An approach of the microstructure of the gallery space:
The case of the Sainsbury Wing

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is largely exploratory. The intention is to contribute to the
description and understanding of the intricate pattern of interdependencies between
the two parameters of the gallery space, the spatial configuration and the exhibition
layout. This paper reports the analysis of the Sainsbury Wing, the extension to the
National Gallery London. Firstly, the paper explores the pattern of spatial organisation
of the gallery and identifies curiosities due, among other things, to a graph problem.
Secondly, it demonstrates that the strongly localised movement is explained by the
syntactic patterns of depth and connectivity. Thirdly, it analyses the conceptual
strategy of the arrangement of paintings to favour thematic or aesthetic relationships
rather than promoting the uniqueness of the work of art. The conclusion is that on
one hand, the layout of the display uses the spatial potentials to maximise the impact
of exhibits and, on the other hand, the power of space overrides the intentions of the
curators when it comes to the morphology of movement and exploration.

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