

ART MUSEUM EDUCATORS:
UNVEILING PERCEPTIONS OF THEORY, METHOD, AND PREPARATION

by

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Abstract

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The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the body of knowledge about art museum educators within the larger ecosystems of art and museum education. This study reveals museum educator perceptions about preparation and professional development experiences, their work with student groups in art museums, and how their understanding of educational theory and method shapes student interaction.

A phenomenological qualitative inquiry was conducted with 10 interview participants and a larger survey was administered with 123 respondents. Personal accounts were combined to create a narrative of the museum educator experience and were cross-referenced with broader survey data to complete an analysis of the landscape of experience. Following analysis and synthesis of the survey data and interview responses, four meaningful statements were uncovered: art museum educators are educationally and professionally experienced; art museum educators come from diverse educational and professional experiences; art museum educators must adapt to the circumstances of their working environments; when visiting museums, art museum educators prefer open-ended experiences that can promote social interaction. This type of experience is evident in the educators' enacted pedagogy with students in art museums. Exploring how museum educators understand their experiences unveiled how they perceive and

practice educational theories and methods while working with student groups and how their preparation aided or hindered their abilities. Exemplary examples of art museum education preparation and professional development experiences were revealed through both survey and interview data. To strengthen the field of art museum educator preparation, recommendations for academic and alternative professional development as well as institutional collaboration were identified.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables	ix
Chapter One: A Call to Study the Art Museum Educator	1
Art Museum Education in the Urban Community	3
Arts Education in an Urban Environment.....	6
Museum Educators.....	9
A Lack of Focused Literature	11
Studying the Lifeworld of a Museum Educator.....	13
Approaches to Theories of Understanding and the Lived Experience of Museum Educators	14
An Autobiography of a Museum Educator.....	15
Combining Theories and Understanding Lived Experiences	23
Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature	26
Imagination and the Arts.....	26
The Socio-Educational Importance of Aesthetics.....	29
Aesthetic/Art Education.....	30
The Changing Shape of Mediation	37
Museums and Education	42
Conclusion	51
Chapter Three: Method.....	52
Chapter Four: Findings	58
Limitations of the Study.....	58
Survey Findings	59
Demographic Information.....	59
Qualitative Study	70
The Making of Art Museum Educators	72
Personal Perceptions of Art Museum Educators	82
The Work of Art Museum Educators.....	89
Transitional Experiences: Orientations and Departures	90
The Gallery Experience with Students	95
Experiences with Teachers	102

Negotiating Studio Experiences.....	106
Experiences of Method and Theory.....	107
Experiences of Camaraderie and Professional Development.....	112
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion.....	115
Statements of Importance (Statements 1 through 4)	
Alternative and Academic Development: Exemplary Examples.....	128
Recommendations.....	134
(Recommendations 1 through 5)	
Areas for Further Research.....	141
Conclusion.....	143
Appendices.....	146
Appendix A: Interview Questions.....	146
Appendix B: Survey.....	147
Appendix C: Interview Consent Form.....	153
References.....	154

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Age Demographic of Participants</i>	60
Table 2. <i>Employment Demographics of Participants</i>	60
Table 3. <i>Nomenclature of Position for Participants at Host Institutions</i>	61
Table 4. <i>Reported Length of Time in the Field of Education and Museum Education</i>	63
Table 5. <i>Formal Education Coursework in Relation to Work in Art Museum Education</i> .	64
Table 6. <i>Alternative Education Coursework in Relation to Work with Visitors in Art Museums</i>	65
Table 7. <i>Institutional Training Time Devoted to Professional Development Per Month</i> ..	66
Table 8. <i>Types of Trainings Offered at Institution</i>	66
Table 9. <i>Number of Tours for Students Led Per Month</i>	67
Table 10. <i>Types of School Groups</i>	68
Table 11. <i>Level of Comfort with Types of Student Groups</i>	68
Table 12. <i>Student Group Preferences</i>	70
Table 13. <i>Demographic Data of Interview Participants</i>	71
Table 14. <i>Educational Demographic Data of Qualitative Research Participants</i>	72
Table 15. <i>Types of employment in museums experienced by interview participants</i>	75
Table 16. <i>String analysis of employment experiences in museums (interview participants)</i>	76

Art Museum Educators: Unveiling Perceptions of Theory, Method, and Preparation

Chapter 1: A Call to Study the Art Museum Educator

A Personal Account

With an audible click, the museum doors have just been unlocked by the security guard, who has been patiently watching the clock, waiting for it to strike 11:00. The sound reverberates in the silence of the lobby, and the eyes of 60 children widen in anticipation. Their faces and hands are pressed against the large panes of glass that separate 17th Street from the quiet, composed interior of the Rubin Museum of Art. As the doors open, the sounds of laughter, chatter, and “oohh” and “aaah” fill the small vestibule that acts as a portal from the outside into the lobby of the museum. From 15 feet away, I can see a flood of third-graders swarm down the few stairs that separate them from the lobby and the magnificent marble space we call the Spiral. I feel tired—no, irritated—thinking about the hour to come. My impending work with these students arrived unexpectedly: a last-minute phone call from a frantic museum educator at the front desk revealed that someone had called in sick for the day, and we were short of educators to lead tours for the students. In a scramble, I quickly juggled appointments, sent email notifications, and made hasty apologies for my absence from two morning meetings: I would be teaching in the gallery.

While I oversee all aspects of the museum’s education initiatives and visitor services as the head of the Education department, I rarely give student tours without receiving advance warning. My calendar is booked for months ahead with administrative meetings, exhibition meetings, curriculum meetings, executive meetings, fundraising meetings, and so on. I try to lead a public tour at least once a month to keep my practice fresh and stay connected to the world

of my fellow museum educators, but most of my tours are now for corporations or foundations that might support the museum. With my head swimming with thoughts of an upcoming budget, an employee-reprimand meeting that was moved to later in the afternoon, and an earlier conversation with the deputy director about a new initiative, I greet the students with a weak smile and take 15 students away, to a small corner of the Spiral. I pause for a moment and review my situation: my unexpected circumstance, the new students and teachers whom I will be with for the next hour, and my attitude towards the situation. I calculate that the hour I spend working with the students will have to be made up by skipping my lunch break or extending my work day. Though I feel slightly defeated, I cannot show signs of frustration to the students. It is not their fault that someone called in sick and that the work has trickled up to me. For the next hour, I will be no longer a museum administrator but a museum educator.

I have jumbled, flashing thoughts in the next few moments. The students are moving closer and are anxiously waiting for me to say something. I catch the suspicious eyes of their teacher, scanning my presence. I tower over her students. I tower over her. As a preemptive measure to alleviate the discomfort that my 6-foot, 3-inch adult male frame can cause, I've removed my tie and blazer to appear less formal and more friendly, having previously experienced teachers and students becoming reserved with someone wearing a tie and jacket during a tour. Not quite knowing what to do, I slip into a typical line of pleasantries and have the students introduce themselves. Their names flow in and out of my ears—I have difficulty remembering names, especially with those people I know I will be with for only one hour; however, the name game buys me some time to collect my thoughts. During this game, I think about what it means to be a seasoned arts museum educator in New York City. I know that this may be the only arts experience that these students have this week and that this one-hour tour

could be a precious moment for them. I know that I know the theories and the appropriate methods, but I also recognize my low level of empathy at this moment. I revert to a “what works” mentality. As I lead the students up the stairs, I rely on storytelling and well-placed questions to explain rather than engage. Midway through the tour, as my thoughts of the office are dimmed and I am overtaken by the presence of art and children, my mental gears switch, and I begin to engage deeply with the students, asking them more about themselves than about the art. We’ve eased into a groove, and I have relaxed. The students astound me with their responses to the art and how they can connect it to their personal lives. We look at artworks together, and the students reveal to me new aspects of paintings that I have examined for hours. Together we create new meanings about the things that are so familiar to me.

I look down at my watch, and it is noon. We quickly run down the stairs and say our goodbyes. As the students flow out of the museum and back onto the street, I see their faces smiling at me through the large panes of glass. It will probably be the briefest, most meaningful hour of my day.

Art Museum Education in the Urban Community

The above account reflects my experience with students and teachers and offers an opportunity to explore how education happens at art museums with museum educators. I am not seeking to construct a new theory of aesthetic knowledge or practice of engagement but, rather, to deeply explore an experience in which I am aware of my environment, social situation, and emotional state while drawing from educational theory and method, all in one brief encounter with students. As a museum educator, I don’t always know what to do nor do I claim to always make the right choices. My mind is filled with multiple educational theories and methodologies, and the intersection of these with the art museum experience elicits deep questions about what is

appropriate to do with students. I don't believe that these questions are unique to my particular situation; they may be occurring daily with other museum educators in large urban cities. But, especially with the pressure of learning outcomes required by urban school systems, it is now pertinent to reflect on how museum educators make sense of their experiences with students. This chapter will focus on the necessity of and approaches to studying museum educators and their relevance to aesthetic and arts education. The first section will explore the current state of arts education at national, state, and local levels; survey how art museums provide access to student and teacher groups in New York City; examine the limited literature that exists about art museum educators; and identify a strategy for exploring the lifeworld of museum educator. The second section presents an investigation into theoretical understandings of lived experiences; a brief autobiography of my work as a museum educator to understand and problematize my own understanding of theories and methods; and a theoretical framework inspired for the research in this study by both the Interactive Experience Model (Falk & Dierking, 1997) and Transaction Theory (David Ebitz, 2007).

