to contribute to the field of information science by exploring artists' ISB in the context of arts and literature. Qualitative research methods are employed in the form of semi-structured interviews with potential respondents, to extract novel and useful insights into the nature of information phenomena in this particular context. Insights unsheathed are discussed for the benefit of practicing artists, as well as the discipline of

information studies. These insights may be used in further research as a starting point of developing theory and applications for example in designing information resources in the aesthetic domain. The purpose is to support the fulfilment of human self-actualisation needs and creative endeavours.

The empirical goal is to gain an understanding of information behaviour of artists in the context of interest. The derived research objectives, as per research interests of the study of ISB (Julien, 1996), is to reveal the 1) needs, 2) forms of seeking, and 3) motivations, use, effect, and/or affect of information in the context of the aesthetic from the subjective, phenomenological perspective of the artist. In the phenomenological approach, the purpose of research is to understand the essence of the lived experience (Byrne, 2001). Based on the objectives, the research questions are devised as follows:

RQ1: What do artists seek or come across information about in the context of the aesthetic in their leisure time?

- Identify information needs regarding arts and literature.

RQ2: How do artists seek information in the context of the aesthetic in their leisure time?

- Identify forms and channels of seeking arts and literature.

RQ3: Why do artists seek information in the context of the aesthetic in their leisure time?

- Understand the motivations for seeking, as well as the use, effect and/or affect of information regarding arts and literature as perceived by the individual.

1.2 Thesis outline

Figure 1 depicts the outline of the thesis.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the topics the thesis is concerned with and revealed a research gap. Research aim and objectives, as well as the research questions, were established.

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 introduces a literature review on the research domain, establishing understanding of key concepts (e.g. higher things, aesthetic dimension, and information seeking), as well as their interrelatedness and value. Excerpts from earlier studies in the field are presented, and relevant theories are considered. Regarding information seeking, special attention is paid to the positive perspective, the affective dimension, as well as artists' ISB.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology of research, detailing and motivating the qualitative methods used in the study, leaning on the phenomenological individual's perspective of the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews as the data collection method are elaborated on.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, as well as analysis of the results.

Chapter 5 provides discussion and conclusions of the study. Limitations, as well as implications to future research are addressed.



Figure 1. The outline of the thesis

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, essential topics regarding the research objectives are presented, backed by theory, literature, and earlier research. The nature and value of higher things are considered. Concepts regarding the aesthetic dimension are illustrated and explained. Implications to ISB are shown, and interrelations of these three main topics can be found throughout the chapter. Furthermore, positive perspective, and affective dimension in ISB are given special consideration along the implications to artists' ISB.

2.1 Higher things

Context can be defined as a backdrop of, or a setting in information phenomena (Talja, Keso, & Pietiläinen, 1999); therefore, higher things can be seen as an underlying context(s) in information studies. Higher things, as divided by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), are the pleasurable and the profound. A definition of *pleasurable* is “affording satisfaction or pleasure”, it is something both enjoyable and gratifying, as well as pleasant: “being in harmony with your taste or likings” (WordNet 3.0, n.d.a). *Profound*, in contrast, is defined as “showing intellectual penetration or emotional depth”; it is something regarded as intense, fundamental, or deep (WordNet 3.0, n.d.b). Based on these definitions, it could be argued that arts and literature in the aesthetic dimension have the potential to possess either, or both, of these aspects of higher things. Kroth (2016) claims that the experience of arts may be profound and can develop into a lifelong interest. Dodd (2014) reasons that the profundity of arts and literature stem from their nature of provoking thoughts. Arts and literature, the creation and appreciation of which provide aesthetic pleasure, have a higher nature: they are all about the human experience, imagination, feelings, and emotions (Sharma, 2021).

Maslow (1968), likewise, postulates a deepness, naturality and intrinsic human quality in all things higher, as opposed to the mundaneness of lower things. Lower things are those that an individual needs to deal with for one's life not to descend into disarray, whereas higher things are generally wanted to be experienced by the individual (Kari & Hartel, 2007). In addition to arts and literature, other examples of higher things identified include celebration, fun, and leisure in the pleasurable category, and altruism, creativity, emotion, virtues, and positive thinking in the profound classification. Love is another example of the profound, as it is said

to have the capacity for humans to “empower each other as worthy human existences” (García-Andrade, Gunnarsson, & Jónasdóttir, 2018, p. 4).

Higher things are often considered pursuits of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). Stebbins describes serious leisure as “the systematic pursuit of an ... activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a leisure career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (2001, p. 3). Experiences of higher things may be imbued with a sense of mindfulness, and of being in the present moment, in contrast to habitual actions of everyday life (Jørgensen, Eade, Ekeland, & Lorentzen, 2020). According to Heidegger (1978), there are two main motivations for an individual to turn their attention towards higher things: either they want to escape the gloom of everyday life (to seek pleasure), or to develop themselves (in a profound way) so as to become more mature. Profound things, as they may be regarded as sublime, reflect the possibility of humanity to reach its highest potential (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

As established, information phenomena can be divided into two spheres, higher and lower, but the division is not clear-cut. “Higher” and “lower” attributes do not determine the value of a phenomenon either, instead, they merely represent the hierarchical relationship of the classification for the purposes of research and understanding (Olson, 2002). Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of needs (Figure 2) depicts this ordinal relationship, in which the importance of the higher and lower things is not defined by the “height” of the phenomena, but rather the context and an individual’s position in the hierarchy. The higher and lower areas of interest can be seen as alternating in one’s need hierarchy, and even strengthen each other in a symbiotic fashion from a holistic viewpoint of an individual’s life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Furthermore, Kari and Hartel (2007) discuss that information in its essence is not of the higher or lower class, but rather the height is ascertained from the context, content, source, and channel of the information.

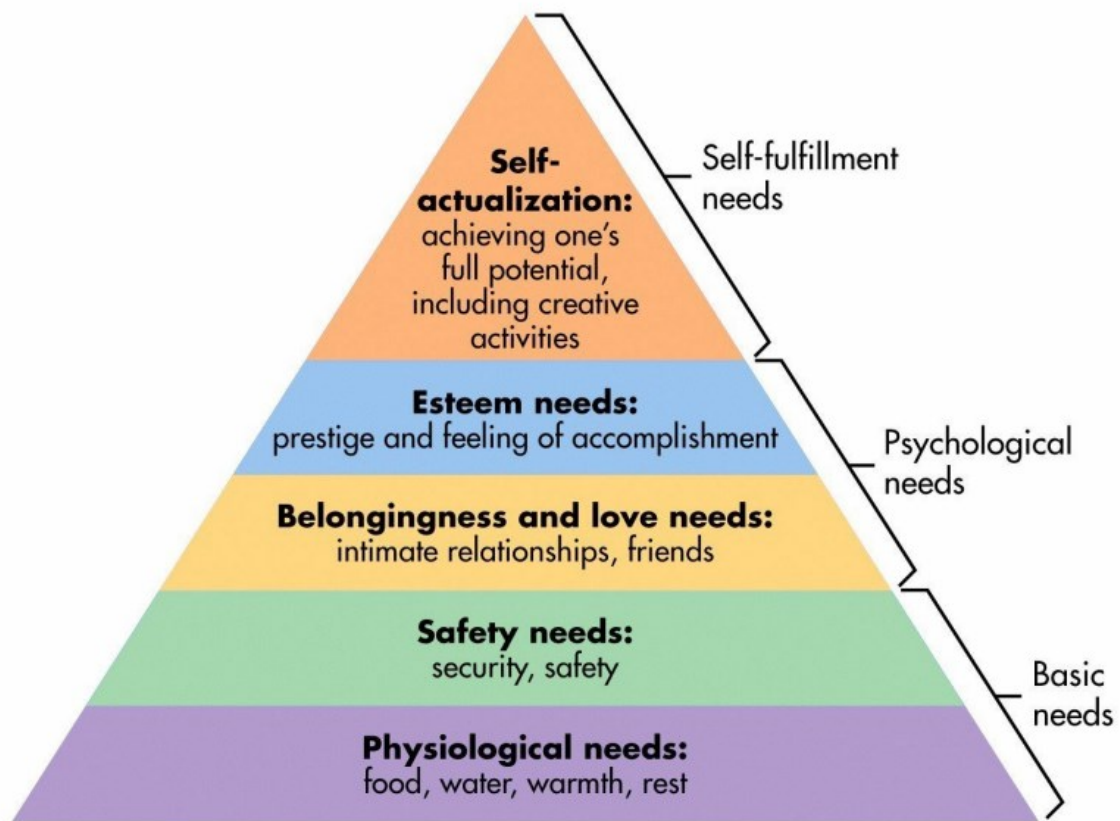


Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2018)

Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation for seeking the fulfilment of human needs. Initially, Maslow (1943) had stated that the hierarchical levels of the pyramid indicate that an individual must satisfy needs corresponding to the lower (bottom) levels before attending to higher needs. Later he (1987) clarified, however, that the hierarchy is not as rigid as originally depicted: a lower need does not have to be utterly and completely satisfied before moving on to needs higher up, and the order of needs is flexible according to individual differences and external conditions. In an example relevant to artists, in some individuals the need for creative fulfilment may take precedence over even the most basic of human needs (McLeod, 2018). Maslow (1987) also claims that behaviours are subject to multiple simultaneous motivations, noting that "any behavior tends to be determined by several or all of the basic needs simultaneously rather than by only one of them" (p. 71).

Highest things in life correspond with self-actualisation needs (i.e. achieving one's full potential, including **creative** activities) as illustrated at the top of the pyramid structure (Maslow, 1968). They are linked with a desire "to become everything one is capable of

becoming” (Maslow, 1987, p. 64). Fundamentally, self-actualisation deals with a more positive aspect of human behaviour, fulfilling potentials as opposed to dealing with problems (Maslow, 1943). Motivations and needs for self-actualisation manifest differently in individuals (Kenrick, Neuberg, Griskevicius, Becker, & Schaller, 2010): “For some people self-actualization can be achieved through creating works of art or literature, for others through sport, in the classroom, or within a corporate setting” (McLeod, 2018, p. 9). Moreover, self-actualisation is seen as a continuous process, rather than a state of perfection to be reached by an individual (Hoffman, 1988).

Humans’ perception of what is painful, and what is pleasurable – one determinant of the height of a phenomenon – is greatly affected by the meaning ascribed to it by the individual (Lembke, 2021). Profoundness of a thing, such as art, may likewise be perceived subjectively (Turpin, et al., 2019). It follows, then, that whether a piece of information belongs to the higher or lower category is also influenced by the phenomenological individual’s perspective – the height of information has a subjective quality and is open to interpretation (Archer, 2000). An implication of this to ISB is that as higher things are wanted by people, backed by a genuine desire, the resulting information seeking in that context is likely to be more persistent (Hersberger, 2002/2003; Spink, Ozmutlu, & Lorence, 2004), and/or more frequent (Kari & Hartel, 2007).

Earlier research on ISB in the context of higher things is sparse, yet the existing studies have revealed that outside the traditional problem-solving paradigm, information phenomena are less homogenous, and new dimensions and insights are to be discovered (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). One of the areas of interest is the notion of *flow*, which by Chen, Wigand, and Nilan (2000) is defined as “an optimal, extremely enjoyable experience when an individual engages in an activity with total involvement, concentration and enjoyment, and experiences an intrinsic interest and the sense of time distortion during his/her engagement” (p. 263), which corresponds with the discussed attributes of, and motivations for seeking higher things, namely the pleasurable. Time perception in such seeking activities, and in general, is subjective and situational – it depends on the individual and the context (Myers, 1992). Positivity is another factor in time perception, a good experience is generally perceived as shorter in duration in comparison to the actual time (Ornstein, 1972). For a pleasurable flow experience to occur, besides the subjective enjoyment, the individual must

also perceive the activity as engaging and moderately challenging (Rau, Peng, & Yang, 2006), as well as be fully immersed in it (Skadberg & Kimmel, 2004).

Facilitating experiences of flow may also lead to the feelings of usefulness and playfulness (Han, An, Han, & Lee, 2020), further enhancing the positive effect derived from ISB of higher things. Chen, Wigand, and Nilan (2000) determined in their research that for example reading and web searching had the potential of inducing a flow state. They further contended in conclusion that flow experiences may improve a person's psychological well-being. It has been shown in research that not only flow experiences, but higher things in themselves are beneficial to an individual in prevention of mental disease (Maslow, 1968; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Higher things have also been found to greatly affect work performance in a positive way (Luthans, 2002). One of the concepts responsible, creativity, which is considered a profound higher thing, correlates positively with academic reputation of management scholars (Dewett & Denisi, 2004) – creativity is not solely the domain of artists and other creatives. Dewett and Denisi concluded that creativity of the scholars' contributions resulted in higher levels of reputation in their field, as opposed to sheer productivity and industriousness.

Futurists claim that there is a trend among people of increasingly appreciating traditional, higher values, abandoning materialism and excessive ambition in favour of family, faith, community, and environment, as well as a heightened sense of what is right and what is wrong (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris, & Piercy, 2017). Values, higher things of profound nature, have been suggested to affect an individual's information behaviour (Bouthillier, 2002/2003). For instance, *altruism* has been found to be a potent motivator for sharing data – assisting colleagues with informal information requests and thus enabling new scientific innovations and breakthroughs (Kim & Stanton, 2012; Stahlman, 2022).

2.2 Aesthetic dimension

Within the sphere of higher things in life, the domain of the current thesis is the aesthetic, that is arts and literature as specified by Bates (2002) as the second highest layer of understanding in ISB (Figure 3). Providing a comprehensive definition of the arts is not an intention of the thesis, for such definitions are subject to much controversy in contemporary philosophy and, furthermore, the practicality of a definition of art is debatable (Adajian, 2022). For the terms

art and *arts*, a countless number of definitions exist; a simple one that fits the purposes of the current research is defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.a): “painting, sculpture, music, theater, literature, etc., considered as a group of activities done by people with skill and imagination”. Literature is, thus, already included in this definition of arts. While the objective of the current thesis is to study information seeking of the aesthetic from the subjective, phenomenological perspective of artists, and the experience of art is considered subjective (McCormack & Dorin, 2001), some further definition of art is nonetheless required, lest every individual is allowed to define as art whatever they please (Beardsley, 2018).

Spiritual (religion, philosophy, quest for meaning)
Aesthetic (arts and literature)
Cognitive/Conative/Affective (psychology)
Social and Historical (social sciences)
Anthropological (physical and cultural)
Biological (genetics and ethology)
Chemical, Physical, Geological, Astronomical

Figure 3. Layers of understanding in ISB (Bates, 2002)

Followingly, a specifically **aesthetic** definition of art (including literature) is explored in more depth. Aesthetic definitions, too, are many – they connect art effectively with the aesthetic: aesthetic properties, experiences, and judgements. Between aesthetic and artistic properties there is a distinction, in which aesthetic properties are taken to be perceptually attractive qualities directly perceived in artworks, and artistic properties may require previous knowledge of their origin and purpose in relation to art history, genres, and so forth. *Aesthetic experiences* are considered experiences, which are complete, cohesive, and intense, stemming from the way things appear to the individual, and these experiences are essentially controlled by the very things experienced. Aesthetic judgements are in essence subjective properties and can be determined and conveyed by the individual to make a verdict of beauty or ugliness, or substantiate for example the delicacy, elegance, or daintiness of the artwork. (Adajian, 2022)

In art production, the product – art – is at the same time something physical (i.e. an object or event) and perceptual (it has aesthetic properties that can be perceived by the observer). Art may also have properties outside these physical and perceptual spheres, such as messages, meanings, and the ability to conjure images in the mind of the observer. Art production itself may be defined by the *intention* of the production, as well as the *reception* of the product (artwork). The intention of production may at the same time, however, for instance be political, economic, religious, medical, or pedagogical, in addition to being artistic. In reception, the observer may for example watch, listen to, read, understand, think about, scrutinise, or contemplate the artwork. The experience of the reception of art includes the full range of an individual's awareness: beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, emotions, and impulses. This experience is often imbued with a certain *affect*, one that is detached from practical matters. (Beardsley, 2018)

In the framework of the current thesis, **affect**, inspired by the aestheticism of arts and literature, is considered as one of the possible motivations for artists seeking the aesthetic. Beardsley (2018) concludes that when an experience has some or all the discussed properties, the experience is said to have an *aesthetic character* – the experience of art may then be considered an aesthetic experience. Beardsley defines an *aesthetic interest* as the intention of obtaining an aesthetic experience, essentially a reason for an individual to seek arts and literature. According to Beardsley, aesthetic interest may, however, be had for other things as well, such as technology or nature. An aesthetic experience, as an object of aesthetic interest, is considered by Beardsley inherently desirable and valuable, something that satisfies a genuine human interest. Consequently, he defines an artwork as “something produced with the intention of giving it the capacity to satisfy the aesthetic interest” (p. 7). This definition he establishes to be an aesthetic definition of art, which utilises the concept of the aesthetic.

‘Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder’, it is said, and it follows that the aesthetic is a subjective concept – the perception of the aesthetic differs from individual to individual, as well as among individuals of different ages, genders, and cultures (Kairanbay, See, & Wong, 2019). Universally measuring aesthetic value is implausible, hence importance should be given to the individual consideration of aesthetic preference (Broer, et al., 2014). Therefore, for the purposes of the current thesis research, individual subjects of study are encouraged to define the arts and literature (the aesthetic) according to their own aesthetic preference, within the aesthetic definition of art provided by Beardsley (2018).

Kari and Hartel (2007) assert that novel forms of information in aesthetics and other higher things have the potential to enrich the field of information science – the value of aesthetic information, as well as the value of aesthetics to information, ought to be recognised. Moreover, they emphasise that for appraising the value of an information source or channel, higher things involved may be a substantial consideration. Representations of information, besides their content, may also be appreciated for their aesthetic value as a narrative or visual experience (Nielsen, 1997). As aesthetic experiences can be simultaneously perceived pleasurable *and* profound, it is speculated that arts and literature are among the *highest* things in life (Kari & Hartel, 2007). The notion of value of aesthetics is bolstered next by a few excerpts from earlier research in ISB.