Art museums have transitioned over the past 40 years from receptacles that house and collect artifacts and artworks to public institutions that value service to their surrounding communities. Museums have become centralized hubs of dialogue and learning, with individual and general visitation and organized student tours (Falk & Dierking, 1997). These student groups reflect the diverse school community, which extends from pre-kindergarten and daycare centers to formalized K–12 schools and universities. To satisfy the increased needs of the community, art museums have expanded their services to go beyond the security, preservation, and collection of artworks and artifacts to include the interpretation and explanation of concepts, contexts, and meanings. In New York City alone, 22 museums that feature permanent art

collections or traveling art exhibitions facilitate guided student group visitation (i.e., tours). Of these, 9 institutions provide this service free to city students while others charge various fees. Though the staffs of these arts institutions vary in size, they have made a commitment to create quality in-gallery aesthetic experiences by using human-mediated learning strategies, which might simply be defined as *tours*. Tours feature a range of pedagogical strategies that are facilitated by multiple types of museum educators: from strict didactic, scripted explanations of artworks on display to radical constructivist explorations of artworks, where the museum educator is only a facilitator of student experience.

To promote and create meaningful experiences with students and other groups, museum educators seek additional preparation and advanced degrees in education to equip them with theories and methods needed to interact with these groups. Museum education is moving beyond a secondary field of art history or arts education to become a formal profession, with programs in museum studies at New York University and the City College of New York and programs in museum education at Bank Street College. Also, programs facilitated by the New York Museum Education Roundtable, the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education, and Visual Thinking Strategies all provide advanced professional development in both educational theory and pedagogy. These programs add to the rich tapestry of professional aesthetic education practices and help to prepare the future leaders in museums who will need to address New York City students' limited access to arts education. As arts education is pulled out of the school systems under the pressure of limited funding, museum educators add value to urban educational experiences not only by increasing the immediate experiences with art that students and teachers have during school fieldtrips but also by adding to the overall arts ecosystem. With arts programs disappearing at an alarming rate and lowered emphasis on the arts in the state and city

curriculums, museum educators may be some of the few connections to arts learning that students have. This adds a distinct pressure to the role of museum educators that urges further exploration.

Arts Education in an Urban Environment

Carefully mediating aesthetic experiences with schoolchildren in a museum is a difficult art to master, especially for classroom teachers who are new to the skills of deep observation and the understanding of conceptual frameworks from which particular works of art have emerged. While students can construct a cursory understanding of art based on relating their life experiences to what they are viewing, they may dismiss many artworks due to immediate personal taste. If a teacher is ill-prepared to facilitate thoughtful observations of art, the museum visit quickly reverts to a maximization of space and time, forcing students to set their weary eyes upon every piece of art within the museum, followed by a desperate attempt to connect the visit to the classroom curriculum in order to justify the visit's expense to the school administrators. While many artworks have been interpreted with labels and wall texts, and some exhibitions arrange artworks thematically, every student and teacher will have a different museum experience. An exhibition may have strong spatial and thematic organization, but a learner's background, experiences, and intended (or unintended) agenda inevitably creates variability at any point.

Teachers leading student groups through the museum may feel the pressure of a curricular goal to match the museum content with classroom content. According to the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics, 89% of public schools offer elementary students one session of visual arts per week in the classroom (Parsad &

Spiegelman, 2011, p. 2). With only 45 to 70 minutes of arts instruction per week, teachers are under pressure to make every moment of a museum experience count.

For the past 10 years, the education of students in the United States has been deeply affected by the priorities of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, legislation meant to create an equitable form of education for all students. While purporting to hold all subjects equal, NCLB emphasizes the need for the subjects of English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.¹ The NCLB Act contains a clause in relation to arts education that allows flexible spending to achieve the national standards for arts education.² This indicates a lack of funding for this core subject.

According to the National Association for Music Education (1994)—the centralized organization that provides standards for arts education, which includes music, theater, dance, and visual arts—students should:

Be able to communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines; be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form; be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art; have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods; be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines. (pp. 14–15)

The standards were set in place to create a system of accountability and proficiency in art and aesthetic education so that teachers can correlate and integrate arts education into broader curriculums.

¹ No Child Left Behind Act, Title IX, Part A, Section 9101 (1) (D)(11)

² No Child Left Behind Act, Subpart 15, Section 5551

In New York City, the trend has been to create voluntary arts and aesthetics standards and only hold schools accountable for the math and literacy achievement of students. In an effort to not close schools due to limited funding, principals and teachers have had to limit access to many subjects in order to increase students' exposure to math and reading. One subject that has been cast out of schools in the war against illiteracy and innumeracy is art, specifically the exploration of aesthetic education within the visual arts. Sympathetically thought of as a necessary loss, the arts have been value-engineered out of the classroom. In New York City, one of the most vibrant arts centers of the world, this issue is paramount.

A study conducted by the Center for Education Policy (2008) on instructional time for students in elementary grades concluded that arts education on a national scope was allotted between 50 and 74 minutes per week. In 2005, New York City Department of Education (DOE) administrators testified that the Bloomberg administration made arts education a priority. In 2007, however, the administration announced the elimination of dedicated funding for arts education, giving principals the option of using the funds for other purposes beginning with the 2007–2008 school year. With so little time and so few funds being allocated to schools for arts instruction, administrators feel a constant need to justify the arts as something valuable and meaningful for students.

Expanding on the national standards, New York provides state recommendations to help educators infuse the arts into the curriculum and outlines a system of accountability for quality arts instruction. The four arts standards put in place for students by the New York State Education Department (2009) include: “creating, performing, and participating in the arts; knowing and using arts materials and resources; responding to and analyzing works of art; and understanding the cultural dimensions of the contributions of the arts.” At the local level, the

New York City Department of Education in cooperation with a group of educators and administrators from museums, arts organizations, and schools created the *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning for Visual Arts, Theater, Dance, Music, and Media*. This publication outlines developmentally appropriate art experiences by grade level for the students of New York City, with a system for educators to account the levels of art literacy being reached. For schools to meet the large number of goals, the city recommends one hour of arts instruction per day, but this is often disregarded in favor of extended math and reading periods.

With so many documented standards in arts education at the national, state, and city levels, what actually happens in New York City's classrooms? Students are expected to experience art both through creation and appreciation in order to become more aware of their surroundings and of others. Their understanding leads to active cultural awareness and participation within society and the world. However, with little enforcement of accountability in classroom arts instruction, it is questionable whether the standards are even being implemented or ever met.

Museum Educators

When the arts are not present in the classroom, one way that teachers infuse them into the curriculum is through visits to art museums. While well intentioned, these fieldtrips, if not properly facilitated, may seem meaningless and be irrelevant to curriculum goals. Art museums can be spaces of wonder designed to lead students to experience significant artworks and to open their imaginations to new possibilities. However, for some, large halls and intimidating environments of museums may suppress their imagination and excitement. What may be perceived as grand and awe-inspiring to the average cultural consumer may be overwhelming and scary to students and teachers alike. While teachers who bring students to explore museums

help facilitate the fieldtrip experience, they are often under-qualified or ill-prepared to foster a worthwhile museum experience, due to their lack of arts education and preparation in the facilitation of the arts experience. Often teachers must rely on the museum educator (an umbrella term that will be used here to encompass the specific job titles of docents, guides, explainers, interpreters, etc.) who works in the museum on a daily basis and who is familiar with the myriad choices that visitors face. The museum educator understands how to navigate the museum space and to mediate the art for the optimal experience.

While many visitor studies have examined how individuals move through galleries (Bourdeau & Chebat, 2001) and interact with particular works of art (Falk & Dierking, 1997 and 2000), little research has been conducted on the roles art museum educators play with student groups during gallery experiences and how museum educators make pedagogical choices. John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000) claim:

It is amazing how little research exists on the role that museum staff—volunteers, guides, explainers, demonstrators, and performers—play in facilitating learning from museums.

The few studies conducted with casual visitors suggest that staff and volunteers positively influence the experience particularly when they are skilled interpreters, helping to facilitate and make the experience meaningful for visitors. (pp. 106–107)

Though Falk and Dierking use the term *interpreter*, they emphasize how important the skill of facilitation is to creating meaningful experiences for visitors. Experiences become more meaningful when interpretation transforms into mediation to build upon students' previous experiences with their aesthetic experiences in the museum. Only through this mediation can museum educators access the students' prior knowledge and history, introduce new knowledge of artworks, and create time and conversation for thoughtful reflection to occur. In what ways

have museum educators come to know how to do this, and how do they employ these learned theories and methods with students in the galleries?

A Lack of Focused Literature

There is a deficiency of information on how art museum educators prepare and enact work with student groups in art museums, despite the fairly recent development by many museums to include education as a core element of their missions and priorities for research. It is important to note that museums also serve as a leisure activity for cultural consumers and, as museums become more visitor-centered, exhibitions and collections that increase visitor satisfaction may be evaluated first, to ensure returning visitors. As many museums have turned to government and foundation funding to maintain particular programs, expectations for learner outcomes are also evaluated on a regular basis. Direct visitor impact may be measured by facts attained while walking through exhibitions, and museum educators are evaluated in terms of direct services based on student outcomes or teacher satisfaction. To become relevant to curriculums, many museum programs clearly state educational standards on their informational materials so that explicit connections can be made. This labeling of a direct arts experience in a museum adds pressure to the results an art museum educator is expected to produce during a short interaction or tour.

This pressure is difficult to define for museum educators, and there are few resources or models that help to reveal how others have managed this type of stress. In searching for accounts about the lifeworld of a museum educator, it is difficult to find true histories that encompass both an internal world of the mind of a museum educator and the external world of the preparation and services to students and teachers. Only two major biographies of museum educators may be found, and both relate to educators who became administrators of science

museums: Frank Oppenheimer of the Exploratorium in San Francisco, California, and Laura Bragg of the Charlotte Natural History Museum in North Carolina. Both Bragg and Oppenheimer operated their institutions before a time of national, state, and local standards in education.

Autobiographical work is also rarely found in the literature about current museum educators. I propose that this lack of literature stems from the same reason that there is a lack of literature on teacher life and experience: the lack of time to write! Kate Rousmaniere (1997) described four experiences that many teachers in the progressive era of the 1920s shared: a continual increase in responsibility without significant administrative support, isolation from other educators, conflict between administrative and educator expectations and realities, and the ability to be adaptive to changing situations (pp. 3–5). Though Rousmaniere interviewed teachers who worked in the 1920s, these same issues are playing out in schools today. Based on my experiences and observations, similar organizational conflicts exist for museum educators. Art museum educators are continually being asked to learn more content, work with greater numbers of students, and handle multiple tasks in museums with dwindling staffs and budgets. Museum educators may attend professional development sessions together to learn new content or pedagogical techniques, but for the most part they work in isolation within the museum. They are constantly under scrutiny from administrators, including those beyond their direct supervisors such as curators, designers, operations workers, and security staff. Danielle Rice and Phillip Yenawine (2002) explored the notion that museum educators contributed to the development of exhibition interpretation by encouraging curators and designers to provide interpretive materials and texts for objects, artifacts, and art (pp. 2–3). However, with interpretive materials now

commonplace, it is difficult for museum staff members outside of education departments to understand that human-mediated contact contributes to learning in significant ways.

In addition, museum educators must continually adapt and be flexible, not only to the changing environments of new exhibitions but also to the differences in groups that walk through the doors: third-graders one hour, college students the next. The demands of the profession result in a shortage of time to evaluate one's work on a regular basis or to write new literature about one's experiences.

Studying the Lifeworld of a Museum Educator

Since there is limited time for arts and aesthetic education in the school system, and therefore the time that museum educators spend with student groups in galleries is all the more valuable, I propose further exploration of the professional preparation and lifeworlds of art museum educators. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge about museum education by eliciting these educators' perceptions about their preparation and professional development experiences, their experiences with student groups in art museums during tours, and how these experiences are shaped by their understandings of educational theory and method. While research has been performed on arts education and educators within the classroom environment and the educational role of the museum in today's community, there is a paucity of literature on how museum educators view themselves, the museum environment, their preparation, and their work with students. Utilizing as an explorative framework the Interactive Experience Model proposed by Falk & Dierking (1997) that contextualizes the physical, social, and personal spheres composing the museum experience, this study will gather perspectives from museum educators to uncover their experiences and their educational understanding of theory and pedagogy. Since access to arts education is limited for many students in urban

environments, experiences with educators in art museums may be the only exposure to art and aesthetic education that students receive throughout the school year. An exploration of how museum educators perceive their experiences will suggest ways to develop and maintain professional practice for art museum educators.

Approaches to Theories of Understanding and the Lived Experience of Museum Educators

A further investigation will provide a framework for inquiry into the theoretical and methodological understandings of art museum educators and their interrelations with students in galleries. David Ebitz (2007) explained:

Theory leads to insights or hypothesis to generate new knowledge, worlds, and ways of working in the world that are practical and good enough to get our job done. It is both a lens to look at the world and a tool to fashion it. (p. 22)

Understanding conceptions of theory in the field of museum education develops a structure of analysis that may be utilized for the process of inquiry into the lives of museum educators.

While a broad survey of theory could create a concise understanding for this framework, I believe that a self-reflective approach to understanding how theory is applied to fieldwork within museums provides a dynamic frame for analysis. When theory and method are learned in a professional context, that is, in the field, there is a greater understanding of experience than prescribed in an academic setting. Through an autobiographical narrative, the following section will explore how theory (as related to method and practice) was presented to me throughout my experience as a professional museum educator. After, I will explore strategies for transacting theories of education, as developed by Ebitz, and examine a learner-centered model of interactive experience developed by Falk and Dierking (1997) that may be applied as one pathway towards understanding the experience of museum educators.

To begin the self-inquiry of my exposure to educational theories and methods, and to reveal biases about what I perceive to be integral to the museum experience, I present a brief autobiography, utilizing techniques of descriptive analysis from the field of phenomenology. Max van Manen (1990) maintained that “phenomenology does not offer the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather, it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (p. 9). By undertaking a deep self-reflection through autobiography, I will connect my experience to these theories rather than construct new theory. I utilized a framework inspired by Clark Moustakas (1994) who explained the term *constructed epoch* as:

A preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, and allowing things, events and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time. (p. 85)

While the construction of the epoch and possible later phenomenological reduction may be utilized for analysis of immediate or short experiences, I adapted the structure and looked at what presented itself during my examination of my history as a museum educator and how this affects my understanding of theory, as a resource for future parts of this study.

An Autobiography of a Museum Educator

My initial understanding of theory relates to a fear of what I am doing as a museum educator, with regard to students. I would suggest that my fear of examining my conception of theory, method, and practice looms like a giant, wild, dark horse, who ravages my thoughts relentlessly yet still presents the challenge of trying to tame and groom it. Drawing from my

graduate experience in theater history and theory, I believe that this feeling, this dark horse, could be metaphorically expressed through the prose of an unconventional play that has little to do with guiding students through art museums. At the beginning of the second act of *Equus* by Peter Shaffer (1973), Dr. Dysart, a psychiatrist charged with revealing the inner thoughts of a young man who has recently blinded a number of horses, emerges abruptly from the darkness to address the audience. Dysart's monologue reveals his inner conflict with the psychological manifestation of the young man's inner demons or perhaps his own.

Of course I've stared at such images before. Or been stared at by them, whichever way you look at it. And weirdly often now with me the feeling is that they are staring at us—that in some quite palpable way they precede us. Meaningless, but unsettling ... In either case, this one is the most alarming yet. It asks questions I've avoided all my professional life. [Pause.] A child is born into a world of phenomena all equal in their power to enslave. It sniffs—it sucks—it strokes its eyes over the whole uncomfortable range. Suddenly one strikes. Why? Moments snap together like magnets, forging a chain of shackles. Why? I can trace them. I can even, with time, pull them apart again. But why at the start they were ever magnetized at all—just those particular moments of experience and no others—I don't know. And nor does anyone else. Yet if I don't know—if I can never know that—then what am I doing here? I don't mean clinically doing or socially doing—I mean fundamentally! These questions, these Whys, are fundamental—yet they have no place in a consulting room. So then do I? ... This is the feeling more and more with me—No Place. Displacement ... 'Account for me,' says staring *Equus*. 'First Account for me.' (p. 74)

My dark horse of conflicting ideologies runs between the notions of presentation and facilitation. I do not think that I am alone in struggling with this pedagogical stallion, and it is a difficult conversation to hold in the field of museums, where performance or theater is considered as viable an option to museum education as student-centered inquiry. When I think about my professional past, I remember the years of work during which I explored museum theater, performance, and inquiry-based science education, which could also be called *explaining*.

I began my life in museums as an actor. That term may be misleading—I was officially an Einstein Player, part of a group newly instituted at the Orlando Science Center (OSC) to perform science-themed shows to the general public and school groups. OSC had an education department that conducted workshops with students. These workshops were usually additions to fieldtrips that students participated in throughout the school year. I was never invited to observe a science workshop or to see what the mysterious science instructors did within a small classroom at the end of a long corridor far away from the exhibition halls. My job was to facilitate on-floor interactions and perform science-theater plays or programs in an auditorium. Facilitation of the on-floor experience, which is common in hands-on science centers, was sort of unstructured: do what you think is right, roam the floors to make sure no one is breaking exhibits, and answer questions when asked (which usually required helping someone to read or find a label). The content training offered for new exhibits was sparse or non-existent, and we were constantly encouraged to learn on our own through experimentation with the science exhibits and visitor facilitation. I am grateful for that experience, and it instilled in me a visitor-centered approach: Our museum was constantly changing, so I was constantly a new visitor to the environment around me. Unless I took the initiative to study the material on my own time, the information that I had about particular exhibitions was limited to the wall text or label copy.

I was rarely given the opportunity to learn more during working hours. Due to my theatrical training and previous work history (I was concurrently a theater major at the local university and a stage assistant at Universal Studios Florida), I was continuously handed scripts about new science shows or demonstrations, and expected to perform them with little rehearsal.