Faro and Giordano (2000) studied the role of aesthetics and creativity, namely art, in information systems design. Based on an observation of the development of several system designs by students, they maintain that music and graphics have the potential to improve human communication. Modern art techniques were utilised to communicate design concepts and justify the motives behind them. In conclusion, Faro and Giordano discern that the often-neglected aesthetic dimension facilitates the pursuit of novelty and quality – aesthetic considerations catalyse more creativity and involvement in the design of information systems. It follows that these aesthetic elements utilised in design can also promote the use of the corresponding information systems and the artifacts therein (Kari & Hartel, 2007).

Nielsen (1997), in his study on fiction and the indexing of it, showed that fiction is substantially different from factual literature. He notes that from fiction, i.e. invented stories, value can be derived in numerous different ways. According to Nielsen, this poses difficulties for classifying, indexing, and retrieving fiction as the content is subject to individual interpretation, similarly to that of any other aesthetic experience. He concludes that unusual features and aspects of fiction, such as its literary context, aesthetic nature, and narrative structure make an indexer's work challenging.

Usherwood and Toyne (2002) studied the subjective perspective of readers of imaginative literature, i.e. fiction, and determined that reading imaginative literature is viewed as an interest that satisfies a vast assortment of human needs. It is noted that there is variety in the behaviour of the readers over time, as well as according to the readers' personal development. The reading itself is found to be a transformational activity, which has the potential to change an individual's life. Reading imaginative literature is viewed as an extremely important

activity by many subjects of the study, and this positive view of reading is shared by introverts and extroverts alike. Besides personal development, Usherwood and Toyne established that reading imaginative literature has been perceived beneficial in advancing one's literacy skills, enriching one's world view, gaining instruction, and as a means of escape and relaxation.

Music is claimed to be a prevalent part of society in the aesthetic domain, for it is enjoyed by most people and created by many (Schedl, Gómez, & Urbano, 2014). Music Information Retrieval (MIR) is its own research field, involved with extracting and inferring meaningful elements from music, indexing music accordingly, and developing search and retrieval systems for music (Downie, 2003). The goal of MIR is aimed at the end users: organising and making the immense music selections of the world accessible to the individual (Downie, 2003). As MIR was defined by Downie in 2003, it is yet a young research field, but it has developed and gained considerable traction over the years, due to the pervasiveness of the topic – importance of the aesthetic experience of music – as well as technological developments, such as mobile music players and music streaming services (Schedl, Gómez, & Urbano, 2014). Schedl, Gómez, and Urbano explain that music as an information artifact has a multitude of modalities: music can be represented symbolically (score), as audio, text (lyrics), gesture, image (e.g. album cover), or even as a mental model of a certain harmony. Additionally, music is a subjective aesthetic experience, the human perception of which is shaped by a vast range of factors, such as beat, lyrics, mental state of the experiencer, and even the assessment of the performer by the experiencer's peers (Schedl, Flexer, & Urbano, 2013). The individual perception of music can be further categorised into properties of the experiencer, context of the experiencer, content of the music, and context of the music itself (Schedl, Gómez, & Urbano, 2014).

It is proposed that seeking of the aesthetic could be beneficial to artists in relation to their creative work and self-care: McMillan (2022) contends that experiencing the aesthetic is good for one's creativity and brain health. According to McMillan (2022), relaxation of mind and body, which is associated with the benefits of aesthetic activities, e.g. reading imaginative literature (Usherwood & Toyne, 2002), is conducive with enhanced imagination and creative thought. In contrast, many forms of modern entertainment, for instance video games, television, virtual reality, and social media, are overstimulating for the human brain and thus have the opposite effect (McMillan, 2022). Moreover, Harmon and Ballesteros

(1997) note that while stress may be a symptom of or motivation for an information need, a state of relaxedness makes it easier for one to formulate one's need.

McMillan (2022) explains that aesthetic experiences, such as deep reading, can divert one's mind from stress, and even change how one's brain works: immersing oneself in a reading experience has been shown in studies to develop an individual's ability to focus, as well as the capacity to understand and form complex thoughts and ideas. Music too, she adds, is likewise beneficial for brain health, no matter if music is played or listened to by the individual; it may be for instance uplifting or induce feelings of relaxation and inspiration. Furthermore, she claims that novel experiences and challenging the brain by thinking, learning, and creating enhance the brain's ability to form new connections and sustain them. It is inferred that aesthetic experiences, then, have the potential to provide cognitive benefits as well.

Subsequently, it is believed that creativity breeds creativity (Imus, 2020). Hence, it is speculated that it would be beneficial for artists to seek various aesthetic experiences in different forms, in order to be inspired to create art of one's own. Letterman (2022) observes that "in every art form, you imitate something you admire, and then it grows into your own". In contrast to intentionally seeking information and ideas from other works of art, it is acknowledged that unconscious information may play a role in creative work as well: insight and intuition are products of unconscious cognition (Harmon & Ballesteros, 1997). Harmon and Ballesteros further argue that for an information seeker it is equally important to extract information from his or her unconscious mind as it is to explore external artifacts. Root-Bernstein (2002) goes as far as to claim that aesthetics itself is a form of cognition, aesthetic sensibility being the basis for intuition. The origin of intuition and creativity, then, is open to interpretation; the thesis at hand focuses on the phenomenological experience of the respondents. Artists' artistic inspiration, creativity, as well as the creative synthesis of aesthetic experiences and concepts in benefit of the artists' creative work is explored within the aesthetic domain.

2.3 Information seeking

Information behaviour and its constituents (e.g. information seeking) are vital to intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of human life (Ford, 2015). In relation to these aspects of life,

Ford argues that the ability to be aware of one's information needs, to seek corresponding information, and to assess, choose, and use it are all relevant skills to possess – the adoption of these skills constitutes the foundation for information literacy much needed in the modern flood of information. Honda (2019) observes the following about information seeking of higher things and the aesthetic: "Information that would have taken a considerable amount of time and energy to gather in the past, now is literally at our fingertips in only seconds. We also have seemingly endless ways to pursue beauty, truth, meaning, and happiness" (Ch. 5, 2:07). As per the definition of ISB by Julien (1996) and the research questions presented in the INTRODUCTION chapter, the area of interest lies in the *what*, *how* and *why* of information behaviour in the context of the aesthetic. This section aims to establish select notions and concepts of ISB from relevant literature in the field of information science, as well as from related disciplines. These notions and concepts are adopted in the research design of the thesis.

Several authors in the field (Byström, 1999; Kokkonen, 1998; Savolainen, 1999) concur that ISB research incorporates the study of information needs, seeking, and uses, although the seeking itself has received the bulk of the attention. In the view of Tuominen and Savolainen (1997), the primary objective of ISB research is to expand the understanding of the role of information in everyday life. This objective aligns with that of the thesis. Relatedly, Kari (2001) claims that "leisure-related information seeking is to be studied so that the research would be relevant to people, and the theory base concerning information behaviour may be further elaborated and tested" (p. 15). Moreover, the focus has shifted from systems to the individual's perspective (Järvelin & Vakkari, 1993) as in ISB the seeker observes the world through one's senses (Dervin, 1998). From the viewpoint of the individual, ISB is seen as a constructive activity, which is impacted by contextual factors (Savolainen, 1999). Therefore, the research on the phenomenological perspective of the individual in the thesis is firmly rooted in the selected context.

Case (2012, p. 5) defines *information need* as a perception of insufficient knowledge to satisfy a desired goal. According to Ford (2015), the concept of information need can be broadened to cover underlying needs, such as achieving or maintaining some physical or mental state. He elaborates that the level of complexity of an information need corresponds with the granularity of ISB required to fulfil the need. For example, information needs related to arts and literature may be higher in granularity than solving a narrow, specific problem

such as finding the timetable for public transport. Ford notes, however, that information needs of differing levels of granularity can exist side-by-side. For instance, an artist's need of seeking for artistic inspiration in a painting could be considered a problem of greater complexity than the simultaneous need of discovering the name of the painter of that painting. Moreover, Cole (2012) illustrates that fully perceiving an information need could be an iterative process, which is susceptible to change during a continuous search for information.

In the context of ISB, Ford (2015) defines *behaviour* as a response to a stimulus. Ford's definition includes both actions and thoughts, thus, even **perceiving** a problem or a need is considered information behaviour. *Information* is defined by Kitchen (2014) as a meaningful pattern of stimuli which can be transformed into knowledge. It can be inferred, concerning information about the aesthetic, that any stimuli with the potential of being perceived a meaningful pattern can be considered potential information (Ford, 2015). By way of learning, information can be internalized by an individual and consequently converted into knowledge (Ford, 2008). It is followingly speculated that information contained in an artwork could be internalized by an artist as aesthetic knowledge transferrable to the artist's own life and works of art.

Data is stimuli that has not yet been consolidated into a meaningful pattern, and hence not considered information, until the pattern is perceived by an individual (Ford, 2015). A parallel can be drawn to the definition of aesthetic experience (Adajian, 2022; Beardsley, 2018) according to which an object may or may not be perceived to stimulate an aesthetic interest. The aesthetic definition of art by Beardsley (2018) may help in distinguishing the concept of meaningful patterns in the context of arts and literature, as according to Ford (2015) definitions of information are loose: on a fundamental level, humans experience a continuous stream of tactile, auditory, and visual stimuli providing data and information to be either ignored or integrated into knowledge structures.

Dissimilarly to the definition of ISB adopted in the thesis in the INTRODUCTION chapter, Wilson in his 1996 model (Wilson & Walsh, 1996) nests information seeking under information behaviour and excludes elements such as incidental information acquisition and using information. The thesis at hand, concerned with the needs, searching, and use of information therefore passes into the territory of *information behaviour* in the view of Wilson. Wilson further separates information searching into using a particular search tool,

and this specific activity is encompassed in the broader concept of information seeking. One relevant notion of Wilson (2000a), which guides the research design of the thesis is the distinction between passive and active information seeking. Incidental information acquisition (Heinström, 2006), also known as serendipity, is a prime example of passive information seeking, as opposed to active searching. Serendipities may occur for example during everyday information seeking (Savolainen, 1995) and pleasure reading (Ross, 1999).

Using information is included in the research objectives of the thesis based on its importance to ISB. Savolainen (1999) argues for the essential nature of information use in ISB studies positing that there is no sense in studying information needs and seeking, unless it is also examined how the received information helps (effect), or what is done with it (use). This kind of approach promotes a more holistic understanding of ISB (Kari, 2001). Furthermore, Ford (2015) postulates that focusing on information outcomes (i.e. whether and how information is used, and what is its impact) would increase the relevance of ISB research to practice, as opposed to having purely theoretical implications. Ford explains that being able to assist individuals and organisations in achieving advantageous outcomes and effects with information is vital to the assessment and development of services. This coincides with the research aim of the thesis, benefitting practicing artists in informing the design of information resources.

Besides information use, another component inquiry of the research question *why* (RQ3) is the motivation behind an individual's ISB. Nahl (2004) claims that motivation fuels ISB, and Heinström (2006) concurs by stating that the more interest an individual has in a given topic, the more broad and explorative is the information seeking. The motivation is assumed to begin with perceiving an information need or an information-related need (Ford, 2015). Ford clarifies that information-related needs are needs that have implications as to the way an individual interacts with information (e.g. seeking or avoiding), encompassing direct information needs within. It is further noted that a fundamental need, such as self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968), becomes an information-related need, when associations with information are perceived by the individual (Ford, 2015). According to Ford, awareness of an information need may be unconscious as well, the perception of it arising at the point of encountering information serendipitously. Relevantly to seeking the aesthetic, not all information needs that motivate ISB are considered relating to problem-solving (Prakken, 2004) or filling a gap (Dervin, 1999; Savolainen, 2000) – some are characterised by a rather

more positive interest (Wilson P. , 1977). Subsequently, it is postulated that an aesthetic interest could be considered an information need when implications for related information are perceived.

In the domain of ISB, Wilson (2006) states that fundamental human needs depicted by Maslow (1968) have commonly been categorised into three types: physiological, cognitive, and affective. As information seeking is not considered a need in itself but is conducted in order to satisfy a more fundamental human need, Wilson argues for the relevance of the concept of 'information seeking towards the satisfaction of needs'. Hence, the motivations for seeking information could be rooted in any of the fundamental human needs. Maslow (1970) expanded his original five-stage hierarchy of needs model by specifying cognitive needs and aesthetic needs in the pyramid structure (Figure 4). Along with self-actualisation needs, Maslow categorises cognitive and aesthetic needs as 'growth needs', as opposed to the lower needs driven by deficiency. In the case of deficiency needs (i.e. physiological, safety, belonging & love, and esteem) motivation decreases as the needs are met, whereas for growth needs (i.e. cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualisation, and transcendence) motivation tends to increase as needs are met (McLeod, 2018). Zhijin, Peng, and Zhengbiao (2011) note that human needs from any level can create various information needs and behaviours.

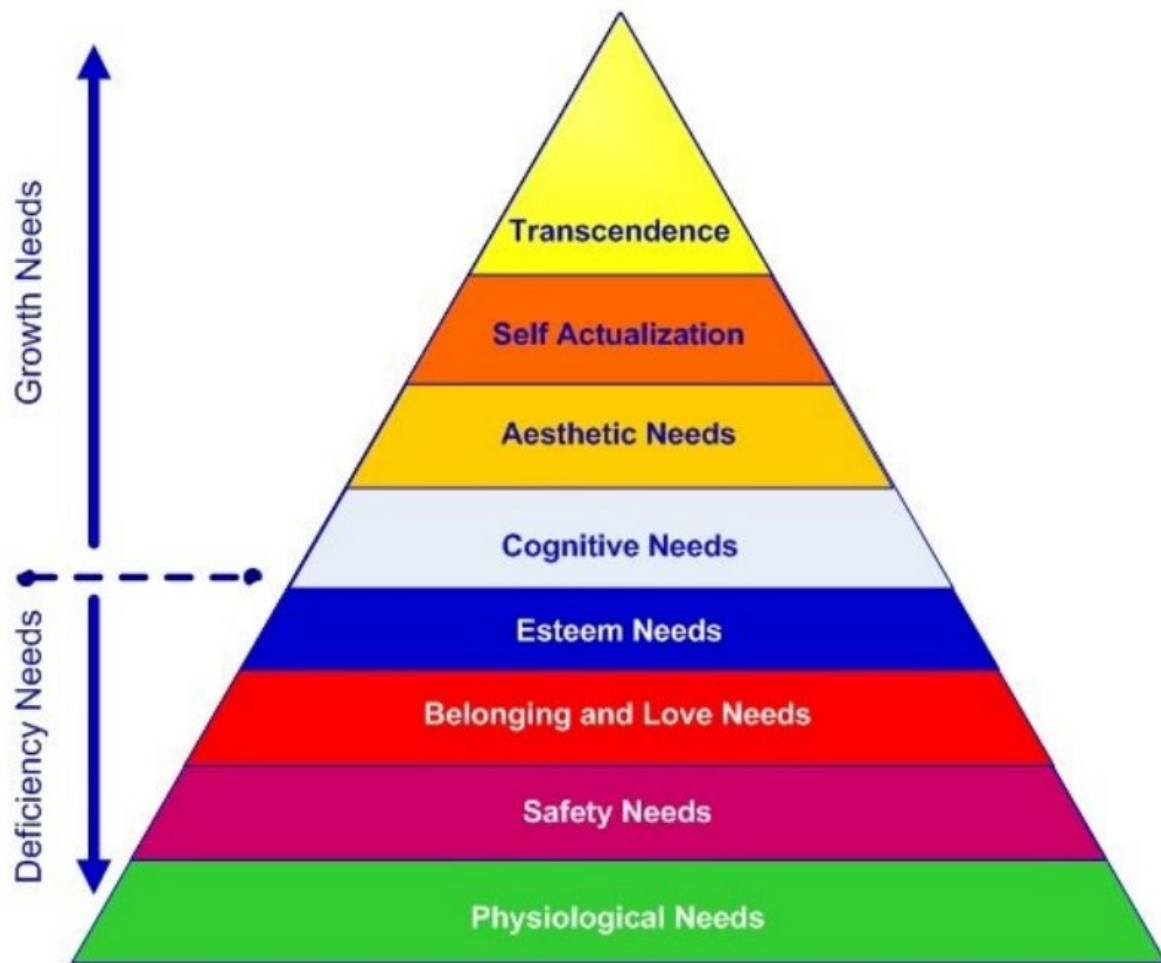


Figure 4. Maslow's motivation model (McLeod, 2018)

Aesthetic needs are about the appreciation of and search for beauty and all things aesthetic (Maslow, 1970), and they correspond with the concept of aesthetic interest as described by Beardsley (2018) in the section 2.2 Aesthetic dimension above. Liu and Cheng (2022) show that the fulfilment of aesthetic and self-actualisation needs has a relationship with artistic creativity. Aesthetics, a sensation of entities experienced mentally, is a fundamental human need (Maslow, 1970) and also the characteristic most essential to artistic creativity (Onah, 2015). It is consequently suggested that aesthetic needs, too, could effectively motivate information seeking in the context of higher things. Information being a cognitive construct, the attempted satisfaction of cognitive needs is implied in information seeking (Ford, 2015). Affective factors of ISB are elaborated on in the 2.3.2 Affective dimension in information seeking subsection of this chapter below.

Cole (2012) claims that “information need is at its deepest level primarily a human adaptive mechanism – at the level of perception, at the level of society and the world in which the individual operates, and at the level of survival as a species” (p. 78). Hence, ‘easy win’ strategies are prevalent in ISB, and shallow, ‘least effort’ (Zipf, 1949) approaches are frequently adopted by information seekers (Mansourian & Ford, 2007). According to Zipf (1949), the principle of least effort dictates that people attempt to minimize the amount of effort they expend on a given task. In other words, individuals have a propensity to naturally pursue a course of action that maintains a harmonious balance in their use of resources. This entails managing their behaviour in a manner that allows them to accomplish their tasks with the least average amount of effort possible. The principle of least effort has been expanded to encompass the domains of information seeking and problem solving (Case & Given, 2016).

Information need in Cole’s (2012) view ties fundamentally to survival, which is considered to belong to the lower sphere of contexts by Kari and Hartel (2007). In turn, seeking of higher things and satisfying growth needs, such as the aesthetic, are motivated by something other than survival (Maslow, 1970). Therefore, as implied in the 2.1 Higher things section above, in the context of the aesthetic ISB is likely to be more persistent (Hersberger, 2002/2003) and does not necessarily follow approaches of ‘least effort’. Desire (Spink, Ozmutlu, & Lorence, 2004) and interest (Beardsley, 2018; Dodd, 2014; Wilson P. , 1977) are likely to act differently from survival as motivators for information seeking.

Ford (2015) acknowledges that human beings may differ significantly from each other in their information behaviour even within comparable situations and tasks. He states that many factors, both external and internal, may have an effect on ISB. Concerning the external, *leisure* and *work* are the factors most germane to the thesis. Leisure in itself is considered a higher thing (Kari & Hartel, 2007), and has been chosen as the situational context of ISB in the thesis. In the INTRODUCTION chapter, it was offered that in the context of the aesthetic, leisure time information seeking of artists could have an effect also on their paid work, unpaid work, or self-care (Robinson & Godbey, 1997), and that this ISB could therefore possibly be deemed a form of serious leisure, which the pursuits of higher things are often considered (Stebbins, 1982). In terms of internal factors, the affective dimension is the most pertinent in the context of the aesthetic, as according to Lee (2018) creativity, emotions, and affective elements will be of most value to humans in the future insurgence of AI.

Furthermore, Beardsley (2018) claims that a certain affect, which is detached from practical

matters, is inherent in the aesthetic experience. Affect and feelings, then, could be regarded also as motivations for ISB, as Wilson (1999) concurs that information needs themselves may develop in conjunction with different aspects of living and working.

While ISB research in the context of higher things is sparse, it has been observed that phenomena in the higher sphere can be reduced or forced into traditional human behaviour models (Dilman, 2000). Kari and Hartel (2007) argue, however, that the outcome of such information studies leaves something to be desired regarding the complexity and novel elements of the phenomena. Kari (2001) claims that information needs, as well as motivations for ISB are more diverse than traditional research into problem-solving suggests. Dervin (1999, p. 731) contends that the behaviour of individuals can be either more static (characterised by habit, stability, rigidity, and inflexibility) or fluid (exemplified by creativity, innovation, randomness, and flexibility). Dervin agrees that much of traditional research has focused on the static, habituated behaviour at the expense of more dynamic and creative processes. Moreover, Kari and Hartel (2007) observe that ISB may be simply a response to external stimuli, but it may also be a way to realise one's inner desires – information resources can also be used for leisure and pleasure, not only for practical purposes.

Ultimately, it is the need for the sense of fulfilment that drives all seeking behaviour of human beings (Gewirth, 2009; Maslow, 1968). As established, information needs may arise from want of higher things, which in turn can be characterised as – and stem from – more fundamental **needs** of self-fulfilment (Gewirth, 2009), self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968), or even the purely aesthetic (Maslow, 1970). Therefore, for the purposes of the thesis the term information need is inclusive of the concept of *information wants* proposed by Line (1974). In other words, it is posited, fundamental human needs transform information wants into information needs. Furthermore, the reception (*effect*) of information is considered transformational to the brain, as well as the life, of an individual (Dispenza, 2010). Nicholson (2002, p. 259) agrees and goes as far as to claim that knowledge and information are “the key to a better life”.

Information seeking of higher things can be seen to be about anticipation of a reward – a pleasurable expectation – as opposed to a painful expectation (Kari & Hartel, 2007). Additionally, the seeking and anticipation themselves may also be perceived as the reward (instead of the outcome), no matter if the process itself is pleasurable or painful (Lembke,

2021). Lembke explains that this is due to biological mechanisms related to seeking the fulfilment of human needs. It is inferred that the strength of motivations for ISB (*why*) could have the potential to affect the searching behaviour (*how*); stronger motivations allowing the individual mental fortitude to overcome greater effort, as opposed to opting for Zipf's (1949) approach of least effort. In example, it could be that an artist would put in extra effort to find background information on a piece of artwork that he or she has a strong aesthetic interest in. Correspondingly, Nietzsche (1967) famously noted that 'he who has a *why* can bear any *how*'. Sinek (2011) concurs that *why* is the question that can drive all other behaviour and establishes that "Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion" (2018).

2.3.1 Positive perspective in information seeking

The positive perspective has been overshadowed by the negative in ISB research (Kari & Hartel, 2007; Mitchell, 1988; Quinn, 2005), as well as in other branches of human sciences (Luthans, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001; Stebbins, 2009a). From a biological and psychological point of view, this is possibly due to the greater survival value of paying attention to the negative rather than the positive (Dispenza, 2010; Lembke, 2021; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Sheldon and King (2001) argue that such negativity bias, however, can obstruct comprehensible understanding of reality. According to Martin (1998), the reluctance to consider new perspectives, as well as the focus on negativity and problems lead to negligence of novel ideas, fundamental questions, and anomalies. Julien (1999) contends that the negative perspective in information science portrays individuals as somehow flawed, even as "'patients' whose symptoms require diagnosis" (pp. 586-587).

Instead of this negative bias in conceptualising information needs, Wilson (1997) posits that it could often be more fitting and beneficial to observe information needs in a positive way, as an interest or want to bolster and develop knowledge of the individual. Additionally, the positive perspective in ISB research entails examining aspects of information behaviour, which would support information processes, in contrast to factors obstructing them (Dervin, 2005; Kari, 2001). Most importantly, however, information scientists should scrutinise their own interpretations of phenomena as not to impose their perspectives and preconceived

notions on the subjects of study, whether they be positive or negative (Naumer, Fisher, & Dervin, 2008).

The positive perspective in information seeking is conceptually tied to the study of higher things and the aesthetic, the definition of higher things being “usually positive human phenomena, experiences, or activities that transcend the daily grind with its rationality and necessities” (Kari & Hartel, 2007, p. 1133). Kari and Hartel convey, though, that even if positivity itself is a higher thing, not all higher things are positive, nor do all positive phenomena belong to the higher sphere. It is concluded that studying the seeking of the aesthetic should nonetheless be approached with openness to the possibility that the seeking is driven by positive motivations and feelings (e.g., interest or desire) as opposed to solving an unwelcome problem or filling a gap. This view is strengthened by the observations in the field of positive sociology, which examines precisely how and why individuals pursue their desires, and how do they make their lives worth living for (Stebbins, 2009a).

Sheldon and King (2001) illustrate the importance of positive psychology and claim that scientists “should try to cultivate a more appreciative perspective on human nature” (p. 216). They argue that motivations, potentials, and capabilities of individuals ought to be studied without a bias toward negativity, for ‘normal’ human behaviours do not exist solely within a negative, or problem-focused frame of reference. Meyers (2000) concurs, demonstrating that a majority of human beings consider themselves thriving – instead of merely surviving – and therefore have a higher level of happiness and life satisfaction. Just as Kari and Hartel (2007) argue for a holistic balance between higher and lower things in research, correspondingly Sheldon and King (2001) argue for the value of positive psychology in examining human behaviour. Lyubomirsky (2001), having studied the role of motivational and cognitive processes in human well-being, postulates that happy people appreciate what is available to them, instead of focusing on lack. Therefore, the focus on *lack* of information (Kuhlthau, 1993a) could be substituted in perspective by a more positive *want* for information (Line, 1974). In a further example, the feeling of *anxiety* (Kuhlthau, 1993a) regarding ISB, could manifest instead as *curiosity* in anticipation of a reward (Marvin, 2015).

Hartel et al. (2010) trailblazed the positive perspective in information science, inspired by work in the fields of positive sociology and psychology. Positive information science has its focus on the positive traits and behaviours of information users, positive aspects and contexts of information phenomena (e.g. seeking higher things), as well as developing positive

qualities of information systems. Insights generated from the study of positive information phenomena are utilized in measuring and developing the performance of various information environments. The goal is to reveal how information practices may improve the quality of life, allowing human beings to thrive with information. A positive perspective in information studies is particularly pertinent to the culture of the Information Age – current information users enrich all facets of their life, including leisure and work, with information. (Hartel, Kari, Stebbins, & Bates, 2010)

2.3.2 Affective dimension in information seeking

Intricate processes of motivation, cognition, and emotion guide an individual's conscious or unconscious decisions to seek information (Heinström, 2006). The importance of emotions in regard to ISB has been acknowledged since the work of Kuhlthau (1991). Further studies and the adoption of the affective dimension in ISB research has been slow nonetheless (Julien, McKechnie, & Hart, 2005). Whilst information studies have focused on physical and cognitive processes, the role of emotions in information behaviour has been disparaged (Julien, 1999; Ross, 1999).

Terminology within the affective dimension, such as *affect*, *feelings*, and *emotions*, has been inconsistent, and the terms have often been used interchangeably (Shouse, 2005). The current thesis concerns itself with all the affective elements in ISB, but for the sake of deeper understanding the distinctions between the terms are elaborated on. As illustrated in Figure 5, Munezero et al. (2014) consider affect a non-conscious phenomenon, feelings as the conscious expressions of affect, and emotions as the outwardly displayed (social/cultural) expressions of affect and feelings. Furthermore, they describe sentiments as conscious emotional dispositions developed over time, which may along information be interpreted by the individual to form conscious opinions. Affect is therefore at the root of the individual's phenomenological experience in the affective dimension and eventually influences the individual's ISB along with feelings and emotions as the experience emerges in consciousness and is conjoined with current and past information.

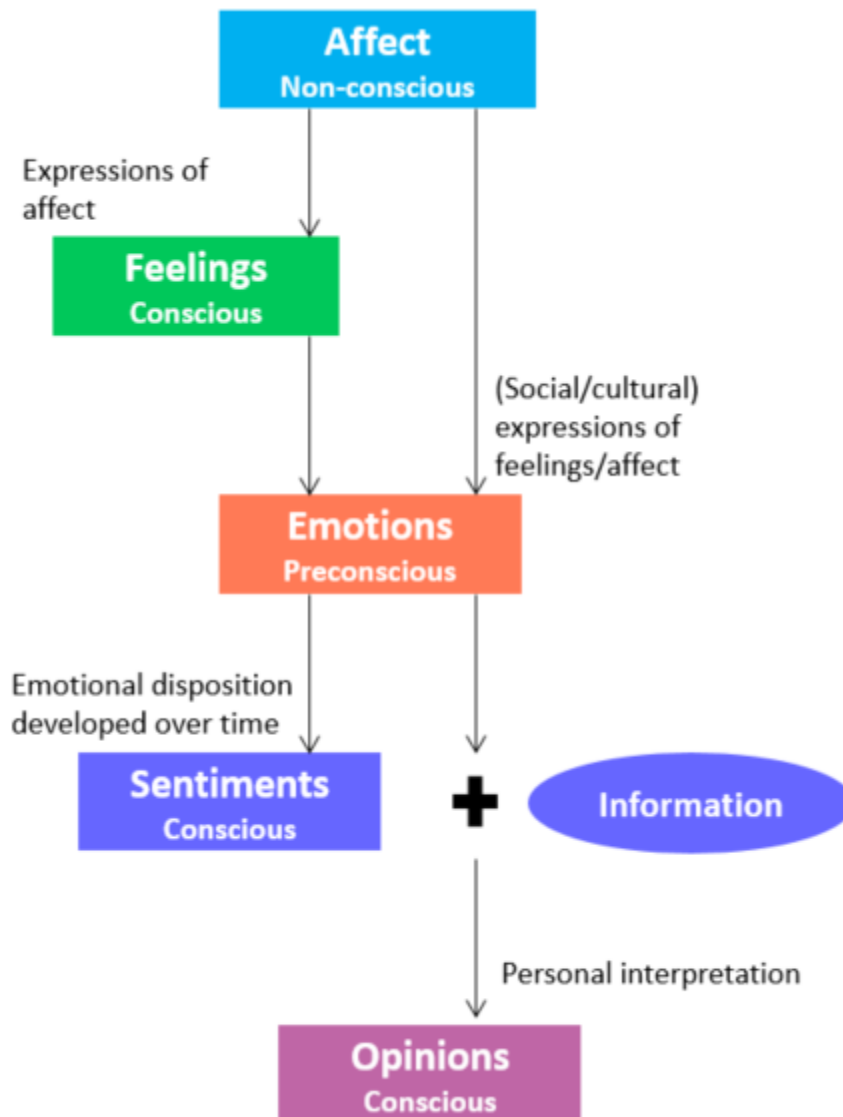


Figure 5. Relation and differentiating factors between affect, feelings, emotions, sentiments, and opinions (Munezero, 2018)

Shouse (2005) delves deeper into the definitions and observes that “feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal.” Feelings are sensations that an individual compares with past experiences and then labels (makes sense of). The personality and biographical nature of feelings stem from the individual’s unique previous sensations one recalls whilst interpreting the current feeling. An emotion, on the other hand, is the display or projection of a given feeling. Humans broadcast emotions to the external environment, sometimes to express inner states of being (as direct expressions of affect), other times to conform to social expectations. Shouse agrees affect to be at the root of the affective dimension: “An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed

and unstructured potential.” Affect as a concept is abstract, and cannot be wholly expressed in language, i.e. it is unconscious. It is a bodily mechanism, which imbues experiences with a certain intensity and ‘makes feelings feel’. Shouse elaborates that “at any moment hundreds, perhaps thousands of stimuli impinge upon the human body and the body responds by infolding them all at once and registering them as an intensity. Affect is this intensity”. Therefore, affect, which transforms into an experienced feeling, plays an important role in the phenomenological individual’s perspective. (Shouse, 2005)

Aesthetic experiences, such as that of music, are considered prime examples of how the intensity of the ‘impingement of sensations’ affecting the body can provide more meaning to the individual than even the message intended by the artist – in other words, the piece of music or art “moves” them (Shouse, 2005). Beardsley (2018) followingly describes the subjective reception of an aesthetic experience:

Sometimes in this receptive interaction we find that our experience (including all that we are aware of: perceptions, feelings, emotions, impulses, desires, beliefs, thoughts) is lifted in a certain way that is hard to describe and especially to summarize: it takes on a sense of freedom from concern about matters outside the thing received, an intense affect that is nevertheless detached from practical ends, the exhilarating sense of exercising powers of discovery, integration of the self and its experiences.

(p. 6)

Based on the abovementioned definitions of the terminology, feelings are the most pertinent affective factor regarding the ISB research of the thesis: feelings are consciously, subjectively, and phenomenologically perceived by the individual. Affects are unconscious, and therefore cannot wholly be expressed in language by the individual. Expressed emotions may be a good indication of feelings, although they can be feigned (Shouse, 2005), nevertheless, the study is not one of observation but inquiry (of the perceived experience) by way of interviews.

Savolainen (1995) regards affective factors as influential in information seeking. He typifies ISB approaches, both affective and cognitive, to be imbued with a feeling of optimism or pessimism. Furthermore, Savolainen (2012) postulates that affective, cognitive, and contextual factors intermingle and jointly affect an individual’s ISB. He exemplifies that how

the individual feels about performing a task may be just as influential a factor as the perceived benefit or self-efficacy. Savolainen (2014) further studied emotions as inhibiting or activating motivations for ISB. He concludes that “some emotions, for example anxiety, may motivate in multiple ways, ranging from starting information seeking to information avoidance, while other emotions such as joy are typically experienced while starting or expanding information seeking” (p. 64). Savolainen concurs that negative bias has dominated in ISB research also in the affective dimension.

Kuhlthau's (2004) work also shows how cognitive and affective factors interact with each other, e.g. cognitive uncertainty may produce affective reactions such as anxiety or satisfaction. Her model illustrates how negative or positive feelings may correspond with different stages of ISB. Therefore, according to Kuhlthau, different affective elements may permeate the ISB process in succession, in example from optimism to frustration, and to satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the end.

Wilson (1981) postulates that affective factors may also influence the selection of information sources. For example, an individual may choose a channel, which he or she has the most positive feelings toward. According to Wilson, needs of self-actualisation may also be regarded affective considerations, which consequently affect ISB. Moreover, Ford (2015) argues that the affective dimension can have an effect also on the use of information, as well as on the impact the sought information has. Negative feelings toward a piece of information might encourage the individual to discard or ignore information, whereas positive feelings might encourage utilizing and sharing information.

As established above by Sheldon and King (2001), positive psychology is vital to understanding human behaviour and aligns with higher things and the affective dimension: it is concerned with positive emotions and traits, and examines higher concepts such as creativity, love, virtue, and happiness (Hartel, Kari, Stebbins, & Bates, 2010). Greenshields and Polkinghorne (2020) argue that love can be used as a lens to view structures and power dynamics in the field of information science in order to illuminate and address various challenges. Moreover, Sheldon and King (2001) argue that the importance of positive emotions is intuitively known by people. Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory sheds light on this matter, as it suggests that positive emotions may accelerate the formation of valuable resources and skills.

Some further implications of positive versus negative emotionality in the context of ISB have been observed. A positive emotional state, or generally an invitational mood, tends to broaden information seeking (Heinström, 2005; Kuhlthau, 2004). Regarding passive information seeking and incidental information acquisition, a positive mood is indicative of increased attention, receptivity, as well as creativity (Heinström, 2006). Heinström adds that positive emotionality, characterised by high motivation, increases the probability of discovering relevant information serendipitously. Amusement and joy, positive states of high-activation, as well as the positive low-activation states of serenity and contentment are both found to enhance cognitive processing of information, as well as to expand the level of visual attention (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). Negative emotionality along with stress have been found to obstruct explorative ISB, as well as to decrease flexibility in seeking (Heinström, 2006). Additionally, Heinström argues that thought processes can be less divergent in stressed moods of negative emotionality, leading to less creativity.

2.3.3 Artists' information seeking

An artist is defined as “a person who creates art (such as painting, sculpture, music, or writing) using conscious skill and creative imagination” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b). Cobbledick (1996) claims that information needs of artists have been neglected in the field of information science. More recently, Lee and Haddow (2017) still concur research onto artists' information needs is comparatively limited. Most of the research into ISB of artists in general has been focused on art students and the academic art faculty (Hemmig, 2008). Specifically, Hemmig notes that published research of practicing visual artists is lacking. Research into information seeking of artists in the specific context of the thesis, the aesthetic (arts and literature), was lacking during the literature review.