The one exception to my dependence on scripts was when I showed a spark of interest in an upcoming dinosaur exhibition. I worked at the Orlando Science Center during a time of great expansion. For two years, I was an Einstein Player in what was called “the old building”: it was old because I began working during a major construction project that resulted in the building of an entirely new facility. During our time at the old building, we were always pushing the boundaries of what our facility could accommodate, and during our last few months of operation before moving to the new facility, we transformed the entire building into a dinosaur sanctuary, like in the movie, *Jurassic Park*. Our roles as on-floor interpreters were to pretend or act as paleontologist interns. At the time, I had taken the initiative to evaluate some of our geology exhibits, based on what I saw visitors doing versus what they could be doing to learn about the layers of the Earth. I developed an interest in the exhibit design process and became close to the design team that was working on exhibitions for the new facility. Seeing that a greater degree of knowledge would help our on-floor interpretation team to perform the roles of paleontologists, the exhibition design team sent me to Flagstaff, Arizona, to study paleontology with Michael Morales, one of the leading research paleontologists in the field. I studied Morales’ environment and mannerisms and researched the activities in a paleontology lab in order to design on-floor experiences or demonstrations about paleontologists at OSC. This was a dream come true for someone who had always wanted to be a paleontologist. Admittedly, my experience at the laboratory was less than glamorous, and I was relegated to many hours of sweeping the floor and

making endless numbers of plaster casts of Precambrian footprints. However, the experience of participating in hands-on learning was invaluable because it was the first time that I had thought about experiential education in the context of program development.

Until my foray into paleontology, I had always relied on a performance script or an outline. My main duty at the Orlando Science Center, aside from roaming the floors and helping visitors when I could, was performing science shows that rotated on a seasonal basis. I was either given a rough outline of points to cover—about weather, or reptiles (to really excite the audience, there were large phenomenological demonstrations or live animals, respectively)—or given a direct script to portray a character who processed or showcased ideas in science. Throughout my five-year history at OSC, I continually delved into this work, refining what it meant to be a skilled performer in a field referred to as museum theater. I believe that we were able to do this kind of work because the administration valued both the leisure experience and the learning experience, and I was encouraged to emphasize the leisure aspect in my work at OSC. This was no doubt in reaction to the other types of learning/leisure activities available to families and students in Orlando, Florida, including SeaWorld, Walt Disney World's Epcot Center and Animal Kingdom, Wonder Works (an interactive mad-science-themed laboratory), Gatorland Zoo, and various other environmental centers utilizing Florida's natural habitats. This type of theatrical presentation and demonstration was also common in other museums, and I created parallel work scenarios at the Orange County Historical Museum, writing and performing plays about Orlando pioneers, while also working within the exhibitions department, mounting photographic exhibitions.

The ultimate museum theater experience, and the one that began my love affair with art, was a special project for the Orlando Museum of Art (OMA) in which I became a producer for a

series of plays to contextualize the exhibition, *A Taste of Splendor: Russian Imperial and European Treasures from the Hillwood Museum*. In 2000, I had been recommended by professors from my undergraduate theater department at Rollins College to help OMA produce a theatrical experience that would enhance visitors' appreciation of the incredible Fabergé eggs and oil paintings in a traveling exhibition about middle-class life in Russia around the turn of the twentieth century. I selected two short Russian comedies by Anton Chekhov, *The Bear* and *The Proposal*, to run in repertory and also performed in them. This was really the first time that I thought about art or theater as a contextualization or reflection of a particular society showcased in a museum. After we performed the plays, we spoke to students, helping them to understand the theatrical experience and connect it to the ideas of material culture presented in the exhibition.

Shortly thereafter, I moved to New York City and worked for 8 years at the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) in the public programming department. Throughout my time at NYSCI, I was given the opportunity to create a theater department that integrated exhibition content into large stage shows. Over eight years, I guided arts programming for early childhood and elementary school students, contextualizing science by providing alternative learning strategies for learners. I also began to oversee portions of the youth development program, known as the Science Career Ladder, and began to teach high school and undergraduate students to work with the arts as a method of engagement for science learning.

What I find interesting about my experience in science museum education is that a great deal of the teaching consisted of demonstration and explanation—explaining label texts, explaining phenomena, explaining processes—and many people who work in science centers (at least at NYSCI and the Exploratorium) are called *explainers*. Visitors do ask questions; there is

inquiry, but the inquiry is usually a stepped sequence to a correct answer. The experiences that truly inspired my passion, interest, and curiosity were those without any correct answers. One of the areas that I supervised was a “make-it-and-take-it” station, where children could make crafts that related to the exhibitions. The activities generally had a prescribed outcome, but there was always room for some creativity with color or construction. What I often found frustrating was that parents or teachers wanted me to provide detailed instructions on how to color an item. If there was a pattern in a butterfly, what was the color needed to fill in the lines? Could I explain the process of coloring, or felting? What were the precise directions? People were scared to move along their own paths of discovery—they wanted explanations—but, looking back, it makes sense, as that was generally their experience of other activities within the museum.

Working with preschool-age children in the area of play was the first time I began to experiment with truly open-ended questions, such as: How do you feel about it? How does this color make you feel? What does this place make you want to do? I worked with puppets and let the children explore their environments without directing them. It was at this time that I began my doctoral work in urban education and began reading the works of Vygotsky, Piaget, and Fosnot to explore constructivism and sociocultural theory. The more I thought about student-centered inquiry, the more I was drawn to the experiences of the arts as a catalyst to spark curiosity.

I worked in the field of explaining for 13 years and then moved into the world of visual arts education. This change came after my first visit to the Rubin Museum of Art. Walking along 17th Street on a cold day in November, I was drawn to the storefront gift shop and went inside. I did not know that a museum existed in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York City, and when I walked in, I wasn't struck by the beautiful art or the breathtaking spiral staircase but

rather by two groups of students sitting in circles on the tan marble floor. Two museum educators were delivering a brief orientation about the type of arts experience that students were about to have and, to my surprise, the educators were incredibly open-ended about what may lay ahead. There was room for students' expressions of their hopes and fears, and the educators treated the students with such sensitivity that I was almost moved to tears. At the institutions where I previously worked, students on buses were often greeted with bullhorns and screamed instructions. With 3000 students passing daily through the halls of a science museum, there was little room for the type of emotional connections that I witnessed at the Rubin Museum.

While the Rubin Museum became one of my favorite spaces to witness student engagement, I was on the lookout for any position in an arts environment. In 2008, I was fortunate to be placed as the head of the Rubin's education department, based on my creative and administrative capabilities and my training. Since my venture into art education in 2008, I have wondered how museum educators balance the urge to explain with the desire for open interpretation. In my role at the Rubin Museum of Art, I sense the tension between presenting contextual information about the works and maintaining a student-centered approach, to understanding the relevance of the artwork for the thousands of students who enter the museum each year. For example, Himalayan art is imbued with a sacred meaning that is exotic to many Western viewers, and sometimes students and teachers enter the museum looking for a quick explanation to quench their curiosity. When museum educators can slow down the process of inquiry and ask truly open-ended questions, then educators, students, and teachers alike can make new discoveries about themselves, about others, and about the world around them. Aside from the contrast of explanation versus open-ended inquiry, the one major difference between science museums and art museums that still intrigues me is the differing degrees of student

engagement. In a science museum, educators are often quite passive, waiting for students to come to them with questions, whereas in an art museum, educators are more active and generally lead students on tours, which means that educators are usually exposed to students for a longer time. These longer durations require museum educators, who are not working from a script or outline, to be adventurous with open-ended frameworks for art experiences. Now that I am out of the realm of science education, where my training was often self-obtained or just meant to explain the exhibit label, I am interested in how art museum educators understand theories of arts learning and arts pedagogy, as well as how they confront real-world issues.

That said, as an administrator, I know that there are museum educators who excel at creating student-centered experiences and those who just deliver interesting facts and entertaining tricks. These tricks are often a show of knowledge consumed from other sources such as scholarly texts or curatorial lectures. In these scenarios, the gallery experience becomes about how much the museum educator knows or how the educator delivers the knowledge. I witness these situations, and I am frustrated by my inability to stop them. It may seem an easy process, to curb this behavior, but how do you tell an art museum educator—who has been leading tours in her particular way for 40 years—to change methods, especially when she is dedicated to the institution? It is a problem many educational administrators face with many educators: how do you stimulate change?

Combining Theories and Understanding Lived Experiences

As someone who has developed many personal theories and methods of education through my professional work with students in museums, and who has learned from a formal academic program the historical theories and methods, I now combine, co-opt, and employ various theories and methods as needed to create and sustain valuable student experiences. I do

not believe that there is one specific theory that must be applied to art museum education, and I echo Ebitz's claim (2007) that different rules need to apply to understanding theory within the context of museum education. Though museum educators observe multiple learning theories, the theories primarily exist and are constructed outside the field of art museum education (Ebitz, 2007, p. 26). The theories and methods that are most commonly used within museum education include constructivism, sociocultural activity theory, empiricism, feminist critique, phenomenology, inquiry-based strategies, object-based learning, experiential education, and visual thinking strategies. These have been developed philosophically or in laboratory and are then used within the realm of gallery experiences with students through the form of a tour.

Ebitz (2007) separates co-opted educational theories into three categories: "Theories of the Object, Disciplines, and Museum Literacy; Theories of Learning and the Psychology of the Individual; and Theories of Making Meaning in a Sociocultural Context." Additionally, these theories may be reduced to ideas of "object, disciplines, individual, society, and context" and can be combined and transacted in any number of ways to make the most sense for museum educators (pp. 25–28). While this approach, labeled by Ebitz as *transaction theory*, allows for a flexible understanding of how theories and methods may be combined by art museum educators, it does not speak to the daily, lived experience of educators in the field. This experience is a culmination of psychological, social, and physical factors that are simultaneously experienced and facilitated by the art museum educator. Being an educator does not divorce an individual from the effects of being in an art environment that provokes emotion and wonderment.

Falk and Dierking (1997) provide a model of visitor experience for museums that may be combined with the above transaction theory to begin an analysis of the art museum educator's lived experience. With the Interactive Experience Model, Falk and

Dierking explore how museum visitors' personal, social, and physical contexts contribute to the interactive experience within the museum. Later, Falk and Dierking (2000) further refine and re-define this model to include a longitudinal component that explores these contexts through a learner's lifespan. Transforming the Interactive Experience Model into the Contextual Model of Learning, Falk and Dierking place greater emphasis on the museum visitor as a learner. Though the museum is a professional environment for a museum educator, these models may also illuminate his or her perspective or at least begin to frame the conversation of inquiry about his or her perception of experience with student groups within the museum.

When experiencing art with student groups, the museum educator is still an active participant in the art or aesthetic experience. He or she is susceptible to the effects of psychological, social, and physical experiences as well as the preconceived notions of what theories and methods may be appropriate to create an ideal learning environment. How individual experiences, knowledge, and presumptions align or exist in disequilibrium prompts this study, as this contributes to the overall experience in the art museum. By utilizing both transaction theory and the Interactive Experience Model (or the Contextual Model of Learning), one can begin to comprehend how museum educators understand and enact various theories and methodologies in the art museum.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study is to investigate how art museum educators perceive their daily experiences with student groups in museums relative to their understanding of educational theories and methods. While the viewing of art can greatly inspire students' imaginations, it is through mediation and discourse that new ideas and thoughts move from the personal to the social realm, providing students with a wider field for imaginative exploration. Within the social realm of learning, as personal ideas and languages are shared, students are able to gain greater agency and construct common meanings. As museums can inspire strong emotions, the interactions between students and educators within art museums can also involve emotions, which create significant markers for retention of understanding. How museum educators decide to approach students provides insight into the making of meaningful impact. To navigate the topics within the study, I will identify specific concepts that inform the underlying structures of guided student tours in art museums. As my research examines the interrelation of human experiences within the presence of art, a review of the literature will plot a course through the writings of those scholars who identify the importance of arts and aesthetic education in society, the structures of learning that frame art and aesthetic education, the changing nature of art and aesthetic education, the manifestation of art and aesthetic education as learning in museums, and the ways that museums create experiences that contribute to the intellectual growth of learners of all ages.

Imagination and the Arts

Arts experiences can spark the imagination and inspire meaningful ideas, allowing individuals to realize new possibilities about the world. Deeply informed by the theories of John Dewey (1934), substantial epistemological foundations of arts education have been advanced by

Maxine Greene (2000) and Phillip Jackson (1998), who have both written on the interrelation of imagination, experience, and art, and the importance for allowing a pedagogy that validates these concepts in order to establish students as socially- and culturally-aware beings.

Imagination serves as gateway between old and new ways of being. Greene synthesized John Dewey's initial thoughts on the imagination with her experiences with the arts to illustrate this dramatic transition. For Greene, we must exist in an analytical relationship with our past experiences to help us comprehend our current states and our possible futures. Greene postulated, "It is against the backdrop of those remembered things and the funded meanings to which they give rise, that we grasp and understand what is now going on around us" (Greene, 2000, p. 20). In order to mediate the experience of shifting from the previous state of awareness to a newly realized consciousness, Greene signified the imagination as the change agent that propels humans in the process of broadening their social and cultural scope:

Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those who teachers have called "other" over the years ... That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (Greene, 2000, p. 3)

The imagination is one tool that initiates the understanding of those around us, no matter how foreign. The social and cultural ramifications of not exercising the imagination in urban environments that increase one's proximity to those who may be categorized as different is detrimental to the success of maintaining progress in a globalized society.

Imagination creates the gateway to empathy for individuals. Martha Nussbaum (2001) linked imagination to empathy by defining empathy as the "imaginative reconstruction of

another person's experience" (p. 302). Here, the term *experience* has no negative or positive cast, and Nussbaum positions the role of imagination as a psychologically and socially necessary function of understanding others. This understanding does not necessarily lead to moments of great compassion or agreement, but it is a critical skill that must be developed in all students.

Within the formal, urban education system, the imagination has become relegated only to classes within the arts. The *imaginative being* is a title reserved for artists, not global citizens, and the imagination is regarded as a frivolous character trait, not a cognitive function necessary for substantial growth as a human being. Greene refutes these socially confining roles of imagination and situates the imagination as a function inherent in all people and necessary for the completion of any experience in which learning is to occur. Learning is not limited to the structured environment of the classroom but can occur anywhere a person is able to induce change. This change may also be thought of as a transformative experience. These experiences may be great or little, or have considerable or minor effect, but they do happen and are necessary to the functioning of a democratic society.

The link between imagination and experience is vitally important for individuals to transcend from current to new ways of being and to interrelate within a democratic society. Dewey (1997) posited that every experience is a "moving force—its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p. 38). As experiences have value, those which lead to greater moments of curiosity (as filtered through the imagination) may be valued more, especially within the realm of education. Philip Jackson (1998) framed Dewey's thoughts to further define an awareness of the construction of an experience as something that is complete, unique, and has unifying emotion. To identify an experience as complete allows for the idea of experience to be measured as a whole unit. Jackson's concept of uniqueness refers to the

temporality of an experience: there is a before, a present, and an after. Emotion “works like a filter through which perceptions are screened” (Jackson, 1998, p. 11), allowing one to mediate one’s experience and to judge the quality of the unit, while comparing it to previous experiences and imagining what may happen in the future. We are continuously in the midst of experience, though the degree of one experience’s transformative effect relies on the measure of Jackson’s three initial characteristics, and imagination allows us to envision future experiences.

Experience is necessary for transformation, but all individuals have widely varying experiences. The act of imagining possible experiences may be triggered by the arts. Greene (2000) remarked, “Arts in particular can bring to curriculum inquiry visions of perspective and untapped possibilities” (p. 90). The arts can lead individuals to question standard or prescribed ways of being. The emotional nature of an art experience, whether of reading literature, hearing music, or looking at a painting, can deepen one’s ability to transform oneself and to create a fulfilling, human experience.

The Socio-Educational Importance of Aesthetics

Dewey theorized the importance of aesthetics, describing it as the greatest form of communication between individuals. “[Artistic] expression strikes below the barriers that separate human beings from one another ... it is the most universal” (Dewey, 1934, p. 282). Madeleine Holzer explored how aesthetic communication is extraordinarily important to the promotion of society and synthesized the views of Maxine Greene, Philip Anderson, and Nicholas Michelli. Holzer interpreted Greene’s definition of aesthetics as:

The intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what there is to be

noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. (Holzer, 2005, p. 178)

Holzer explains that, for Greene, aesthetic education is a catalyst of civic engagement, the spark from which one begins to share a point of view that is subjective. Aesthetic education is also necessary to develop reasoning skills, and through experiments in the arts, educators are able to expose students to a range of emotion and thought needed to fully engage life. Once the dialogue between art and person exists, then a person may further develop thought and perception by examining and exploring new works of art.

Holzer (2005) mentions that Anderson pushes this notion further by asserting the transformative effect of aesthetics is an explicit action that may occur in the classroom, “that the experience of art changes us, it changes art, and it changes our way of seeing the world, including the world of our classrooms” (p. 180). The teaching of the arts is a way for educators to activate the democratic process through the cultivation of the human spirit. This utilization of the arts creates a pathway for thought to occur within the students, and the integration of the arts into the curriculum allows students to grow. Holzer (2005) completes her synthesis by quoting Michelli’s examination:

Preparation for liberty and democracy does not mean learning how to vote. It means learning how to respect and embrace each other in our everyday encounters. Aesthetics are central to this embracing. Social justice is not achieved so long as we exclude vast numbers of future citizens from aesthetic education. (p. 183)

To truly have a socially just community, aesthetics must be an integral part of the curriculum for students.

Aesthetic/Art Education

The history of aesthetic education has many twists and turns, and it underlies the unspoken stereotypes of the arts held by many students, teachers, and museum educators. By reviewing the history of aesthetics in the scope of general education—how far it has fallen and how its perceived value in relation to art education tempers perceptions about overall student growth—this section of the study will uncover the environment in which museum educators understand the process of teaching and learning.

The roots of aesthetic education may be traced to the cave paintings created at the dawn of human civilization, but perhaps the most extensive examination of aesthetics took place during the time of the great Greek philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. Classical Western philosophy has fallen in and out of favor from that time through the present. The resurgence of classical ideals in Renaissance Europe led to a long series of reactions, including the revolts against these aesthetic principles in the modern era. Reflecting classical values, the study and value of aesthetics within education entered into a societal dialogue as an offshoot of classical philosophy (Addiss & Erickson, 1993). It has been enhanced by scholars such as Herbert Read (1945), who so eloquently framed the thoughts of Plato, arguing that “art should be the basis of education” (p. 1).