In the broader concept of higher things, Munro, Ruthven, and Innocenti (2022) studied characteristics of ISB of creative DJs through the lens of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2009b). DJing was found to be consistent with serious leisure, as there were clear instances of it developing from a hobby into a more serious activity. Moreover, the relationship between work and leisure was fluid in the careers of the DJs. The distinction of work and leisure was in many cases so blurred, that the DJs were considered in Stebbins' (2009b) terms occupational devotees. Information seeking of music is seen integral to the information behaviour of practicing DJs. (Munro, Ruthven, & Innocenti, 2022)

Serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) is a collection of insights concerning leisure time activities. These insights are applicable in the study of ISB in a situational context of leisure (Hartel, 2005). They are particularly pertinent to the study of information seeking of artists in their leisure time, in their own area of expertise, as established by Munro, Ruthven, and Innocenti (2022) in the case of the practicing DJs. Information and ISB are integral to serious leisure, for individuals partaking in serious leisure pursuits make substantial efforts on the basis of purposefully procured knowledge, skills, or training (Hartel, 2003). Hartel notes that serious leisure generally takes characteristics of a career, the seeking of expertise typically being long-lasting and passionate.

As in the case of the DJs, the line between free time, paid work, unpaid work, and self-care may blur (Munro, Ruthven, & Innocenti, 2022; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Leisure belongs to the free time segment of activities (Robinson & Godbey, 1997) and is defined as an “uncoerced activity undertaken in free time” (Stebbins, 2002). Hartel (2003) argues that individuals partaking in serious leisure are willing to make considerable efforts to acquire information and knowledge, thus in information science the traditionally dominant principle of least effort (Zipf, 1949) does not hold unequivocally. Furthermore, Hartel suggests that studying ISB in the context of serious leisure may produce novel insights, and that information seeking in serious leisure activities can be seen in a more positive perspective in comparison to resolving gaps (Dervin, 1999) or uncertainties (Kuhlthau, 1993b).

Relevantly to practicing artists, Bawden (1986) studied the implications of information to creativity. He established that four different types of information are beneficial in the creative process: speculative information, peripheral information, interdisciplinary information, as well as inconsistencies and exceptions. Moreover, he discussed that information behaviours helpful to the creative process include random stimulation of ideas, finding analogies, favouring coincidences, and refraining from appraisal in the moment.

The analysis of interviews of artists conducted by Cobbledick (1996) revealed that artists lean on interpersonal sources for technical information as well as information about the local art scene; they benefit from libraries and printed materials; a significant portion of the material is not related to art; and that they often find the material whilst browsing specific subjects.

Medaille's (2010) study into ISB of theatre artists establishes six main purposes for their information seeking: (1) to understand an artwork's critical, cultural, and historical context,

(2) to familiarise oneself with historical or contemporary productions, (3) to search for materials related to performance, (4) to find technical or process information, or (5) performance materials, and (6) to advance their career aspirations. Notably, Medaille discovers that theatre artists value information seeking as vital to their creative endeavours – the artists' personal accounts of their artistic experiences illustrate ISB's critical influence in the creative process.

Lavranos et al. (2015) studied the interplay between musicians' ISB and their musical creative process, providing understanding into musical creativity and the corresponding role of satisfaction of information needs. 'Musical creativity' is seen as the artist's drive for expression, which is affected by the artist's ISB for that specific purpose. Musical creativity therefore acts as a motivating factor for information seeking. It has an inherent intentionality and is impacted by the self-efficacy of the artist, as well as the available information. The permutations of information resources, barriers, and the underlying needs enable or hinder musical creativity. Practical implications of this kind of research are to improve the design and development of music-related information services; to expand music information literacy skills for the enhancement of creativity; and to adopt the perspective of ISB to better enable artistic creativity. (Lavranos, Kostagiolas, Martzoukou, & Papadatos, 2015)

3 RESEARCH METHODS

In the previous chapters, the research gap of lack of contextual research in artists' ISB of arts and literature was discussed, and the research domain of higher things – more specifically the aesthetic – was expanded on. A secondary purpose of the literature review was for the author of the thesis to familiarise himself with the research topics, including the positive perspective and affective dimension of information seeking, in particular those of artists. Such thorough familiarisation with these topics of interest was necessary for a clearer picture of plausible research methods to emerge, and as a preparation for respondent selection, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The research questions of what, how, and why are all explored from a perspective of the individual, as perceived by the individual. The behavioural study in question belongs to the field of ISB. This chapter presents the research methods of the thesis, including the underlying philosophy of research, as well as the research design characterised by a phenomenological approach.

3.1 Philosophy of research

Epistemology, the philosophical branch concerned with the nature and justification of knowledge, is a fundamental methodological consideration of any research (Pernecky, 2016). The underlying philosophy of research – the methodology and epistemology of the thesis – is chosen to be *interpretivism*, as it coincides with the research objectives and the nature of knowledge sought after in the research questions. The interpretivist framework is an alternative to positivist methodology, and relies on a qualitative approach, multiple perspectives in interpretation, and a natural setting (Mathison, 2005). Qualitative research methods are thus adopted in the thesis, multiple perspectives of individuals' perception are uncovered in the semi-structured interviews, and the respondents are asked to recall their behaviour in a natural setting in their leisure time.

In the interpretivist perspective, it is believed that reality holds numerous meanings and interpretations in which emotions are involved (Mathison, 2005). In the thesis research, the affective dimension is one of the key aspects under investigation. Moreover, the goal of theorising in interpretivism is seen as understanding the lived experience of the individual instead of generalising abstractly (Mathison, 2005) – this viewpoint emphasises a deeper

understanding of the perception of the individual in the thesis research, and grounds the findings into more practical insights for the benefit of practicing artists.

Furthermore, in interpretivism the researcher and the informants of the study are seen as equals – openness and dialogue are inherent principles in the inquiry (Mathison, 2005). These principles guide the application of data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews. The author of the thesis, therefore, strives to withhold from imposing his own perspectives and preconceived notions on the informants of the study, and rather unravel the subjective perception of the individual in open dialogue with the informant. The act of inquiry in interpretivism is, accordingly, characterised as dialectic, subjective, and value laden (Mathison, 2005).

The current thesis research under the framework of interpretivism, in addition to the qualitative and subjective orientations, could be called *idiographic*. Idiographic research, as opposed to nomothetic research (which is concerned with generalisability), is described to be associated with the individual, unique, singular, and concrete (Vogt, 2005). These idiographic values coincide with those of the thesis: the individual perspective and the inclination towards real-life practicality in an effort to understand subjective phenomena. The strength of idiographic strategies is that the descriptions of each individual are vibrant and rich, but this can also be a disadvantage: in the end, the accounts tell only about one individual's perception of reality (Case & Given, 2016).

Regarding the philosophy of research, a process of reasoning – the judgements used to ground various approaches to research (O'Leary, 2007) – is also selected. The reasoning of the current thesis is *inductive*: the research begins with questions and is followed by collecting data. The collected data is explored for themes and patterns in order to extract novel insights. In induction, interviews are often used as the data collection method (O'Leary, 2007), just as in the current thesis. The goal of the research, then, is not to confirm any predetermined hypotheses, but to stay open to the possibility of discovery. In qualitative research, inductive methods are seen as the least biased way to interpret the data (O'Leary, 2007).

In inductive research, concepts are let emerge from the collected data (Ford, 2015). As the aim of the thesis is *exploratory*, it is therefore not an objective for the inductive approach to lead to creation of theory or models, but rather generate insights which may be used as a

starting point for further research or utilised in other ways. A disadvantage of inductive research is that the strength of statistics as evidence cannot be drawn upon to provide 'real and generalisable' results (Ford, 2015). Instead, the thesis research is *open-ended* and, thus, unforeseen findings are expected. As the research is interpretivist, idiographic, and qualitative, the results are not generalisable to different contexts or situations, but the inductive reasoning is an attempt for the findings to be transferable to related contexts or situations (Case & Given, 2016), based on the extent to which there is a 'resonance' between the compared contexts and situations (Ford, 2015). Ford concludes the matter by stating that "any science involving the cognitive, affective and social aspects of humans is limited in its scope to produce incontrovertible and predictive models and theories, due to the complexity of people and the contexts in which they operate" (p. 239).

The interpretivist framework encompasses *phenomenology*, a term that holds a multitude of interpretations and meanings (O'Reilly, 2009). In the next section, the phenomenological approach is presented as it is used in the research design of the thesis.

3.2 Research design

The research design of the thesis, the framework with which answers to the research questions are sought, is observational as opposed to experimental, as it is deemed that the lived experience of individuals is too complex for experiments to be conducted (6 & Bellamy, 2012). According to the research philosophy introduced in the previous chapter, the observational research in the thesis is interpretive and inductive.

The domain of the aesthetic, which is considered among the higher things in life (Bates, 2002; Maslow, 1970), can be studied from the viewpoint of information science, for information activities (e.g. seeking) are indivisibly entwined in such a context (Kari & Hartel, 2007). The study of information phenomena in aesthetics lends itself fittingly to the phenomenological approach, for phenomenology is literally the study of phenomena, particularly about how things appear in one's experience (Smith, 2018). Moreover, in studies of phenomenology the conscious experience in question is examined from the subjective perspective of the individual (Smith, 2018), which coincides with the nature of the aesthetic experience (Adajian, 2022; Beardsley, 2018).

Gorichanaz (2019) argues that in studying the pleasurable and the profound (i.e. higher things) in information science, the phenomenological perspective ought to be utilised. Kari and Hartel (2007) also call phenomenology a particularly suitable approach in this context. Armstrong (2005) concurs that phenomenology is an apt approach for studying the contexts of the aesthetic, works of art, and literature. In his view, phenomenology supports inductive research: attention should be focused on what is inherent in an individual's consciousness, without presuppositions about the origins of the perception. Armstrong argues that in phenomenology the lived experience of individuals is the underlying source of the value and meaning of all phenomena, and that for example aesthetic judgements are abstracted from the 'ebb and flow of the lived world'. Phenomenology, therefore, encapsulates the research objectives of the thesis, and guides the application of the research design.

Intentionality, a fundamental structure of an experience, is a concept integral to the phenomenological approach (Smith, 2018). Consciousness of an individual is always directed at something (Armstrong, 2005), and this is referred to as intentionality, which is in particular an experience of or about some object (Smith, 2018). This object of intentionality in the context of the thesis is an aesthetic one – a work of art or literature – as well as the recalled perception of that intentionality. Information processing, incidentally, happens within this intentionality, as information is embedded in the experience of an object of intention, and consequently the individual proceeds in executing behaviour with that information (Smith, 2018). The concept of intentionality is embedded in the ISB that is under investigation in the thesis.

Within the concept of intentionality, phenomenology is concerned with studying different types of experiences of human beings: emotions, thoughts, perceptions, memories, imaginations, desires, embodied actions, and so forth (Smith, 2018). The affective dimension, and all the perceptions and behaviours of the individual related to information seeking of the aesthetic are accordingly considered in the current research. *Subjectivity* of these experiences and perceptions is embedded in phenomenology and, thus, supports the exploring of the research questions. The subjective orientation may enhance the sensitivity of interpretation and understanding, as well as promote variability in perceptions and interpretation (Ford, 2015). The phenomenological research design introduced in this section constitutes the foundation for the methods of data collection and analysis presented in the following sections.

3.3 Qualitative methods

Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology (Usher & Jackson, 2014) and, thus, qualitative methods are employed in the research. Additionally, the research questions could not be adequately answered by simple 'yes or no' hypotheses, nor with quantifiable data – rather, words and meanings are emphasised. The goal is to explore the artists' ISB in the context of the aesthetic to gain an understanding of it. Case (2016) notes that “researchers may use qualitative approaches for exploratory studies, as the methodologies and methods allow researchers to tap into people’s minds to examine a new idea, tool or experience” (p. 229). Pertinently to the research at hand, qualitative methods are suited to comprehend empirical phenomena (Reneker, 1993), and perform well in the absence of pre-existing theory (Wilson T. D., 2000b). Moreover, qualitative methods may be more sensitive to specific contexts (e.g. arts and literature) (Miller & Dingwall, 1997), and can be employed in a more natural setting (Mathison, 2005). In the long term, it is argued for the aggregate of explorative qualitative studies to provide a deep understanding of any information phenomena (Martyn, 1974).

Qualitative methods are chosen to answer the research questions also because of their practical orientation, as Ford (2015) claims that quantitative and deductive methods in contrast cannot “reflect the complexity, ambiguity and context-dependent variability of real life” (pp. 174-175). It comes down to the nature of the knowledge sought after in the research questions, as well as evidence required to support it. In the thesis at hand, they correspond with qualitative methods: they allow for a more complex and holistic viewpoint to the phenomena (Ford, 2015). The research is qualitative namely as data is in the form of interview transcripts rather than numbers, and that it is analysed for concepts and themes rather than counting variables and relying on statistics.

In contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative methods can be seen disadvantaged in terms of lacking precise definitions, as well as the isolation and measurement of variables (Ford, 2015). However, as Ford argues, such quantitative reduction of a phenomenon can cause it to lose much of its real-life holistic complexity and messiness, which are striven to be understood in the current research. The key advantage of qualitative methods in this regard – corresponding to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 – is that “researchers can bring to bear human qualities of empathy and deep subjective perceptions to understand at a deep level ‘what’, ‘how’, and

‘why’ of people’s experiences, thoughts, and behaviours” (Ford, 2015, p. 211). Subsequently, Wilson (1981) notes that the emergence of new concepts is precisely the goal of qualitative research, and it is needed as a preliminary method of exploring novel phenomena and contexts.

3.3.1 Data collection

Qualitative data collection is the process of obtaining unstructured data for the purposes of analysis and interpretation (Flick, 2018), in this case through interviewing respondents. *Qualitative interviewing* is used as the data collection method in the thesis, in the form of individual semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews the researcher has a schedule of questions, which are implemented in a flexible manner so as to allow the respondent to influence the direction of the interview (O’Reilly & Dogra, 2017). This is necessary to extract the phenomenological individual’s perspective to the research questions. Interview questions related to the *what* (RQ1) and the *how* (RQ2) of the artists’ ISB are more heavily structured to simply identify needs and forms of seeking, whereas to the *why* (RQ3) less structure is imposed. More in-depth focus is adopted for eliciting answers to the *why* question: the respondent’s perceptions of their motivations for seeking, as well as the use, effect and/or affect of information are explored from a subjective perspective as the lived experience of the individual. The primary advantage of semi-structured interviews is to allow for dialogue and openness to drive the data collection process (Mathison, 2005), yet have a degree of structure in the data from which to extract concepts and themes as answers to the research questions.

Prior to the interviews, the respondents are provided information about the purposes of the study, as well as the topics and questions of the inquiry in order to promote the reliability and validity of semi-structured interviews (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The interviews are conducted personally with each of the respondents either online (e.g. via Zoom) or face-to-face according to the preference of the respondent, as well as to accommodate for difficulties imposed by geographic distance between the interviewer and the interviewee. In the beginning of the interviews, the respondents are formally asked for informed consent. The respondents are asked a series of probing questions according to the predetermined structure, and ample time is allocated in between for follow-up questions by the interviewer, as well as impromptu sharing of experiences by the interviewee. The interviews are recorded with the

permission of the respondent, following proper research ethics, for more accurate transcription of the interviews for the purposes of analysis. No personal, nor identifiable data are collected of the respondents. The interview process may be further examined in **Appendix 1. Interview structure** in the APPENDICES below.

Key terms regarding the subject matter, e.g. *information*, *arts*, and *literature*, are let be self-defined by the respondents of the interviews with the guidance of the interviewer (relying on the concepts discussed in the LITERATURE REVIEW chapter), to allow for necessary openness to the subjective viewpoint sought after in the research objectives. Semi-structuredness, and the subsequent dialectic dialogue, of the interviews allows for a truer-to-life picture of the individuals' perceptions to emerge. The respondents are asked to describe their perceptions of the ISB experiences in an open-ended manner.

Theoretical sampling is utilised in the respondent selection. Theoretical sampling, in which “participants are selected on the basis of how richly they might be able to illuminate the emerging understanding of [sic] phenomenon under investigation” (Ford, 2015, p. 212), is suitable for the qualitative interpretive research at hand. As statistic generalisation is not an objective, random sampling is not required and, thus, focus is on the richness of the data gathered instead (Ford, 2015). While the lack of generalisability is a disadvantage, the richness of the description of the context of study may allow for resonance between other contexts and hence, allow for transferability of deeper understanding and insights (Ford, 2015). The artists, the respondents of the semi-structured interviews, are selected from various fields of expertise for the purpose of providing multiple different perspectives (as per the methodological implications of interpretivism). The artists are contacted in social media (e.g. Instagram), as well as through the personal connections of the author.

3.3.2 Data analysis

The unstructured data gathered, the interview transcripts, are analysed qualitatively. According to phenomenological research principles, the data derived from the phenomenological investigation is organised and analysed, and further summarised. Illustrative quotations from the transcripts are used to strengthen the concepts and their presentation (Ford, 2015). Findings are distinguished from prior research covered in the

LITERATURE REVIEW chapter, discussed, and concluded. Lastly, limitations, as well as future implications are considered. (Moustakas, 1994)

The method of the analysis is *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA), which is supported by interpretivism and the phenomenological approach employed in the study. The goal of IPA is to explore the subjective lived experience of the informants. According to IPA, the interpretative process is embraced not only by the researcher, but also the participant, who interprets his or her own perceptions of the ISB. Following the guidelines of IPA, particulars of the data are scrutinised first, so as to provide an in-depth overview of each individual case. Only then, the patterns of divergence and convergence across individuals are assessed. (Eatough & Smith, 2017)

With IPA the author is committed to understanding the phenomena of interest from a subjective perspective, believing in its value in formation of broader knowledge. IPA supports creative and imaginative ways of thinking about the ISB phenomena underpinned by phenomenology, for phenomenology informs the process of IPA. Besides the foundational interpretativeness of IPA, among the key features of IPA are experience and idiography. IPA aims to comprehend experience of individuals in the context of real life. This view coincides with the concept of intentionality (covered in the 3.2 Research design section above), as Eatough and Smith (2017) argue that “experience is a complex concept and for IPA it means attending to aspects of experience which matter to people and give rise to particular actions within a world that is ‘always-already to hand’ and inherently meaningful” (p. 7). Furthermore, this experience is subjective as it is phenomenal rather than objective reality. The analysis is idiographic in the sense that the practical and unique aspects of the ISB phenomena are striven to be understood, without undermining the integrity of the informant. (Eatough & Smith, 2017)

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a synopsis highlighting the most relevant findings and analysis of the individual interviews. Following this, the patterns of divergence and convergence across all interviews are assessed. The major themes focused upon in the analysis are the respondents' subjective, phenomenological perspectives to the questions *what*, *how*, and *why* of seeking the aesthetic as per the research questions, as well as major topics (e.g. higher things, relatedness to creative work and self-care, hierarchy of needs, and serious leisure) covered in the LITERATURE REVIEW chapter.