During the time of the classical philosophers, the definition of society was not inclusive of all people but only of those that society deemed worthy of education. Access to aesthetic education is deeply rooted in the particular prejudice of the dominant social structure. Efland (1990) argued that:

A central issue in art education, as in general education, is access to instruction. In very early times the arts were either learned through group rituals that were an integral part of worship or taught to a selected few through arduous apprenticeship ... Thus all through

the history of art education, access to instruction was affected by class, gender and the general social status of the visual arts as subject for study. (p. 1)

Examining the sociocultural importance of access to aesthetic education, Efland (1990) proposes that with aesthetics (and with other forms of education), an accepted dominant group is allowed access and a subgroup is denied this privilege. Efland explains that this access has been dictated by three major factors—patronage, education, and censorship—which are determined by the socially powerful. *Patronage* refers to the means of material production: who is allowed and able to make the art. *Education* refers to the training of both artisans and audience members (i.e., participants in the art experience). *Censorship* refers to the societal control over audience and artisan participation within the arts (Efland, 1990, p. 2). As in the past, today's students and teachers must contend with these social hurdles to gain access to aesthetic education. For the poor, access is often denied.

In the general realm of arts education, those who usually have had access to arts instruction have been the elite class (though this access slightly changes with the introduction of technical skill instruction). Through time, education in fine arts became more accessible but only to those who were privileged with general education at secondary and college levels. Bringing art into the elementary classroom has a larger implication than just providing students with the access to beauty. McFee (1961) explained that:

Every culture has some form of art. Standards of quality vary from one society to another. The major functions of art are: (1) to maintain the concepts of reality of the culture through ritualistic and religious symbolism, (2) to maintain the organization and roles within the culture through communicating status in clothing, architecture, and ornamentation, and (3) to enhance the appearance of the artifacts for the culture. (p. 34)

With the act of bringing the arts into the classroom, a new layer of cultural awareness is given to students who may have never had entry to this language. The separation of skills training from that of aesthetic awareness still privileges particular segments of society. Delpit (2006) argued that, “students need technical skills to open doors, but they need to be able to think critically and creatively to participate in meaningful and potentially liberating work inside those doors” (p. 19). Without a combined skills- and analysis-based arts education, students are not given a complete worldview.

As the study of aesthetics was separated from craft, training in technical art skills (such as draftsmanship and other forms of technical drawing) became more prevalent for art-minded students in vocational tracks. This type of art education was extremely gendered; it was mainly taught to male students. At the same time, female students at secondary and university levels had access to aesthetic instruction in the form of art appreciation. Later, these students were primed for instructional roles as teachers in elementary grades. Through a trickle-down effect, middle-class women, who composed the majority of the teaching force, introduced art to poor students who were not initially allowed access to aesthetic education (Efland, 1990).

Around the turn of the twentieth century, as teachers began to delve into their own teaching of aesthetics, they created new priorities for learning art and its history. Influenced heavily by Viktor Lowenfeld and the movement of child-centered pedagogy, the field of aesthetic education took on a more holistic definition as a way to interpret life. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1982) defined aesthetics as “the means of organizing thinking, feelings, and perceiving into an expression that communicates these thoughts and feelings to someone else” (p. 62). Lowenfeld and Brittain claimed that a greater holistic understanding of students may be attained through careful study of the artwork produced by children.

[Through expressive arts, the] child reveals himself directly and without fear. Art for him . . . is a meaningful communication with himself; it is the selection of those parts of his environment with which he identifies, and the organization of these parts into a new meaningful whole. (p. 33).

In this view of art education, the child's expressive act takes center stage as a mediator of experience. However, this experience is constructed solely by the child's perceptions, with little contextual influence. Addiss and Erickson (1993) critiqued Lowenfeld's view of aesthetics because it "primarily centered on the potential of art activities to increase children's creativity and facilitate their development" and significantly decreased the acceptance of teaching art history (p. 99). This critique brings to light the academic tension between two aspects of arts education: individualistic student expression and contextual, historical aesthetic learning. Educators come to work in art museums from both backgrounds, bringing this conflict of epistemologies to the gallery floors.

There is a danger in too narrowly defining and critiquing aesthetics in regard to the teaching of art and art history. Herwitz (2008) provided a more balanced definition that speaks of aesthetics as a necessary cyclical force: "Art and aesthetics are joined at the hip insofar as art offers truth, which aesthetics then tells a story about, making a new kind of truth—and insofar as a philosophy requires remaking through art" (p. 172). By defining how art and aesthetics are intertwined as co-catalysts for meaning-making within the individual, Herwitz critiques the idea that the instruction of aesthetics needs separation into factions of art-making and art history. The discourse generated from the study of art history fosters an environment in which different creative processes may begin. How educators explore this process with students is a key to the promotion of the arts in society.

Addiss and Erickson (1993) wrote that teachers have three definitions of teaching art history: “teaching art history as artworks (a misconception); teaching art history as information; and teaching art history as inquiry” (p. 120). These instructional approaches provide insight into the world of the classroom. Without being supported by instruction in history or theory, teaching art history as a list of artworks and art practices reduces student learning to nothing more than a game of memory, with artists identified as categories, rather than an attempt to correlate art to student knowledge or life. Teaching art history as information shows artworks as reflections of history and illustrates historical developments through the artists’ lives and works. As this approach provides a more humanistic and subjective view of history, it allows a greater role for students’ feelings about art. Teaching art history as inquiry reflects the most constructivist, or inquiry-based, approach to the subject. When students are permitted to investigate artworks from their own points of view, they are allowed greater freedom to formulate their thoughts and opinions. This more recent approach is a key to unlocking the structures of teaching and learning within museum galleries. While previous methods of instruction (i.e., art history as identification of artworks and as information) have been employed in museums, inquiry-based methods can help the art museum educator and the student group to collaborate in discussing the knowledge that exists about a work of art.

Addiss and Erickson (1993) argued for inquiry-based art historical instruction as a preferred means of exploration by suggesting that:

Students should all learn to think for themselves about art history simply to meet the general goals of education. Art-historical inquiry requires higher-order thinking skills that are too seldom presenting the elementary and secondary curriculum. Authentic

generative inquiry is intrinsically more interesting and can therefore be a means of increasing student motivation. (p. 126)

By insisting that educators use an inquiry-based approach for instruction, we can move the arts out of their current vacuum to become part of a holistic curriculum that involves the knowledge explored in the classroom. Combined with the process of deep looking, inquiry-based methods can easily transfer to other subjects—ones that should have never been separated from the arts in the first place. By employing inquiry-based arts instruction as a guiding principle, museums can become the ultimate resource rooms for students.

In explaining the social importance of this type of approach, Atkinson and Dash (2005) participate in a larger dialogue regarding the teaching of the arts as an opportunity to introduce critical theory:

Art teachers need to recognize that the alternatives offered by the aesthetic practices of artists, craftspeople and designers today differ from traditional school art ... Although aesthetic practices have been valorized in modernism, [the role of] the artist often has the role of critical agent within it. To forget this role in the rush for normative standards, examination success and increased status is to deny the history of modernism. And to fall prey to such collective amnesia is to deny what is most valuable about art in modern culture. (Atkinson & Dash, 2005, p. 137)

To be effective agents of change in a democratic society, educators must expose students to a broader view of the role of aesthetics. The interpreting of art to develop critical faculties creates deeper meanings for students. The artists and the messages or expressions of the artworks can become catalysts for thinking and conversation. Further unifying the many lenses through which to explore art, Hurwitz and Day (2001) explained “artists, art critics, art historians, and

aestheticians” all draw upon multiple influences “such as the political, anthropological, social, philosophical, and psychological” (p. 7). Art does not exist in isolation, and it must be practiced as an interdisciplinary dialogue within general education. While to some this may seem like an obvious approach, often teachers are not prepared to use this type of dialogue in the classroom. In museums, there are boundless opportunities to begin inquiry-based conversations that involve critical and social practices, but many art museums are still in the nascent stages of providing opportunities for contextual dialogue.

The Changing Shape of Mediation

Museums have made great progress towards facilitating constructivist atmospheres, which prompts the issue of museum educators’ preparations for understanding their environments. To explore this, I will briefly examine the development of constructivism and how the adoption of this theoretical framework has become an aspiration for total museum pedagogy and, in turn, how this affects the theoretical and methodological practice of museum educators.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a child was understood to be an empty vessel in which no understanding could occur until the formation of language. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999) examined how Jean Piaget twisted this notion of tabula rasa around, with a complex theory of cognitive structures that exist within the infant and grow as a result of interactions within the environment. Through intense experimentation, Piaget “concluded that the world of young infants is an egocentric fusion of the internal and external worlds and the development of an accurate representation of physical reality depends on the gradual coordination of looking, listening, and touching” (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999, p. 69). This sensory exploration into the world places the infant and young child into a sequence of

isolated cravings, thirsting for the experiences that will satisfy the need for survival, including mental stimulus. From these observations, coupled with the study of other age ranges, Piaget used a strict paradigm of predictive developmental goals to differentiate acceptable learning standards for students at particular ages. Cole, Cole, and Lightfoot (2001) refined Piaget's stages of cognitive development as four major phases through which a child develops from birth to the age of 19: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Each phase identifies landmarks within human development. These four phases occur in a system of psycho-isolation, responding to the environment and the self. Lev Vygotsky (1978) shifted the responsibility of development from the self and the environment, to the self and social experiences, exploring how the children have the capacity to bridge prescribed developmental levels when in the presence of others.

Vygotsky (1978) examined the structures created by scholars such as Piaget and Dewey and transformed a pragmatic practice based on biological development into a socially responsive theory of cognition that emphasizes the interpretation of cultural signs and symbols (i.e., language). For Vygotsky, the “development of higher mental processes is the transformation of sign-using activity, the history and characteristics of which are illustrated by the development of practical intelligence, voluntary attention, and memory” (1978, p. 57). Vygotsky explained that children can be challenged into recognizing signs and symbols (i.e., words or language) that may be unfamiliar, being slightly out of their prescribed developmental reach. He defined a zone of proximal development—“the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86)—to explain how children can reach greater levels of cognition through social interaction. Vygotsky

believed that learners were not empty vessels awaiting knowledge from the transmission of facts during the course of established developmental stages, but thinking entities capable of surpassing the developmental paradigm with the mediation of new concepts through social interaction. The interrelation of language and thought in a social environment creates a system of internalization in children. Through language and dialogue, children examine concepts beyond their initial comprehension and ruminate on the language internally until these concepts are understood. Fosnot (2005) suggested that this rumination allowed for a greater understanding of human potential and is not bound by milestones of age. Here the idea of mediation becomes central to the idea of knowledge production.

Evident in Vygotsky's work concerning young children is the ideal that the language that the child uses and the thoughts that the child is thinking are the same. If new language is introduced to the child, and the child examines this language through discourse, the child develops the ability to generate new thought processes. Within the museum experience with elementary students, if skillfully managed by a museum educator, the mediated experience generates a socio-collaborative experiment for new language and thoughts. Understanding the sequencing of mediation is key for the process to occur.

Catherine Fosnot (2005) further refines Vygotsky in her explanation of the role of mediation in constructivist knowledge. She clearly states:

[Constructivism] is a poststructuralist psychological theory, one that construes learning as an interpretive, recursive, nonlinear building process by active learners interacting with their surround—the physical and social world. It is a psychological theory of learning that describes how structures, language, activity, and meaning-making come about, rather

than one that simply characterizes the structures and stages of thought, or one that isolates behaviors learned through reinforcement. (Fosnot, 2005, p. 34)

Skillful mediation or teaching is a resource that acts between the students and the social group to help them understand new and complex symbols and concepts. This mediation requires a teacher's willingness to become vulnerable in front of students and to acknowledge that there is more than one correct answer. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1982) argue that:

Youngsters need an opportunity to see teachers who admit that they do not know, who are willing to accept the thoughts of others, who can enjoy life and like having others enjoy theirs, who have many ideas and the flexibility to allow children to have their own, and who accept every youngster on his own worth. (p. 87)

By letting go of the traditional notion of the teacher as an infallible knowledge-giver and adopting one of the teacher as a skilled, informed, yet fallible mediator, educators can encourage deeper connections with students and inspire learning at all stages of life.

As I have described earlier, teaching in the arts does not guarantee the use of a sociocultural framework or constructivist methodology. Arts education can be repetitive and drill-based, with little room for the imagination. Artistic training has often been accompanied by a strict and rigorous pedagogy that suppresses interpretation. Acknowledging the background of a learner is an approach that must be incorporated into the curriculum of any lesson. Teachers who are trained artists are not necessarily qualified to exercise student imaginations. Didactic explanations of art find their way into galleries, and repetitive skills-based lessons find their way into the studio. A museum can provide tools that broaden knowledge construction in students by creating varied interpretations that penetrate multiple "cultural systems" (McKay & Keifer-Boyd, 2004, p. 28). McKay and Keifer-Boyd (2004) explain that "cultural systems are

negotiated meaning systems using visual, oral, and textual languages as the primary signifiers” (p. 28). Museums may take advantage of these systems by contextualizing art objects and texts, which provide opportunities for socialization with other visitors or museum educators.

While the favorable attributes of constructivism may be desired within all learning environments, positivistic notions of knowledge creation are common. Luis Lankford (2002) wrote that the struggle for art museums to adopt constructivist methodologies reveals an interrelation of aesthetics and meaning-making. In the past decade, art museums have made the leap from transmission models of education (i.e., feeding visitors art historical facts) to constructivist models, encouraging visitors to consider the contexts of how art was conceived and socially understood. By placing a greater emphasis on creating connections between the sociocultural positions of visitors and of art objects, museums offer multiple paths for visitors to learn about and appreciate art.

Lankford stresses that the total environment of the art museum also adds to the ability of the visitor to make connections with art. Every nuance of the gallery space, from lighting to installation technique, can evoke associations to visitors’ personal experiences. For the general public, a museum is a free-choice environment, where individuals can explore as much or as little as they choose, and the environments that exist within the museum help to attune or distract the individual. Csikszentmihaly and Hermanson (1995) said of intrinsic motivation: “Situational interest occurs when one encounters tasks or environments with a degree of uncertainty, challenge or novelty” (p. 69). In many museum environments, every public space is planned to create curiosity in visitors. Difficulties can arise when individuals are grouped together (such as in school groups) and when environments primarily designed for free-exploration are mediated. When the structures of formalized art and aesthetic education systems enter the museum in the

form of school tours, how do these differing methodologies contribute to constructivist learning atmospheres in museums?

Museums and Education

In the following examination of the development of the modern museum, I use as an analytic lens Efland's (1990) understanding of aesthetics through patronage, education, and censorship. Through their history, museums have had various purposes, beginning as simple warehouses of objects and becoming educational institutions. The concerns of censorship arise again in considering what information and access is shared and how museums communicate their educational messages.

Objects can carry symbolic meanings that become shared within communities. In the nineteenth century, governments struggling for dominance originally assembled museums as showcases for such objects in an effort to create communal identity. For many European countries, art museums became a source of pride, as poorer classes were given access to treasures associated with a national identity. Such symbolic capital was seen as necessary to foster and sustain a sense of national unity (Alexander & Alexander, 2008).

As agents of collection and display, museums amassed objects for the public's education, defined in the broadest sense. Many museums collected objects based on their perceived intrinsic value to humanity: "Whether aesthetic, documentary, or scientific, objects tell much about the universe, nature, the human heritage, and the human condition" (Alexander & Alexander, 2008, p. 188). This notion of objects' general importance came from academia, from those who had access to education. Now, while many museums still collect valuable objects, the communication of these objects' relevance to the specific communities that witness them has

become important. Within the past 30 years, the missions of museums have been transformed to emphasize audiences rather than collections.

This shift in the purpose of museums, from collection to audience, has created some debate about their roles to educate or to be spaces for learning. While it may seem semantic, the difference between providing education versus providing a space for education determines which party holds dominance: the museum or the student. Within the published missions of many museums, the role of educating the public has been deeply established and, as of 2003, formal programs of education have been created within at least 135 art museums in the United States, and the development of more programs is expected. These programs have even moved outside of the museums, to be resources for arts and aesthetic education for school classrooms (Alexander & Alexander, 2008).

As museums broaden their missions to include these educational programs, they have also broadened the meaning of education. By focusing on exhibitions (the thematic arrangements of objects and artifacts), written descriptions that provide context, and special events and workshops that emphasize the inspirational nature of art (and that provide more context), museums are working to differentiate the educative process. Those who identify as museum educators and have specialized teaching skills are now allowed to influence the process of exhibition design and evaluation in the interest of the greater public. For these institutions, education is now defined as having either a transmission or cultural approach (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007).

As forward-thinking museums adopt cultural approaches to education, they elect constructivist methods of working with students, valuing the knowledge within the student. This “critical museum pedagogy” allows for what Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (2007) called the

“democratization of the museum” (p. 4). This cultural approach “understands communication as a society-wide series of processes and symbols through which reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed” (p. 16). Within this approach, students are active learners with particular points of view that must be acknowledged, not silenced.

To flourish and keep pace with the changing nature of society, museums should consider this constructivist view important, in regard to aesthetics. While some contemporary art museums dive into the vast digital media domain, many museums are challenged by financial and spatial constraints and need to create different types of experiences to capture the increasingly media-savvy student audience. Herwitz (2008) conjured an almost romantic vision of the fading attention to objects, revealing the change that technology has wrought in students:

One of the reasons students today find museums so odd, spend so little time in them, is that the contours of twenty-first-century experience have so speeded up, are so much a matter of clicking from website to website, product to product, everything has become so rapid, that art is seldom made today which solicits the kind of intensities of experience, the long sit in the museum for hours, that a Jackson Pollock, a Michelangelo, a Louise Bourgeois, wanted, demanded an Agnes Martin whose minimalist changes in a uniform surface across a canvas require the longest time to animate, with a strangely tiny meditative state that is in its own way, enormous, about the enormous, poetic, lyrical. No one has time for this, either to make an object that will do it, or to spend the time engaged in it. (p. 112)

Though Herowitz glibly painted a dismal landscape for both the artist and the student, I believe that museum educators do strive to create or re-imagine a relevant student experience of art. In a

conversation with Philip Yenawine, Daniele Rice emphasized that museum educators cannot deny the changing shape of society:

We live in information-rich culture. Everywhere we turn we are surrounded by information from the news media, from the Internet, from the myriad of billboards and ads that confront us. . . . The more information we get, the more we want. I think this is because what we're really searching for is meaning, and opportunity to make sense of the complex world that we inhabit. (Rice & Yenawine, 2002, p. 4)

If given space for culturally relevant dialogues between museum educators and students, the student experience within art museums may be transformed to lead to deeper understandings of self and community.