A total of four (4) respondents were interviewed, and the interviews lasted between 70 and 100 minutes in length. Three of the interviews were conducted in English, and one was conducted in Finnish. The quotes from the interview held in Finnish were translated into English by the author. Although it was not a requirement of the respondent selection, the author finds it noteworthy to mention that the respondents interviewed all have at least ten (10) years of experience as practicing artists.

Respondent 1 (R1) is a writer. R1 seeks arts and literature mostly from their own field, of literature: "Most often I seek books and audio books... Fantasy books, inspiring biographies and true stories, books on spirituality and self-development. And basically anything with beautiful writing, especially in English". R1 also actively seeks music, either something completely new, or something they have enjoyed since adolescence. From time-to-time R1 attends live performances, such as music concerts: "There is something magical about live performances". Moreover, R1 seeks visual art in social media, mostly that of their artist and hobbyist friends'. R1 also considers some movies "true pieces of art" but thinks that such are a rarity.

Additionally, R1 often comes across the aesthetic by chance:

I would say I find most of my arts and literature unexpectedly. I hear new music, when I turn on the radio in my car. Sometimes I use the app Shazam to find out the name and artist of the song and save it for later. I also like the recommendations lists on Spotify. Sometimes they miss the mark, but

every now and then I find true gems. Then I click the 'like button' or save them to a playlist.

R1 rarely visits art galleries, unless a friend of theirs asks them to join to visit one. R1 considers these excursions as unexpected and spontaneous, and often happily obliges as such art viewing is “more fun together with friends”. That is when R1 comes across paintings and other visual art they would not have otherwise seen. Whilst exploring a new city, R1 visits intriguing churches for both aesthetic and spiritual reasons. Exploring on a leisure pace is precious to R1: “Taking a walk, I see art all around me”. R1 recounts social media a great medium to come across art unexpectedly whilst scrolling or browsing: “I follow a lot of artists in social media, so my feed is filled with art. Photographs, paintings, pictures of fresh tattoos.”

R1 appreciates the information related to the artworks, as well as the information value of arts and literature:

Mostly I just want the aesthetic experience, however, I am interested in knowing the names of the authors and artists of the artworks. Particularly in the case that I find the artworks so interesting that I want to experience more of the works of that given author or artist. Often, I am also interested in the year of production or publication, as that gives a lot of context into the information and setting found in the artwork, especially in the case of literature. It could also be said that I look for information within a literary text for example, things I can draw inspiration from, or perhaps for personal development. One can find beneficial, actionable information even in fictional literature.

R1 is adamant in their avoidance of any arts and literature that evoke negative feelings and elaborates: “I feel very susceptible to the emotional influence of artworks, especially in the form of stories in books and movies. Sometimes it’s tricky though – a movie might start all happy-go-lucky, and then get darker and darker towards the end”. Furthermore, problematically, R1 considers it difficult to stop watching halfway a movie, or stop reading halfway a book, even if they no longer enjoy it. Abandoning the viewing or reading of something no longer enjoyable is something R1 has tried to learn for the longest time.

R1 seeks new books to read in multiple ways but most often discovers them serendipitously; recommendations from friends, listening to podcasts, as well as from other books:

Some time ago I was reading this book called Tools of Titans by Tim Ferris. In each of the sections, an influential person shares at least one recommendation of a book that was really important to them. I took note of those books that sounded interesting to me, and since then I've been reading or listening to many of them. I think it's a great way to find more books to read. Rarely I start by searching for books by a specific topic, but I do seek books by an author I like. ... For example, I would read anything written by Gregory David Roberts or Patrick Rothfuss, their literary skill is off the charts. It's so beautiful to read, and the stories are engaging too.

Searching by author, then, is more common for R1 than by any specific topic. R1 recounts that having found a book they want to read; it is easy to find it online.

R1 is likely to put much more effort into seeking something they are interested in, as opposed to solving a need or a problem. R1 tells in a positive tone about their *obsessive* seeking of information, staying up much later than intended by a computer. When solving problems, on the other hand, R1 is easily satisfied with the first workable solution.

R1 mentions eyestrain as their biggest barrier to searching for information:

As you can see, I am wearing these glasses, and without them my eyes would get tired so fast while reading or looking at anything with detail. So, the glasses definitely help... But I would still like to be able to read more in one go. I mean, I usually have to stop when I feel a migraine coming. I'm quite sure it's because of eyestrain. I am so glad that I found audio books. I can read, or rather listen to, so much more with audio books, without noticing adverse effects. I can also listen to audio books while I walk, or when I have already put out the lights at night-time. It's great.

The main reasons for R1 to seek the aesthetic are learning and inspiration. R1 loves to learn new things, for the sake of learning alone. Furthermore, R1 wants to improve constantly in all areas of their life, including their craft. R1 considers it an additional benefit to be able to share and help others with the information. Inspiration is just as important to R1: "Inspiration

I get from arts and literature gets me through rough patches in life. I want to be in awe of life and anything beautiful that has been created”.

Reading literature is considered essential to their craft by R1, however, there is a caveat:

At a young age I was already interested in writing, and I was told that to improve your writing you must read writing by others. So, I took that to heart and was reading ferociously at times. The problem with that, though, is that if you only keep reading, you never practice your writing. I fell too much on the consumption side of literature and have never been too prolific in my writing. You must find a balance... A balance between consumption and creation. You need both I think, for fulfilment. I was also told that I should write what I know, what I have experienced. So, I must seek experiences outside the books as well. From other art, and life itself. Travel is great. Incidentally, while travelling you see so much art everywhere... Art from different cultures. They can be a great influence on one's own work.

R1 says that arts and literature may be both pleasurable and profound, however, he stresses that it can also be neither, depending on the personal preference of the experiencer. R1 would never call arts and literature everyday things but notes that they can be ‘shallow or even painful’.

R1 emphasises the positive influence of the aesthetic and claims to seek arts and literature more when feeling positive feelings, as then the positive aesthetic ‘resonates with them more strongly’. Sometimes, when R1 is feeling negative, they might be uplifted by music for example, but reconsiders their statement: “Then again, if I am feeling really down, even upbeat music just feels to add into the anxiety, and I would rather take a respite in silence.”

R1 looks forward to and experiences *flow* often in their reading, or when they ‘get in the zone’ while writing. Losing track of time is a positive experience to R1: “It feels good afterwards, satisfying.”

Seeking arts and literature is a considered a significant activity by R1, which fulfils not only self-actualisation and aesthetic needs, but some basic and psychological needs as well:

Yes, learning and growing are a high priority in my life. I make time every day to learn something new. I also want to both experience and create something beautiful every day. I would say that the more tired I feel, the more I want to curl up with a good book or watch a movie. So, that kind of takes care of some physiological needs too, rest... I do need to feel safe though, to enjoy any arts or literature. ... Arts and literature may help me feel like I belong. It can be the shared experience of walking through that art gallery with a friend, or the feeling of belonging you get when you are immersed in a really good book, you know? You feel like you are a part of the characters' life. I don't know if it's a good substitute for real life interactions, but it's definitely better than no interaction at all. Feeling awe for something beautiful, like truly great writing, is a pleasure in itself.

R1 perceives to experience joy, belonging, happiness, interest, and desire with the aesthetic. R1 is oftentimes 'moved to dance or sing along to music' and feels a wanting to 'keep going to see what happens next in the story'. R1 avoids art and literature that may invoke negative feelings, and instead yearns after 'the joyful: colourful, beautiful drawings'. R1 anticipates to feel better with arts and literature, and prefers stories with "clever lessons, inspiring characters, and... a happy ending". Awe and appreciation are among the most important affects of the aesthetic for R1:

Awe of beauty, no matter if it's visual, musical, or literary. Just the day before I was watching this show called "Moving Art" on Netflix. It's beautiful cinematography of nature, and also of people doing aesthetic things like... Like fire dancing. It felt very much like art to me. It inspired awe in me, and I felt giddy with excitement to dream to visit places like that in the future. Somehow it wasn't as stimulating as a sitcom for example, but it just felt... Good. Good to watch it, you know? It was beautiful, and it made me appreciate all the beauty in the world. I feel I am inspired by all things beautiful. I guess that's one reason I seek arts and literature... To experience something beautiful. To appreciate everything... To appreciate life and people, to appreciate all the people who create and make the world a beautiful place.

R1 has understood from others that many artists do their best work while experiencing negative, 'even devastating feelings', but does not share the sentiment: "In those times, I couldn't imagine bringing pen to paper to create something beautiful. I would rather journal, bring out the gunk, right?" Journaling in such a situation R1 considers making room for them to be creative again. Inspiration is something profoundly positive for R1.

R1 reads also for spirituality and self-development, and the lessons they wish to take immediate action with so as not to forget them. R1 believes that "if the information or knowledge is not used, it's just philosophy." Hence, R1 reads some books several times, writing notes as well as their own thoughts on the subject. In other forms of art, inspiration and feeling better are the greatest effects for R1: "I feel, then, better about my life, and my creations."

R1 perceives most benefits of the aesthetic as subconscious: influences on vocabulary, writing style, and perceptions of beauty: "I mean... I'm not consciously paying attention to sentence structures and whatnot, but those leave an imprint in my mind, don't they?"

Viewing something creative inspires creativity in R1. Sometimes, R1 may even reproduce a picture by drawing: "It's not my forte, but I think it's good for my process". Generally, R1 strives for originality in their work, but notes firmly that "you cannot shut yourself down from the world [and it's influences]". R1 often heeds to intuition and creative imagination but finds the origin of these insights a mystery.

R1 finds the aesthetic valuable to their wellbeing, especially as an alternative to socialisation:

Sure, I think I could get the same benefits from social interaction or other activities, but most of the time I prefer a good book to a social gathering. The introvert that I am, I feel my energy is drained in a social setting, whereas reading a book with relatable characters gives me a sense of belonging... This is, how could I say it... a pseudo-social experience. That is with the literary characters, as well as the author or narrator of the book. The same goes for viewing works of art in social media. Liking or commenting on an artwork gives me sort of this sense of being part of it all, being connected. Sometimes it's difficult to get back on the socialisation-horse, when I've been off the saddle for so long. But a good book never fails.

Whether arts and literature are relaxing to R1, depends a lot on the piece of art. Many a book are more stimulating than relaxing to R1. R1 explains they need the right balance between relaxation and stimulation, in order to be at their most creative: excess stress needs to be relieved, but one must also feel 'perked-up' to get to work.

R1 strives to apply information and knowledge from arts and literature in their life and work. R1 is keen on sharing the insights with others, 'often even to unwilling listeners'. R1 does not make their aesthetic judgements known to others, however, but rather contemplates inwardly:

I think there are so many different tastes and preferences in the world, each to their own. Mostly I want to learn about myself. I use many of the concepts I learn from literature in my everyday meditations. I guess... "Who am I?" is the most fundamental question I am looking for answers to in arts and literature.

Respondent 2 (R2) is a singer and writer. In the aesthetic domain, R2 actively seeks music, specific songs, poems, dance performances, new adaptations, and new artists: performing art in general. R2 also seeks anything beautiful, aesthetically pleasing; paintings and photographs of landscape are among their favourites. R2 is also curious of many forms of modern art, such as music videos. R2 additionally seeks literature, from fictional novels to psychological literature and scripture.

Serendipitously R2 comes across all manner of arts and literature "all the time". In their preferred daily newspaper R2 encounters "articles related to art and music, information related to theatre productions, literature reviews. Poems. And of course, photographs... Photography art". R2 elaborates that for example advertisements of theatre productions seen by chance may lead them to buy tickets and watch the play. On television and radio R2 also comes across art unexpectedly, e.g. music, light art, and many other unanticipated forms of art in the programs. R2 produces a multitude of examples of serendipitous encountering of art in their lived life:

I was also thinking of... There are many kinds of art I come across by chance, even walking down the street. Graffities, even great ones. Posters. Spatial and street art can be truly great as well. And then, you can

nowadays see a lot of conceptual art in people's homes, such as knitted paintings with inspiring messages, especially in the homes of contemporary youth. On holidays I've often come across many kinds of performing acts, they can be intriguing as well. And of course, I also want to mention churches. Just yesterday I was in the church... There you come across beautiful paintings and architecture. Sculptures... And naturally, church music.

Regarding information related to the aesthetic, R2 seeks topical and timely information on the art scene. Within literature R2 seeks generally educational, psychological, and spiritual information and knowledge. Considering other works of art, R2 is interested in the background information, the meaning and origin of the artwork. R2 gives an example: "When and how a song has come to be, and why has it been created".

R2 avoids abstract art, as it is not "pleasing to the eye" for them. R2 ponders that it could be just because they do not fully understand it: "Nowadays they make these very big installations, from whatever materials, but I just don't understand them, especially if they are very abstract. I mean, what do they do with them afterwards? I prefer not to pay much attention to them". R2 clarifies that they have a strong preference for figurative and performing art instead.

Actively R2 seeks the aesthetic in multiple ways:

Library is one, although nowadays it has come more to googling, the Internet. That's where I search for information. Music you find in YouTube. And then, the newspaper I find a very valuable source, magazines too. Where else? The civic college was a great source for me in the past, that's where I took singing lessons. I have joined writing groups too.

In a library R2 gravitates to specific (physical) sections to search for material in their topics of interest. For R2 topics take more importance than a specific author, although especially in fiction they might search for more by an author of interest. Recommendations by others are a significant source of the aesthetic to R2 as well.

R2 perceives to put more effort into seeking something they are interested in, although at times in their writing process they are in need of some information to progress, and they heed

the needs of advancing their writing extremely seriously. Generally, R2 does not perceive problems in or barriers to information seeking, rather they feel natural parts of the process. Moreover, R2 often seems to effortlessly find the kind of aesthetic information they are searching for.

As to the motives for seeking the aesthetic, R2, above all else, enjoys ‘all things beautiful’, and produces from their mind a myriad of other reasons too:

... [I enjoy] beautiful pictures, music, and interesting books. Then, I want to develop myself, and educate myself. I want to learn, also to learn to express myself better. I want new experiences. And then there is this thing... I want to escape reality. I want to find consolation to my grief. A part of it is also being able to share the experience of art with others, that is a big one...

R2 also seeks arts and literature to fulfil their potential, “to seize opportunities”, and to express themselves (especially through their own creative work). R2 perceives seeking arts and literature to certainly be beneficial to their creativity. Generally, R2 finds arts and literature pleasurable, even profound at times. It is all about their personal experience, however, as R2 elaborates: “Art is something that reinforces my existing feelings. If one is joyful, then it strengthens the feelings of joy. On the other hand, if one is sad, then it reinforces the sadness”. R2 considers arts and literature among the higher things in life in a sense, but clarifies that “It is, however, now that I think about it, a vital part of everyday life”.

R2 seeks the aesthetic more when feeling positive feelings, but negative feelings also have their place when it comes to arts and literature:

When you are feeling positive feelings, you have more energy – more enthusiasm – to be interested. That is when you also observe... Notice more art all around you, in your surroundings. Then again, negative feelings – they might encourage some creative writing. I think that I’ve needed both positive and negative feelings in my writing. It’s often easier to get started, when you aren’t grappling with some distracting feelings or needs, though... So, I would say that positive feelings are more important at the end of the day.

R2 experiences flow states with arts and literature, particularly when they are writing, reading, or investigating some issue. “One can really lose their sense of time”, recounts R2 and remarks that afterwards it feels great, having had a “respite from the daily struggles”, as well as experiencing feelings of accomplishment. Additionally, it may feel like having experienced something good, or learned something new. On the other hand, according to R2, sometimes the experiences of flow may lead to stress, suddenly noticing having spent too much time on something.

Regarding the hierarchy of needs, it can be inferred that R2 prefers their basic needs to be satisfied before engaging in active seeking of arts and literature. However, aesthetic experiences are a high priority in the life of R2. R2 welcomes the serendipitous encounters throughout the day, every day, no matter how they are feeling or whatever the state of their basic and psychological needs is. Creating art, on the other hand, corresponds strongly with R2’s self-actualisation (as in expressing themselves) and especially esteem needs: “Having written a great piece – it could be a speech too – I receive appreciation and respect from others. The same goes for singing well, too”.

With arts and literature R2 experiences:

All kinds of feelings. Joy and rejoicing. The joy of discovery, and the joy of insight. I mean... The joy of realisation. Appreciation for all things beautiful. Then, I also get consolation and solace, comfort... Not to forget excitement and thrill. I could mention peace, too. And then, of course, sadness, and even anxiety. ... Naturally, when I am feeling sad, then I might avoid that plaintive song. It would only add to the feeling of sadness; that is not something I want.

Even if R2 was not feeling good in the first place, certain music, such as contemporary worship music, “can offer so much – it can lead to feelings of empowerment”. In anticipation of aesthetic experiences, R2 recalls often feeling excitement, expectant interest, for example when they take a book home from the library.

The effects and benefits of experiencing arts and literature are many for R2, such as “learning to appreciate all kinds of art, and artists. Then to respect the environment, nature, and people. Gaining new experiences, getting smarter... And getting respected back”. Spiritual music R2 finds to have very direct and straightforward effects: healing, lowering stress, as well as

inducing a feeling of wellbeing and wholeness. R2 also finds arts and literature to affect their creative work: “Experiencing different kinds of content deepens my know-how and allows for fresh perspectives. It makes me feel self-assured. The more I seek information, the more I seem to be interested... It feeds itself”.

Their creative process R2 describes followingly:

I prefer to trust my own intuition, and... My own experience and skill. And then... I would not say that I wasn't imitating other artists to some degree, as they give me perspective, insights, and the like. In the end though, I want to be... original.

R2 reveals, however, to synthesise aesthetic experiences in their mind into new creative expressions, albeit subconsciously:

When I'm writing, I put things together. Things I have observed and experienced – they give meaning to my writing. Something I've found in arts and literature. Now that I think about it, it's kind of one of my strengths, one that I'm proud of. It feels like a gift, making all those connections.

Discussing literature, R2 makes a special mention of the Bible and its significance to their life, elaborating that: “There is a lot of art in the Bible. Songs, poems, proverbs, beautiful texts. There is so much to draw from, artistically and otherwise. I read the Bible daily, and often use it as a basis for my own writing”.

Arts and literature are a form of self-care to R2: “I think they are vital in maintaining my own psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. When you feel better mentally and spiritually, you feel it in your physical being also”. Furthermore, R2 perceives the aesthetic generally relaxing, which leads to enhanced creativity and ingenuity. A special effect of arts and literature for R2 is the information, knowledge, and experiences which they can make use of when raising children. R2 makes aesthetic judgements of arts and literature in their mind, for the sole purpose of choosing to share the greatest experiences with other people in their life. R2 shares final, salient thoughts on arts and literature:

I wish art was always done ecologically; we should support that. We have this beautiful nature, created by God. We should preserve it, for it is the

basis for so much of beautiful art – those landscape paintings, too... Nature is a true inspiration.

Respondent 3 (R3) is a musician. Within the aesthetic domain the main interests of R3 are visual and musical, both of which relate to their own field of art, as R3 elaborates:

Visually I like colours a lot. Colours and patterns. Colourful patterns on a black background. Something that I find really fascinating. ... Musical patterns are really interesting. Sequences done with synthesisers or some other instruments. For example, using delay. Could be that there's some kind of simple pattern that is the same all the time. Repeats itself, but then all kinds of effects are used to make it more interesting. And then there's the quality of the sound, and I don't mean any Hi-Fi quality but... how any instrument sounds. There are, for example, certain synthesiser sounds that are really enjoyable. Especially from the 70s. There are quite a lot of synthesiser lead sounds. Bass sounds, string sounds. Effects. These kinds of things I find quite pleasurable. What else? Progress, perhaps. Could be that a piece of music starts a certain way, and then progresses to something else altogether, and may also reprise to the beginning or something like that. And then there are also these vinyl album covers, which sort of combine the music and graphic arts. Some of them are really striking.

Additionally, R3 seeks films, TV shows, and video games, all of which they could perceive as art, but are not as important to them as music. Within these formats R3 seeks interesting worlds and stories: “Something that’s really different from normal, everyday life [is interesting]. Or, then again, something that simulates normal life quite closely... but may paradise it a bit for example.”

As for discovering music new to them, R3 finds Spotify a useful tool. Through it R3 encounters, from their preferred genres, new, interesting artists, and bands: “...some artists that are really obscure, so that they haven't been really popular ever, but now it is possible for their music to be heard by Spotify users”. Graphic arts R3 encounters serendipitously ‘everywhere’, e.g. on the Internet, in exhibitions, and even in theatre leaflets. Furthermore, an appealing cover picture of a book might kindle interest for R3 to pick up that book.

Generally, though, there needs to be an active interest or appeal in a given topic for R3 to seek literature.

R3 perceives arts and literature laden with informational value. Even if the primary reason for R3 to seek graphic arts is aesthetic pleasure, sometimes they need inspiration, or the study of a specific style, when making an album cover for their or their band's music. Listening to music, R3 pays close attention to all sorts of information, from inspirational to technical aspects:

For example, today I listened to the new album of Kosmischer Läufer, who is a synthesiser artist. It was a really good record, I think. ... I found some really inspirational stuff there and I already made some notes on what I should do myself: what kind of musical piece I should try to create.

What kind of sounds people are using, or what kind of elements? How is the piece of music done? How is it sort of arranged? What kind of sounds are there used? Are there any effects? Do I recognise some instruments and how do they work together? How are things mixed? I look for all those kinds of things. ... I'd like to incorporate those techniques to my own music.

Moreover, writing lyrics to some of their songs, R3 wants to base them on something, drawing inspiration from mythologies, modern stories, and 'all kinds of things'.

R3 deliberately avoids some arts and literature, such as films and TV shows, when the topic is too difficult for them – causing a reaction in them that they do not wish to deal with at that moment – or, when a piece of art is 'really disturbing'. The same goes for reviewing a piece of art, even if they value the initial experience:

For example, the Prestige is a really good film. I think it's one of the best films I've seen... But it was so difficult to watch that... And it left me really... I can't even describe it, but it was really difficult, so I'm not going to see it again.

As for how R3 seeks the aesthetic and related information, they praise the Internet as their main resource. Regarding graphic arts, R3 utilises image search, and notes that discovering the name of a given artist helps with further inquiries. R3 finds Wikipedia also a good resource for research, and elaborates on more intricate sources on the Internet:

...And then there are these specific websites that enthusiasts create and... Well, it could be that someone is really interested in some topic, and they go and create a website and then add all sorts of information in it. For example, there's someone who posted all the lyrics of Eläkeläiset songs in his website. And I think he gathered them by listening to the songs and then writing them out. So that's really dedicated. And of course, all kinds of forums are also really useful. For example, if I know I like some artist's sounds from a certain era and I want to find out which instruments they were using at that time, the information is usually quite easily to be found on the Internet. On some forum, there's always someone who is enthusiastic enough... Or has known or knows the person in question or could be that the person themselves is on the forum and remembers what synthesisers they used in the 1979 concert in Munich, for example.

Moreover, R3 highlights YouTube as another great resource, in which there are tutorials aplenty. For example, if R3 wants to replicate a specific synthesiser sound, “chances are that someone has made a tutorial on how to make it on some synthesiser and it can be adapted to the machines I have”.

R3 takes seeking arts and literature seriously for the benefit of their own craft, getting enthusiastic about a specific topic or even just a detail, on which they can stay fixated on for hours: “Something that just engulfs me so that I sort of forget other things and just... do that.” Generally, however, depending on their mood, it is often easier for R3 to start looking for information on something that needs to be done for their work, whereas to follow their interests it might be more difficult to “find the time or the motivation, or find the right moment to incorporate it [into their art]”.

The most salient problem with seeking the aesthetic for R3 is that “there's so much of it that it's sometimes difficult to find what you're looking for”. Subsequently, R3 could face difficulty in making decisions between choices of art to consume. Nonetheless, R3 would not want the choices to be limited either.

As to the why of seeking the aesthetic, aside from inspiration and specific information (including the analysis of musical techniques), R3 mentions entertainment as one of the main reasons. Moreover, R3 highlights the reactions that art evokes in them as the reason for their

intrigue in art. While these reactions are difficult for R3 to explain, they are all-encompassing in the sense that they have both affective and cognitive elements: a piece of art might move them, cause a feeling (either positive or negative), and consequently start a thought process. R3 perceives themselves to be quite reserved, and is less likely to emote these feelings outward, but notes that “I feel quite a lot of... inside me. So, it may not show but some things are really moving.”

Moreover, seeking arts and literature sets R3 ‘on the path where they can find the tools they need to express themselves better’ in order to fulfil their potential and self-actualise. Learned techniques and other useful things extracted from arts and literature accumulate into the skillset of R3, albeit oftentimes unconsciously. R3 also wants to experience beautiful things and expounds that one can find ‘beauty’ even in things that are not aesthetically pleasing at first glance – even “roughness and ugliness can be [perceived] beautiful in a way”. R3 further explains that this could be due to the artwork causing a reaction, which they can be perceive beautiful in a sense. An initially unattractive piece of music may become ‘something more’ for R3 when they keep listening to it.

R3 finds that arts and literature can be both pleasurable and profound, and shares an experience of a profound moment:

I was travelling on an aeroplane, and I was dozing, listening to music at the same time. I think I was almost asleep or almost awake, and I heard this piece of music. And it was really, really good. It was simple but elegant, beautiful. It had all the elements that make a good musical piece. I don't think I checked what it was, but I knew the artist. And I couldn't find it for a while after that, but I remember the moment when I listened to it. Even though I was in an unconscious state, or let's say less conscious state. Even now, when I think about it, I can really see myself or feel myself in the aeroplane listening to that music and... feeling all the emotions. The ambience. At that very moment. I sort of... Well, in my mind, I'm in that aeroplane.

Whether R3 finds arts and literature everyday things or something higher, depends on several factors and variables, some of which are difficult to account for, such as their mood or the

situation: "Sometimes I'm in such a mood that it is just entertainment and I just listen and enjoy it. ... I'm in another state, and it does other things to me."

R3 seeks arts and literature more when they are feeling positive feelings. R3 describes a negative state of mind 'more crippling', and in such a state they might consume some art to occupy their mind in avoidance of the negative feelings. Usually though, in a negative state of mind R3 just does not 'feel like it', whereas in a positive state of mind they might be able to enjoy arts and literature on another level, and it is easier for them to feel enthusiastic.

Flow R3 experiences often with arts and literature, especially when they are creating music:

It may be difficult to start, but then the process sort of fuels itself. It might just engulf me for hours. So, I don't remember to eat, and I don't go to the bathroom, or... It really occupies all my thoughts and brain functions.

The experiences of flow in art creation evoke some conflicting thoughts in R3 as to the priorities in their life. During flow, R3 might neglect basic needs such as eating, sleeping, or human contact. R3 reflects on the perceived negative connotations:

If I look at what time it is and then I see that, OK, it's been 6 hours and I have this many messages from someone. And then I feel that I have neglected my... Normal life. And it gives me quite a lot of... Perhaps anxiety is not the correct word for that, but... Guilt, perhaps? And regret that I've let myself go into that state, [especially] if there is something that I have neglected it as a result.

Such experiences may leave R3 feeling 'sort of exhausted' and as if they have 'failed somehow', specifically in their 'normal, everyday life'. R3 muses that these sorts of feelings might be caused by some personal trauma of failing expectations, or by not being in contact with other people; and the feelings may surface even if 'nobody expects them to do anything', and even if the results of the flow experience are inherently positive:

And even though... The results are amazing sometimes and I really enjoyed it and it's beneficial and I can express myself, and there's a lot of positive things and sometimes only positive things in that [flow experience]. It's really... Sometimes it's difficult to justify afterwards to myself for some reason.

R3 additionally notes that “I think it's easier to detach from consuming arts and literature than creating it. ... It's easier to put the game on pause. Or put the book down. For something.”

Furthermore, R3 shares that they often feel inadequacy in seeking arts and literature, namely in their own field of art:

I might listen to some music and it's so really... Beautiful. Technical. And well-thought. Inspirational. Inspired. Just amazing in all ways. And then I think that I'm never going to be able to achieve that. So that sometimes I feel inadequacy... or quite often, actually.

While seeking arts and literature, in anticipation of novel experiences, R3 experiences both cognitive and affective expectations. In a profound professional curiosity, in new music albums of their favourite artists R3 is eager to discover if the artist has ‘incorporated new instruments, genres, or aspects to their music’. New music is also a fundamental source of inspiration for R3: they want to ‘do a song a bit like this, but in their own style’. In the affective dimension, in anticipation of aesthetic experiences, R3 highlights the value of ‘surprise’ and, thus, is careful to avoid spoilers: “It takes away from the magic. Sort of”.

In their own creative work, R3 considers a positive state of mind crucial to their process, even if they were creating a melancholy song:

If I'm feeling negative, then I don't feel creative at all. I really go deep into my own mind. Inwards, and there isn't any inspiration there. Or at least not that kind of inspiration that is required to make music. ... And it could be that the music I'm creating is a sad song, but when I'm doing it, it's from a positive state of mind, even though I'm likely feeling those emotions myself. And sometimes it could be quite exhausting, but it still feels good to do it. Partially, because it brings up those emotions. Perhaps they have been repressed earlier. And I haven't had the opportunity to feel them. And making that particular piece of music is a way... Or means to let them come to the surface. These emotions, I mean. It happened a lot when I was creating my previous solo album.

The effects of seeking arts and literature are strongly tied to R3’s own musical creativity, as they illustrate further:

If I'm listening to certain artists, the music that I create during that time tends to have a lot... Pertaining to those artists. So, they really do affect me. Even though I might have a piece of music that I have worked on previously, I have all the melodies in my mind and things like that so that the core is there but... The music I'm listening to at that moment causes the song to evolve in a certain direction.

Furthermore, the music creation of R3 might even be affected by the ambience of a TV show, such as the 80s theme in Miami Vice: “It’s also the entirety of the TV show that affects me, not just the music”. R3, then, perceives to synthesise different aesthetic experiences into new creations of art.

Aside from the remorseful feelings following flow experiences, R3 perceives arts and literature to be an important form of self-care, the effects being ‘really positive at least in the long term’. Whether aesthetic experiences are relaxing for R3, depends heavily on their orientation, whether they are in ‘analysing mode’, which is less relaxing, or if they ‘just let it happen without thinking about it too much’, then it is more relaxing. Either way, consciously or unconsciously, the aesthetic experiences affect the creative process of R3. Using information obtained from arts and literature R3 sees as an ongoing process that happens all the time, which gets used by them in other suitable contexts: “Information comes from everywhere.”

Respondent 4 (R4) is a tattoo artist. R4, on their leisure time, seeks books and audiobooks to enjoy, sometimes visits art museums and art galleries, and travels to see beauty in the world. For R4, leisure time seeking of the aesthetic is intrinsically interwoven with their professional creative work, as any visual stimuli can prompt a new tattoo design.

Furthermore, the seeking and creation of art are, thus, quite inseparable in the mind of R4. The line between leisure time and work is likewise exceedingly blurred for R4 in their own art creation, especially when they are painting or drawing – as those forms of art can be directly used as tattoo designs. R4 often strives to deliberately separate their leisure time aesthetic activities from their professional work by way of shifting their focus onto ‘art in 3D’ (i.e. any artform that is not on a flat surface like paintings, drawings, and tattoos), such as knitting, cross-stitching, or sculpture:

It's still creative. Stuff to do with colours and shapes and making things. But not on a flat surface. I'm worse at it, and I think it's a plus: there's less stress to be good or do something nice... It's easier for me not to judge the outcome, the further it is from my field. I think it feels more like leisure time.

R4 describes themselves a fundamentally visual person and, thus, pays attention to any aesthetically pleasing visual stimuli in their environment. R4 does not go out of their way to photograph, but rather serendipitously comes across beautiful sights, objects, and peculiarities of which they snap a photograph for their collection of aesthetic keepsakes:

I'm doing something else, and sometimes it's just like... Ah, it's so pretty. This is art. ... I quite easily take photographs even if I have to kind of embarrass myself taking pictures of something silly or... have to get into difficult positions to do that. I guess that's something really spontaneous. I find it relaxing.

R4 shares another example of serendipitous discovery of the aesthetic, in which a friend of theirs asked them to join in a pottery class. They had never considered pottery before, but through this recommendation 'got really into it': R4 consequently started watching pottery TV shows, and even bought some clay of their own. R4 often comes across art unexpectedly online too, as they 'might see a nice sculpture or a flower' on the background of someone's holiday pictures for example, and then R4 proceeds to screenshot these for their creative folder as reference pictures, perhaps for the purpose of inspiring a drawing or a tattoo flash design.

In addition to inspiration and reference, the information value of arts and literature R4 finds contemplative:

If something is aesthetic... Or I find it pretty... I think it's good to think: why do I feel like that? What is it about the thing that appeals to me? What makes it art? I don't usually go very far in there on those thoughts, so it's quite intuitive. ... It's more like unconscious information that I think comes with being a quite visual person. ... I don't think I have to think about it really. ... I think it's more that it just does [give me information]. It's quite effortless, I think.

R4 actively avoids some arts and literature, for example such that would take too much time: they would not see a long play about war, 'because that would just make them sad for four hours'. Furthermore, R4 is conscious about the monetary cost, too, as they 'could go to the opera, but would not pay €100 for it'. As per their preferences, R4 would also avoid performance art, finding it pretentious and awkward: in example, "being naked and putting food on you and calling it art".

As to how R4 seeks the aesthetic, their preferences guide them to choices of humorous and feel-good arts and literature, and furthermore to artworks that are similar to their own creations: 'watercolours, detail things, something abstract'. Music R4 finds through Spotify, as well as by listening to their favourite radio station. R4 also values recommendations from other people. R4 mentions Google Maps as a particularly rich source of information about the local art scene, effortlessly being able to search for 'comedy shows in the area' for example. Social media is another important source of information about arts and literature for R4: information of events and recommendations flow in Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Subsequently, however, R4 agonises about how scattered the information on the art scene nowadays is, yearning for the golden days of Facebook:

Facebook used to be really good for that kind of thing. You would have events, which were quite active, and you could see where your friends are going. If there's a gallery opening, or a music gig, you could see: oh, three of your friends are going there. ... But now when younger people are more into Snapchats, you don't really have a profile. In TikTok, you just scroll there. I think it's harder and harder to find these things. Facebook used to be really handy for it. It's a shame it's not used like that anymore as I found that a good way to find events and any kinds of art things happening around you.

If I would hold an exhibition, I don't even know how to get under 25-year-olds there at the moment if they are mainly on Instagram and TikTok. You can make Instagram ads, but what are the chances that the right people are going to see that? And you will have to pay for it. In TikTok, with my following, I would probably get 20 views for my TikTok about my exhibition opening. So yeah, I think it's become harder for people to find this stuff... and to inform other people about these kinds of things.

R4 muses that this barrier to information seeking about the art scene could be fixed by an app that would be “just for events, and all the events would be there ... in one place”. According to R4, the difficulty in implementation of such an app would be ‘having absolutely everyone in the world using it’.

The motivations for R4 to seek arts and literature are fuelled most prominently by their pure aesthetic needs: “I am fundamentally a visual person... For me it’s really important for things to be aesthetic”. In example, during a music gig R4 pays special attention to the lighting. In their leisure time it is very natural for R4 to occupy their time with all things visually aesthetic: “If I just have the time and energy on my days off, I want to do something, because I enjoy that. The process, and also, when you can see something that you have done yourself.” Listening to audiobooks, on the other hand, is oftentimes a way for R4 to pass the time whilst doing more repetitive tasks.

Seeking arts and literature helps R4 to be creative themselves, drawing inspiration ‘from the weirdest places, absolutely everywhere’, including literature. R4 elaborates:

But I don't think it's something you consciously do. It just kind of comes with it, so you seek arts and literature. Because it's all going to add to... It's some kind of mental thing. When you need it... It might be there.

You always use something from you when doing creative stuff. ... [From other people] you learn new ways to do things. New ideas. You're like, of course, always part of the environment and... What you do is also what you give.

Seeking arts and literature are, thus, a good way for R4 to develop themselves. Consequently, R4 perceives to be fulfilling their potential and self-actualising with arts and literature, especially when creating art themselves. R4 ‘lives and breathes’ art and, thus, considers it both a higher thing, ‘unexplainably important’, as well as an intrinsic part of their everyday life. R4 claims that arts and literature being everyday things for them does not take away the profound importance of the aesthetic. The pleasurableness of arts and literature is a question of degree for R4 and varies by context: “It’s a little bit pleasurable, always. And a little bit of annoying, always. It’s just different amounts. On different days and in different art forms. And how it fits your day”.

R4 seeks arts and literature more when they are feeling positive feelings. Feeling negative feelings, such as sadness or anger, R4 prefers to deal with them by way of physical activity, such as exercise. R4 explains: “I need to be relaxed. I need to be content. Ideally a little bit bored to go for arts and literature. To go and do a painting on my free time or... do something that's to do with aesthetics”. R4 highlights the surprising value of boredom:

I'm a firm believer that you need to be bored to be creative, you need that kind of empty slate... in your head space for the opportunity of art to grow... for ideas to bubble, and the inspiration to come. Yeah, personally, that's for me. I can't wait for the boredom to get to work, to find enjoyment in doing art on my free time. I need to have enough time for it.

You can cheat yourself to just like... Just get a blank paper or whatever you want to do. And stare at it until you're too bored to just stare the blank canvas, and then start drawing.

Followingly, even though arts and literature take an obviously high priority in the life of R4, their needs follow a rather linear hierarchy:

I wouldn't like lose sleep or go hungry to seek arts and literature. ... I wouldn't be in the right space. I kind of need to be content in every way... to be able to receive. I wouldn't think I would get as much out of [arts and literature] if my head was... Like in some kind of drama, or if I had too many things in my mind. I would prefer just dealing with other needs first to be able to even... actually enjoy and get stuff out from arts and literature. It doesn't make it less important. It's just... You're going to have to do it that way.

One of the reasons R4 chose tattooing as their career was the possibility of experiencing creative flow, which they find a very good feeling: “You get addicted to it. You want to have it again”. R4 experiences similar feelings, albeit to a lesser degree, whilst experiencing arts and literature created by others, in example when dancing to music on a gig – actively participating.

The affect and effects of arts and literature R4 finds interestingly variable, as they experience both positive and negative feelings. Even the negative reactions to art R4 might consider

beneficial and interesting, for they spark in them a sort of self-reflection: “Sometimes it’s like, oh, this is rubbish. And then I think it’s important after that to think: why do you feel like that? What is it missing? Or why do you think like that?” Art can also be profoundly moving for R4, as they share an experience in example:

I just watched an episode of a TV series. Made me cry so much I couldn't breathe. I was hyperventilating about this piece of art... It was a short episode - it was 20 minutes into watching these fictional characters' lives, and I literally couldn't breathe, that's how much I was crying. So sometimes it moves me to tears. Easily, actually. Later, I was talking about it, and just telling about that piece of art, that episode... I was crying again... So, that was a good example of how it can feel. I was really emotional. It's almost like I was there.

R4 considers such a strong emotional experience ‘cleansing’. Had R4 known of the artwork eliciting such a reaction, they would have possibly avoided it. However, they recall it felt really good afterwards, as if they had unknowingly dealt with some matters personal to them.

Having visited an art gallery, R4 perceives themselves to be filled with inspiration, ‘bursting to get it onto paper’: “It’s a really nice feeling”. The uses of information obtained from arts and literature are majorly subconscious for R4. Contemplating their art school teachings, R4 draws a parallel between artistic rules and information:

Only when you know the rules, you can break them. I think that's to do with information as well. The more you know, the freer you are to use it or not to use it. I think that's a good way to think about the information you get from arts and literature.

Furthermore, considering the imitation of other artists versus relying on their own creative intuitions, R4 strikes a balance: “A little bit of both, I think. Even if you take this from there, that from there – the way you mix it, it becomes yours. And the way you do it is creativity. They don’t close each other out.”

R4 perceives arts and literature beneficial for their psychological well-being “in so many ways”, especially in creation, but also in experiencing arts and literature created by others, and would, thus, consider arts and literature a form of self-care. Additionally, R4 considers

experiencing aesthetic things relaxing, which, as established, helps themselves to be creative. As for further uses of arts and literature in their life, R4 shares their salient thoughts:

I would say it's also a way to make home look more like home. I feel better in my everyday life, when I have some things I made myself in the corner of the room. Or something I've chosen. It's a way to make your habitat more enjoyable. ... Yeah, you can be exhausted. And it just makes the day that much better, sitting in your living room with some silly things. ... It makes you smile to look at that frog statue in the corner of the kitchen.

Next, a brief assessment of patterns of divergence and convergence across all the interviews is presented, in so providing answers to the research questions. The purpose of the following assessment is not to attempt to generalise the results, but rather interpret the aggregate findings of the individual phenomenological analyses.

As to what do artists seek or come across information about in the context of the aesthetic in their leisure time (RQ1), all the respondents perceived to seek or come across a variety of different types of arts and literature and related information – most prominently from their own field of expertise, barring a few contextual exceptions. In the case of R4, a preference was asserted for a different type of art creation ('art in 3D') in contrast to their work-related interests, when seeking arts and literature for leisure specifically. The information value of arts and literature for R4 is mainly contemplative and self-reflective in benefit of their own creativity. R2 described the widest range of arts and literature sought after, corresponding to the variety of their two artistic professions of singing and writing. The related information needs of R2 expand to spirituality, psychology, and education. The information needs of R1 and R3 regarding the aesthetic are most focused on material related to their artistic professions. R1, however, puts more emphasis on attaining literary information actionable in all areas of their life whilst benefitting their writing profession subconsciously, whereas R3 consciously strives to obtain inspirational and technical information directly applicable to their music.

All the respondents perceived to come across a major portion of their experiences with arts and literature unexpectedly, depending on their interests – what they paid attention to in their surroundings. The perceptions of the respondents regarding such serendipities were

characterised by phrases such as ‘most of my arts and literature’, ‘all the time’, ‘everywhere’, ‘every day’, and ‘easily’. Furthermore, all the respondents perceived to deliberately avoid some arts and literature, either due to strong personal preferences or more prominently to avoid succumbing to negativity and unwanted states of mind.

As to how do artists seek information in the context of the aesthetic in their leisure time (RQ2), the respondents had the least salient phenomenological perceptions – seeking and encountering arts and literature were seen as natural, even unconscious parts of their life. Moreover, the prominence of serendipitous discovery of arts and literature, as well as related information, lessened the need for the respondents to actively seek the aesthetic. Organic processes of receiving recommendations and coming across further options in artworks and art circles were prevalent. The Internet, however, deserves as special mention as it was seen a tremendous source of the aesthetic by all respondents, encompassing a wide variety of channels (e.g. applications and websites, about which R3 elaborated in detail). Spotify and/or radio were highlighted as channels for music by all the respondents. Social media was seen a significant channel for art by R1 (discovery) and R4 (information about events). R2 substitutes social media with more traditional options – the daily newspaper and the library, whereas R3 prefers more control over their own searches on the Internet, opting for forums and specialist websites. The respondents differed in their preferences to search by topic of interest, or by author/artist in different contexts.

Generally, for the respondents, ‘interest’ is a strong factor in how they seek arts and literature. This interest may often supersede goals of mundane problem-solving. As the respondents take their seeking of the aesthetic seriously, however, especially in benefit of their artistic work, the seeking may also be fuelled by an urgent professional need (as in the case of R2), or it might be easier to get started with an immediate problem as opposed to following an interest (as in the case of R3). R2 did not perceive barriers to their information seeking of the aesthetic, but other respondents gave extremely varied examples (eyestrain, paradox of choice, and scatteredness of information).

As to why do artists seek information in the context of the aesthetic in their leisure time (RQ3), the motivations and outcomes (use, effect and/or affect) of the respondents are diverse and personal. For study of these individual, phenomenological perspectives of the respondents as to their reasons, the reader of the thesis is referred to the synopsis of the individual analyses presented earlier in this chapter, as well as to the discussion in the

following chapter. Nevertheless, a few excerpts are presented. R1 perceived to seek arts and literature namely for learning, inspiration, appreciation of beauty, and introspection; R2 for a wide variety of reasons, such as self-development, escaping reality, and finding consolation to their grief; R3 in example for inspirational and technical information, as well as entertainment; and R4 for visual aesthetic needs, inspiration, contemplation, and self-reflection among other things.

All the respondents, to some degree, in seeking arts and literature want to self-actualise – to fulfil their potential and be creative. They want to experience something beautiful, and to improve in their craft. They could find arts and literature pleasurable and/or profound, depending on the artwork in question, as well as their state of being. Arts and literature were considered higher things in life of the respondents, although they are very much a part of their everyday life. Arts and literature are sought significantly more by the respondents when they are feeling positive feelings. Arts and literature are a high priority in the respondents' life, although their need hierarchies differ – R1 and R2 welcome aesthetic experiences even if their basic or psychological needs are not completely met, oftentimes even to fulfil those needs, whereas R3 and R4 prefer their basic and psychological needs to be better taken care of before seeking the aesthetic. All the respondents experience *flow* with arts and literature, especially in creation. In general, flow was perceived a highly positive experience, although R2, and especially R3, perceived to struggle with negative effects after a flow experience.

Thoughts and feelings with arts and literature were perceived numerous by the respondents, spanning from great joy to profound sadness – R3 and R4 shared experiences of being intensely moved by art, and R2 touted healing properties of spiritual aesthetics. The respondents feel significantly more creative in positive states of mind, and generally perceived seeking arts and literature beneficial to their own creativity. Relaxation and alleviation of stress were seen as important effects by all the respondents, although R1 claimed to also need stimulation for optimal creativity. The respondents strive for originality in their craft but explained to synthesise aesthetic experiences and inspiration from arts and literature by others into their own work. The respondents considered the aesthetic beneficial for their well-being – a form of self-care – at least in the long run. Perceived negative reactions were possible with arts and literature as well, although even they were understood to have the potential to lead to better psychological health. Finally, the respondents use the

information and knowledge obtained from arts and literature in diverse practices, most common of which are evaluations, sharing, and benefitting their craft in various ways.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the findings of the study are discussed and concluded in the frame of comparing them to the literature review, noting significant consistencies and then, unsheathing novel insights. Finally, limitations of the study are addressed, and implications as well as future research are considered.

5.1 Consistencies with the literature review

The findings of the thesis supported several concepts established in the LITERATURE REVIEW chapter. Information seeking of the aesthetic, specifically of arts and literature, can be seen integral to the lived experience of artists as per their phenomenological perspective.

Arts and literature could be seen as pleasurable and/or profound and, thus, have the potential to be considered higher things in life, the study of which deserves further emphasis in order to bring contextual research in information science to balance. However, as discussed by Kari and Hartel (2007), the perception of the height of the phenomena was found to be subject to contextual factors, such as the state of being of the experiencer. As established by Dodd (2014), the profundity of arts and literature stem from their nature of provoking thoughts, instances of which were prevalent in the findings, along with profound affective reactions. It was found that it feels natural for artists to seek higher things, such as arts and literature, as postulated by Maslow (1968).

It is concluded that artists take seeking of the aesthetic seriously even in their leisure time. In fact, the line between their leisure and work is so blurred that the artists hardly perceived this distinction in their phenomenological perspective. The artists perceived to purposefully, as well as unconsciously, procure information and skills beneficial to their craft from arts and literature, continuously during their everyday lives. Artists' information seeking of the aesthetic could then be considered a form of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). Subsequently, it is argued that leisure time ISB in such contexts of the higher sphere is worth exploring further for the benefit of practicing artists, as well as the holistic advancement of the field of information science. This argument is bolstered by the absence of findings related to the principle of least effort (Zipf, 1949) in artists' information seeking of the aesthetic.

In the findings it was evident that artists' information needs in the context of arts and literature were based on more fundamental needs, such as self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1968), aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970), and even in some cases more basic and psychological needs. It was also analysed that the fulfilment of aesthetic and self-actualisation needs has a relationship with artistic creativity, as shown by Liu and Cheng (2022), and Onah (2015). It is postulated, then, that arts and literature are of such fundamental significance to the lived experience of artists that the corresponding fulfilment of needs ought to be regarded with respect and supported – at least not hindered – by society if the human race is to thrive rather than merely survive.

The findings support the clarification by Maslow (1987) that the need hierarchies of individuals are not as rigid as he had originally depicted, and that they are flexible according to individual differences and external conditions. It was further observed that individual differences were significant between the artists in terms of all the research interests of the study – the information needs, forms of seeking, as well as the motivations for and outcomes of the information seeking, yet common themes were detected as well. This observation does, nonetheless, suggest that generalisation of results in this kind of context of ISB is hardly plausible.

Artists perceived that their seeking of arts and literature was often characterised by a positively motivating interest, as opposed to apparent lack of information to solve a mundane problem – although some professional challenges were seen as important matters to solve by way of information seeking, too. Anticipation of aesthetic experiences was perceived by the artists to be characterised by positive expectations, such as excitement and curiosity, instead of anxiety (Kuhlthau, 1993a) for lack of information.

The notion of flow, which corresponds with the discussed attributes of, and motivations for seeking higher things, namely the pleasurable (Chen, Wigand, & Nilan, 2000), was perceived an experience integral to creation by the artists. Moreover, it was perceived by the artists that seeking arts and literature is beneficial for their psychological wellbeing, which has been found the case in other higher contexts as well (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In light of the findings of the thesis, it is thus posited that adopting a positive perspective to ISB research in comparable contexts would be conducive to holistic understanding of information phenomena in the higher sphere. A positive perspective could be more conducive to findings that would be beneficial to individuals, also focusing on the prevention of problems instead

of solving them. Multiple instances were illustrated in the findings, in which seeking arts and literature benefitted the artists in their self-care, as well as personal growth both in their everyday life and creative professions.

It was found that in the aesthetic dimension, artists' information seeking extended outside arts and literature as well, to other things perceived beautiful or attractive, such as nature, and even affects and feelings evoked by (artistic) objects and events. This observation supported Beardsley's (2018) theories of the aesthetic: experiences, reception, and judgements. The aesthetic is, thus, an innately subjective concept, the experience, and effects of which vary from individual to individual. The importance of contemplating aesthetic experiences to the artists' creative process is illustrated in the findings. Aesthetic experiences were seen by the artists to have inherent value in themselves, as per aesthetic needs recognised by Maslow (1970).

Furthermore, affective factors considered by Beardsley (2018) were found significantly motivational to seeking arts and literature. It is consequently argued that the affective dimension – affects, feelings, and emotions – should receive more emphasis in the study of ISB. In the findings there were instances of the artists perceiving the affect of an aesthetic experience profoundly moving. These affects were difficult to put into words, yet they were foundational to the experience, eliciting strong feelings and sparking cognitive processes. Thus, the affects played a critical role in the phenomenological perspective of the artists pertaining to the information seeking of the aesthetic, as argued by Shouse (2005).

The informational value of aesthetics to artists was also bolstered by the findings, which support the compatibility of information studies in the context of arts and literature from the aesthetic viewpoint. Subsequently, the synthesis of aesthetic experiences and information into new ideas and concepts was perceived an important part of the creative process by the artists, perhaps even more so than intuition and pure imagination.

Information seeking, namely in the context of the aesthetic, was seen vital to intellectual, emotional, and even social aspects of the artists' lives, as established by Ford (2015). Arts and literature were perceived to be a source of information, inspiration, and personal development. Certain affective needs and wants were perceived to be satisfied by aesthetics, and the social connotations of arts and literature were acknowledged in sharing, recommendations, and joint experiences.

The artists were conscious of what their information needs regarding the aesthetic were, whether it was about actively seeking, serendipitous discoveries, or avoidance. Furthermore, the artists perceived a vast range of cognitive, affective, and in some cases even physiological needs – fundamental human needs as categorised by Wilson (2006) – to be at the root of their information needs as motivations for and desired outcomes with aesthetic information. The forms of seeking, on the other hand, were less salient in the minds of the artists, for seeking arts and literature was perceived a natural part of everyday life, characterised by ease. Additionally, the openness and effortlessness of serendipitous discoveries alleviate the burden of seeking. It is, therefore, postulated that when it comes to information seeking of the aesthetic, the *what* and *why* are questions of higher importance in comparison to the *how*. In other words, when the information needs (what) are fuelled by a genuine desire (why), the how is perceived to, in a way, take care of itself – even more so with modern technology. Furthermore, it was found that for the artists' interest-motivated growth needs (Maslow, 1970), such as cognitive needs and aesthetic needs, motivation tends to increase as the needs are met, the process thus feeding itself.

The artists perceived the concept of information to encompass any aesthetic elements in arts and literature, which they could internalise as knowledge transferable to other contexts, such as their own creative work. This includes, in example, the aesthetic value of sentence structures, styles and methods of visual art, technical aspects of music, affect of the aesthetic, and personal contemplations evoked by a piece of art. This viewpoint of the artists into information coincides with that of Ford's (2015), in which definitions of information are loose, and that *information is everywhere* – meaningful patterns can be drawn from all sorts of data. Moreover, aesthetic information was perceived to be, in some way or the other, transformational to the cognition, and subsequently to the life of the artist, as posited by Dispenza (2010).

5.2 Novel insights

In this section, insights more novel to the author extracted from the analysis of the interview data are discussed for the purposes of supporting the fulfilment of human self-actualisation needs and creative endeavours, as well as to provide inspiration for further research – starting points of developing theory or applications in the field of information science, also for the benefit of artists' ISB.

Information needs, effect, and affect

Based on the analysis of the results, it is concluded that artists seek various forms of arts and literature, as well as other aesthetic experiences in their leisure time. However, a majority of arts and literature sought by artists has a connection – one way or the other – to their own creative field of expertise. This connection is either direct (e.g. writers seeking literature or musicians seeking music, including technical information) or indirect. By indirect connection it is meant that the aesthetic information and experiences sought after can somehow be utilised in the artists' creative process, as inspiration, as synthesis of aesthetic experiences into new creations, or as effects to their state of being (e.g. relaxation) thus enhancing their creativity.

As the artists perceived, however, to also utilise arts and literature as a form of self-care, some information seeking of the aesthetic is done with the pure intentions of entertainment and enjoyment, as well as for want of affective factors, such as profound affective reactions elicited by artworks. These affective reactions can provide catharsis to the artists, start cognitively beneficial thought processes and, thus, help them deal with psychological and even physiological needs. On a further note, it is concluded that strong reactions or feelings lead to vivid remembrance of profound aesthetic experiences, reliving of which can be induced by thought alone.

The process of art creation was likewise perceived to have the potential to help the artists process previously repressed feelings. The affective and cognitive reactions evoked by arts and literature were perceived initially either positive or negative in nature by the artists, yet the outcome of such seeking was most often evaluated as beneficial regardless of the nature of the initial reaction. It is thus concluded that leisure time seeking of arts and literature has a strong connection with the artists' other areas of life, such as creative work and self-care. Self-care with arts and literature was perceived to extend to one's physical being as well: "When you feel better mentally and spiritually, you feel it in your physical being also".

Outside the most traditional definitions of arts and literature, the artists perceived films, TV shows, and video games also as artworks. This view is, however, contingent on the perceived quality of the film, TV show, or video game, more so than in the case of more traditional forms of art such as paintings. This contingency bolsters the significance of subjective

perception in determining whether an object is considered art or not – beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder. Furthermore, the value of live performances is appreciated and evaluated in a manner different from other arts and literature: “There is something magical about live performances”. Generally, it is interpreted that the preferences for art and literature can be very specific and well-established in the mind of an artist.

The social aspect and incidental information acquisition

The social aspect of information seeking of arts and literature, which was not one of the focuses of the current thesis, still emerged prevalent in the phenomenological perspective of the artists. It was found that some arts and literature, such as visiting an art gallery, ‘is more fun together with friends’, and that in such instances sharing experiences, dialogue, and recommendations are of significance to the phenomena. Other people were seen as enhancing the aesthetic experiences, as well as sources of arts and literature – especially of art forms novel to the artist. For future research in the context of arts and literature it is thus suggested more attention to be paid to the social dimension in ISB.

Exploring and travelling the world were also mentioned as prime sources of discovering art and other aesthetic experiences serendipitously by the artists. When it comes to serendipitous discovery of arts and literature, the aesthetic preferences and orientations of the artist take a significant role: in example a visually oriented artist observes and notices proportionally more visual aesthetic stimuli in their surroundings, whereas a singer as a performing artist pays more attention to the performing arts. It is consequently argued that individuals may consciously affect the nature of their incidental information acquisition by way of focusing their mind on a preferred topic. As established in the LITERATURE REVIEW chapter, the state of being of the artist was also found to correspond with the openness to serendipitous discoveries – positive states of mind are more conducive to the reception of such experiences, characterised by interest and enthusiasm.

The artists in the study differed significantly in their preferences for seeking background information on artworks. By some the background information was seen as an important aspect of the artwork, supplementing the artwork with context (e.g. year of production), revealing the meaning or origin of the artwork, or as a means to find more of comparable artworks (e.g. by author/artist). By others, in contrast, background information was not seen

as significant to their aesthetic experiences at all. It is speculated that this viewpoint could be altered by the form of the art as well – scrolling through pictures in social media might elicit less interest in the background information as opposed to reading a book, the experiencing of which takes significantly longer in time.

Information avoidance and attitudes

In avoidance of arts and literature the most significant reason was found to be the unwantedness of negative influences, feelings, and reactions. For some of the artists, however, experiencing certain perceived negative feelings with arts and literature were often seen as beneficial experiences retrospectively. Furthermore, the evaluation of artworks (such as an objectively impressive film) was separate from the subjectively difficult reactions elicited by the artwork. In other words, an aesthetic judgement of a piece of art could be extremely positive, yet the piece of art might still be deliberately avoided in the future for its nature of evoking difficult reactions. These reactions, in general, were seen by the artists to contribute to their intrigue in art and, thus, are considered a motivational factor in ISB of the aesthetic. Moreover, aestheticism and beauty could be found within the experience of these affective or cognitive reactions, even if the artwork in question was not perceived beautiful initially. The reactions could also spark valuable contemplation or self-reflection, which would then have the potential to aid in future creative processes.

One of the artists spoke enthusiastically about their *obsession* with information seeking when it came to searching for information on something they were interested in. As established, generally the artists regarded to put more effort into seeking something they were interested in, in opposition to the principle of least effort, but views on the connotations of the word ‘obsession’ differed significantly between the artists. For one, the obsession was perceived a ‘wave to be ridden’ to a desired outcome, whereas for other artists the word obsession evoked such negative connotations that they explored their vocabulary for milder expressions such as focus or fixation. This choice in wording their perceptions was thought to illuminate the underlying feelings of the artists toward their passionate information seeking of the aesthetic, as per the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the interviews. It is thus concluded that in choice of words, as well as in perceptions of their lived experience, a lot depends on the attitude of the individual towards certain concepts (such as obsession). It is posited that the

individual may ascribe a positive or a negative meaning to any ISB phenomena. This ascription of meaning was also evident in one of the artists describing not to experience any barriers to information seeking of the aesthetic, but rather viewed them as natural challenges, which were part of their creative process. Moreover, whether arts and literature were considered relaxing or not by the artists, could depend on the mode of reception – whether they were analysing the piece of art, or just enjoying it.

The connection of arts and literature to other higher things

Literature was seen as the artform most conducive to learning information actionable in the artists' everyday life: 'acquired information should be used, lest it remains mere philosophy'. This information can also be utilised in helping others, when connections are made between the perceived information needs of others, and the information and knowledge obtained by the individual. The increasingly popular audiobooks were perceived a convenient form to consume literature, either to avoid eyestrain, or to consume literature whilst doing other tasks. Within literature, in the context of the aesthetic, a special mention was made of the Bible, which was perceived to contain numerous forms of art. The Bible can, thus, for select artists be a specifically meaningful source of inspiration, as well as a basis for their own creative work.

On the topic of spiritual arts and literature, churches were seen to hold both spiritual and aesthetic significance to some of the artists, making them especially rich sources of aesthetic experiences – also in the context of exploring, travelling, and serendipitous discovery. Furthermore, contemporary worship music was seen as a form of art with observable benefits to an individual's wellbeing and feelings of empowerment. Spirituality and religion being on the highest layer of understanding in ISB according to Bates (2002) as illustrated in Figure 3, just above the aesthetic dimension, it is posited that these two of the highest layers could be perceived to overlap in some individuals' perceptions. Art and literature are, then, argued to have the potential to be intrinsically connected to other higher things in life.

As some artists consider themselves to 'live and breathe' art, aesthetic experiences are, thus, both higher things – 'unexplainably important' – as well as an intrinsic part of their everyday life. Moreover, the seeking and creation of arts and literature could be seen as inseparable phenomena in the minds of the artists. It was further analysed that both the consumption and

creation of arts are important to the artists, and that a balance must be found between these two for optimal results in creativity. This balance between consumption and creation of arts and literature is suggested to be a potentially fruitful area of further study in artists' ISB, in terms of how knowledge of this balance would benefit human creativity.

Positivity, aesthetic information, and creativity

In the analysis positive feelings and states of mind were found to increase both the seeking and creation of arts and literature. In the phenomenological perspective of the artists, it was noted that they were aware of multiple examples contrary to this finding – they had understood other artists to fuel their creativity with negative feelings. This finding is, thus, something that should be further investigated. In the scope of this analysis, however, positive feelings corresponded with increased receptivity and enjoyment of arts and literature, as well as the optimal conditions for art creation. In some instances, having one's basic and psychological needs met, as well as being in a positive state of mind, were perceived to be crucial to the creative process – even if the piece of art in creation was of melancholy nature. Moreover, it was observed that the process of art creation could also be utilised as a medium to deal with repressed emotions, specifically when these emotions were contemplated from a currently positive state of being.

Aesthetic information from arts and literature was perceived to be obtained and utilised mainly subconsciously by the artists unless they were specifically studying certain styles or technical aspects of music for example. It was understood that an artist is always susceptible to the influence of the surrounding world and, thus, creativity has a lot to do with making connections and synthesising ideas. The making of these connections was perceived to be a desirable artistic skill. Followingly, it is argued that there is a fine line between imitation of other artists, and original creativity and intuition. As one of the artists reflected: "... The way you mix it, it becomes yours. And the way you do it **is creativity**". Furthermore, it was perceived that the more aesthetic information an artist has, the more they are 'free to use it or not to use it', allowing for further nuance to creativity.

Arts and literature were holistically perceived to be a way, or a source of tools, for the artists to express themselves. Arts and literature, thus, allow for the artists' self-actualisation. The seeking of beauty was perceived a fundamental need in itself – an aesthetic need. Besides

these fundamental needs, arts and literature were also regarded to have the potential to fulfil needs of belonging (in experience), and esteem (in creation or performance). Information and experiences obtained from arts and literature were also seen beneficial to parenthood in one salient example.

Technology and barriers to information seeking

Modern technology was perceived extremely beneficial to ISB in the context of the aesthetic by the artists. Specifically, the Internet was praised as a great source of relevant information: one can always find someone on the Internet “who is enthusiastic enough” to provide the obscure information an artist might need. Wikipedia, forums, specialty websites, YouTube, Google Maps, and different applications of social media were highlighted as examples of such sources by the artists. Music streaming services, such as Spotify, were perceived great ways to find music, also of artists more obscure to the masses. In the modern flood of information, however, the paradox of choice was regarded a somewhat debilitating barrier to information seeking of arts and literature.

Notably, another barrier to information seeking of the aesthetic was considered the current state of Facebook – in the golden days of this social media platform it was perceived easier to find events, as well as to socially collaborate around these events. Nowadays it is considered more difficult for the artists to advertise their own events, as the information is more scattered due to the increased number of social media platforms, and as the popularity of Facebook has declined especially among the younger generations. This is deemed a problem that would require solutions to benefit artists’ as well as their audiences’ ISB.

Outcomes with the aesthetic

In a conclusion as to the artists’ outcomes with aesthetic information, the effects and affects were perceived to be wide-ranging. As per the interpretation by the author, the most novelly notable feelings experienced with arts and literature were those of awe, joy, inspiration, appreciation, sadness, and inadequacy. Positively and negatively perceived affects were both observed in the study. Arts and literature (e.g. music or the ambience of a TV show) were perceived to subconsciously affect the being of the artist, as well as influence their creative

direction of a contemporary project. Aesthetic experiences were also perceived to have the nuance of supporting self-discovery in helping to answer questions such as 'Who am I?', in consolation of grief, as well as in the more mundane escapism from 'real life'. Artists want to be creative in their leisure time, too, even if it was about relaxing with an art form not directly related to their professional work – the pressure to perform well may be less outside their specific expertise. Even boredom was curiously perceived an important element in art creation – in that specific headspace it would be easier for the synthesis of previously experienced aesthetics and creative imagination to blossom. Surrounding oneself with arts and literature, either created by themselves or by others, was seen desirable – 'a way to make a home feel more like home'. Finally, arts and literature were perceived to be a conduit to affect – reinforcing existing feelings, 'whether they be of joy or sadness'.

Higher things created by humans are wonders, which continue to build on existing creative endeavours throughout the ages, as eloquently put by Brian Cox (Cox & Cohen, 2016) in *Human Universe*:

I deliberately borrow from Shakespeare; the most precious objects on Earth are not gems or jewels, but ink marks on paper. No single human brain could conceive of Hamlet, Principia Mathematica, or Codex Leicester; they were created by and belong to the entire human race, and the library of wonders continues to grow. (Ch. 30, 7:57)

5.3 Limitations

The study has several limitations that ought to be considered when examining the findings. The limitations regarding the choices of research methods were covered in the RESEARCH METHODS chapter. One of these limitations is the reliance on qualitative methods, which do not allow for generalisability of the results. The aim was to provide rich accounts of individual phenomenological perspectives of the respondents, but even so the results are consistent only with the perceptions of these specific individuals. Moreover, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a subjective, interpretive method of analysis, the results of which are influenced by the respondent's interpretation of their lived experience, the quality of communication and dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, as well as the researcher's interpretation of the interview data. While these limitations have been

acknowledged in the research design, they should still be considered whilst interpreting the findings.

Furthermore, the time restrictions of the study limited the data collection to four (4) semi-structured interviews, which as a sample size is small. A larger sample size would have almost certainly provided more novel insights into the ISB of artists in the context of the aesthetic, as a clear saturation point was not reached. Again, focus was instead put on the richness of the individual accounts of the perceptions sought after in the study, which resulted in diminished quantity of the interviews within the time limit. The respondent selection was conducted by way of theoretical sampling, which may have introduced certain biases in the respondent selection: the quality of the choice of respondents was subject to the ability of the researcher to identify the best possible choices of the ones available. The target group of (practicing) artists, as it was defined in the study, is vast and, thus, the selection of four respondents reflected only a fraction of possible artistic professions. It is acknowledged that artists from different fields of expertise, as well as different individuals from the current fields of expertise, could have provided further insights into the nature of information phenomena in this context. Nonetheless, this explorative study provided novel insights into the individual perceptions of practicing artists and contributes to the dialogue in the field.

5.4 Implications and future research

The aim of the thesis was to contribute to the field of information science by exploring artists' ISB in the context of the aesthetic. The research on the subject matter uncovered novel insights that may be found useful for practicing artists, benefitting their craft and creativity, as well as for educators of arts and literature, and information scientists exploring the fundamental context of higher things in life and the development of information resources in the aesthetic domain.

The thesis could be studied by anyone to deepen one's understanding in the key theoretical concepts, such as higher things in life, aesthetics, information-seeking behaviour, as well as the positive perspective and affective dimension in ISB. Furthermore, the thesis offers food for thought as to what could be important to humankind in the era of AI, and the implications of seeking the aesthetic trickle into the domains of psychological wellbeing and self-care as

well. The above contributions are in alignment with the purpose of the thesis, which was to support the fulfilment of human self-actualisation needs and creative endeavours.

Future research in the area of artists' ISB in the context of the aesthetic could build upon the novel insights uncovered in the thesis. As indicated by the literature review and the subsequent thesis research, information studies in the context of higher things in life deserve more emphasis, particularly in the realm of leisure time ISB, in order to bring contextual research in information science to balance. A positive perspective into ISB in such contexts is suggested to be considered in further studies, and appropriate emphasis on the affective dimension, including affects, feelings, and emotions, is encouraged by the author when studying ISB. The adoption of a positive perspective, when applicable, could be conducive to a more holistic understanding of information phenomena under investigation. In the view of the author, more importance ought to be placed on the prevention of problems as opposed to solving existing ones, thus benefitting individuals at a more fundamental level.

Additionally, the social aspect of information seeking of the aesthetic could be studied more thoroughly, as it was not a focus of the current thesis, yet emerged as prevalent in the phenomenological perspective of the artists. As the seeking and creation of arts and literature could be seen as inseparable in the minds of the artists, the balance of consumption and creation for optimal creativity is likewise a potentially fruitful area of further study.

Finally, research could also be conducted to examine the impact of technology, such as artificial intelligence, on artists' ISB and the creation of aesthetic works. Moreover, the potential of information interventions, such as information literacy programmes, to enhance artists' ISB and support their creative endeavours, should also be explored. Overall, these potential avenues for future research could help to further our understanding of artists' ISB and its implications for the creative process, human wellbeing, and society as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview structure

Briefing

- The interview is done with your consent, which you are free to revoke at any time.
- The interview is completely confidential and anonymous.
- The interview may be recorded with your permission, for the purposes of analysis. Afterwards, the recording is deleted.
- All the questions in this interview are related to your leisure time information-seeking behaviour.
- I am most interested in your subjective perceptions of the aesthetic – anything you perceive to be attractive – specifically within arts and literature. This includes anything that you have an aesthetic interest in, e.g. paintings, music, or fictional literature.
- You may always ask clarifying questions, as well as provide additional information and insights that you consider relevant to the inquiry.

Demography

- What is your own field of art?
- For how long have you practiced art?

Information needs

- What kinds of arts and literature do you actively seek?
- What kinds of arts and literature do you come across by chance?
- What kind of information do you look for in arts and literature?
- Do you deliberately avoid some kinds of arts and literature?

Forms of seeking

- How do you seek arts and literature?

- Do you put more effort into seeking something you are interested in, or something you need to solve a problem?
- Do you experience any problems while seeking arts and literature?

Motivations

- Why do you seek arts and literature?
- Do you find arts and literature pleasurable and/or profound?
- Do you seek arts and literature more when you are feeling positive or negative feelings?
- Do you experience flow with arts and literature?
- Is seeking arts and literature a high priority in your life?

Outcome (affect / effect / use)

- What kinds of thoughts and feelings do you experience with arts and literature?
- What do you feel while seeking arts and literature – in anticipation of aesthetic experiences?
- Are you more creative when you are feeling positive or negative feelings?
- What good do the information, knowledge, or aesthetic experiences obtained from arts and literature do for you?
- Does seeking arts and literature on your leisure time affect your own creative work?
- Do you perceive arts and literature beneficial for your psychological wellbeing and/or good for your brain/cognition?
- How do you use information or knowledge obtained from arts and literature?