The terms *education* and *interpretation* have often been used interchangeably to discuss different methodologies of sharing and exploring information about works of art. While these terms suggest active forms of engagement, they fall short of what mediation offers to empower students to construct knowledge first from the self. Freeman Tilden (1977) introduced the definition of interpretation as an “educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experiences, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information” (p. 8). While this definition attempts to position the term *interpretation* as a broad approach to exploring concepts with museum visitors, it still casts the museum as the primary knowledge-holder, passing knowledge down to visitors as opposed to constructing meanings with them. This type of top-down dissemination is often implicit as visitors and students enter museums and explore exhibitions on their own.

Traditionally, curators of art exhibitions place informational (interpretive) labels throughout the galleries and arrange works of art in patterns or clusters. The arrangement usually reveals a narrative or thematic thread decided by the curators, but often student groups come to the museum with specific agendas assigned by their teachers. George Hein (1998) wrote that visitors often completely ignore labels and particular pathways (p. 152). No matter how much a museum tries to encourage a particular method of engagement, a visitor always comes into the museum with his or her personal wants and needs. Falk and Dierking (2000) emphasized the primacy of the visitor's agenda:

At the heart of every visitor's preconceptions and expectations is her personal context—her personal reservoir of knowledge, attitudes, and experience, influenced by expectations concerning the physical characteristics of the museum, what she will find there, what she can do there, and who is accompanying her on the visit. (p. 25)

Often it seems the museum aims to take away the visitor's agency and, through the use of exhibition layout and labels, identify itself as the primary knowledge-holder that the visitor must learn from. The museum's didactic goals seem to conflict with the visitor's agenda, and it seems to have no way of ascertaining the wants and needs of the visitor.

Falk and Dierking (2000) explained that museum educators are one important factor in addressing this gap by mediating constructivist engagements of learning. Museum educators are able to assess a visitor's needs and wants and to mediate the learning experience so that the visitor can achieve the fullest experience. Though it is evident that the presence of educators in the galleries is important to the museum experience, there is little research that measures their effects. Falk and Dierking (2000) stated:

It is amazing how little research exists on the role that museum staff—volunteers, guides, explainers, demonstrators, and performers—play in facilitating learning from museums.

The few studies conducted with casual visitors suggest that staff and volunteers positively influence the experience particularly when they are skilled interpreters, helping to facilitate and make the experience meaningful for visitors. (pp. 106–107)

In working with methods that mirror the theories of constructivism, museum educators serve important roles in on-floor interpretation and program presentation.

One major programming component that museum educators provide is the tour. Though there are many tour strategies, the thematic tour is one popular method of unifying a collection of artworks or artifacts. Structuring a tour thematically enables museum educators to discuss artworks that mean something to them personally and to change the selection of works if they sense that visitors would prefer alternate pathways. In this instance, the tour facilitated by a museum educator is ultimately a “structure of engagement.” Rika Burnham and Elliot Kai-Kee (2005) used this phrase, along with defining a tour as “a means of inviting people to appreciate and understand great works . . . promising visitors that [the museum educator’s] knowledge will guide their looking,” while “respecting the knowledge and life experience that” visitors possess when entering the museum (p. 68). The museum educator can help to facilitate the visitor’s experience by providing open-ended questions that help further understanding, and the “unexpected comments” from students and teachers may help to “expand the [tour] group’s awareness of what is possible” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p. 73).

Falk and Dierking (2000) noted that a guide’s approach to facilitating a tour or an on-floor interaction is vitally important to maintaining the constructivist atmosphere:

The need to capitalize upon the sociocultural context of groups suggests the importance of strategies that facilitate a sense of a community of learners among visitors. Such strategies require rethinking roles for docents or floor staff as facilitators of experiences rather than disseminators of information, and making such a commitment requires changes in the training and mentoring of staff and volunteers. (p. 194)

While the sociocultural context is important to the facilitation of a successful engagement, the challenging nature of many pieces of art requires some information transfer for a visitor to gain a greater understanding or appreciation of the artwork. Also, students may ask questions about the content and creation of the piece, which leads them to further their own goals of learning.

Museum educators often choose from two categories of strategies: standard didactics and open-ended, inquiry-based learning. Standard didactics may be defined as the transmission of information in the form of a lecture. One approach to open-ended, inquiry-based learning in tours follows a neuro-cognitive method developed by Abigail Housen, called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS requires a facilitator to build observational and emotional knowledge based on the community's understanding of the piece. The addition of preconceived or scholarly knowledge is never part of VTS facilitation. This approach allows for the development of what Yenawine called "viewing skills" or the ability for students to "increase observational skills, [the] ability to probe, [and the] ability to find variety of possible meanings" within single artworks (Rice & Yenawine, 2002, p. 1).

Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) provided another inquiry-based approach that required students to experience an artwork several times through a methodology and philosophy called *aesthetic education* (currently presented by LCI under the term *imaginative education*). Holzer (2007) explained that "aesthetic education consists of a continuous experience with a work of art

over time, mediated by a particular form of individual and group inquiry” (p. 4). As developed by LCI, aesthetic education promoted the use of gallery exploration and art-making to strengthen “capacities for imaginative learning,” which included: “noticing deeply, embodying, questioning, making connections, identifying patterns, exhibiting empathy, creating meaning, taking action, reflecting/accessing” (Holzer, 2007, p. 5). Reminiscent of Lowenfeld’s student-centered philosophy of art education, the process of LCI’s aesthetic education left little room for the historical contextualization of objects and caused conflict in art museums whose mission is to contextualize objects through exhibition or display. Trying to find a happy medium, Rice and Yenawine (2002) mention that many museum educators use a pragmatic approach that asks student-centered and open-ended questions and supplements didactic information to build further knowledge.

After observing and analyzing 35 guided tours, Jeff Camhi (2008) concluded that the most frequently used method of interpretation by museum educators was didactic explanation. Even though Camhi noted numerous interpretive possibilities in the literature and resources, including theatricality, inquiry, and hands-on exploration, he found that museum educators used didactic explanation 90% of the time. Camhi does not conclude that this interpretive method is negative, and he allows that it could be the visitor’s preferred method of learning. What is missing from this research is the reason why the museum educators in the study chose to utilize didactic explanation in the first place.

Mediation may be useful in encouraging visitors to explore their feelings in relation to a piece of art or to closely look at different aspects of the composition. For some visitors, when context is given, the teaching begins. Streb (1984) suggested that:

It is the role of the art teacher to act as an intermediary between the student and the artist's work. Thus, the teacher must be concerned not only with the work and its author but also with the student's experience of the work and its author. (p. 165)

The museum educator must be careful to balance the mediation of a student's experience with a piece of art and the context given. The museum educator is the living extension of the museum, and the mode and tone of the student's agenda (whether focused on learning or leisure) may be greatly altered or enhanced by the balance of mediation and teaching that the museum educator perceives the student to need.

When working with student groups, the role of the museum educator includes mediating the social dynamic. As most students are brought to museums in groups on fieldtrips, museum educators are challenged to provoke their curiosity within the context of the tour. Curiosity is a major element of fieldtrips with student groups, and the tours within a museum become rituals that are enacted through mediated experiences. Randal Collins (2004) indicated that the three main ingredients of an interaction ritual are: that it occur in a social group, that the social group has designated boundaries of membership, and that the group has a mutual focus and shared emotion (pp. 47–48). The four outcomes of interaction rituals are group solidarity, emotional energy, group symbols, and feelings of morality (Collins, 2004, p. 49). Beyond their curiosity about the exotic museum space and its objects, the students' curiosity to learn more, to gain another level of understanding of particular concepts, can be nurtured by mediating the student experience in the museum. When students are in a group, the mediation that a museum educator may provide can strengthen the group experience and increase the emotional energy that allows for group solidarity, agreed-upon symbols, and morals. In essence, the more aware a museum educator is of group identity, the more successful the experience may be for student groups.

How the museum educator chooses to mediate the social and environmental worlds of the museum, while balancing pedagogical methods and theoretical understandings, still eludes the available research on museum educators.

Conclusion

Arts experiences can spark the imagination of students and lead to new empathetic understandings. Though experiencing the arts is an excellent opportunity for such transformation, many students historically have not had access to visual arts or aesthetic instruction. Museums have become valuable resources for student learning in aesthetics, and through proper facilitation, museum educators can mediate experiences for students that enable them to construct personal meanings with artworks along with acquiring knowledge.

While there has been research on learning in museums, the primary focus has been on ways that students receive information, based on exhibitions or didactic tours. The sharing of information can be an important goal of a museum visit, though greater gains for students may result from a concise study of the preparation of museum educators, the theoretical and methodological knowledge of museum educators, and how educators apply this knowledge towards student engagement in the field.

Chapter 3: Method

This study explores how art museum educators perceive and communicate their daily experiences with student groups in museums, relative to their comprehension of educational theory, method, and preparation. To create a broad understanding of these topics, I augmented a phenomenological qualitative inquiry into the perceptions of art museum educators with a broadly distributed survey that revealed the professional landscape of art museum education. Utilizing personal accounts and the survey, I cross-referenced interviews with the broader field to have the most well-rounded descriptive analysis.

To create this analysis, I used phenomenological research methods that transcend inquiry to analyze participant feedback in the qualitative study. Zurmuehlen (1980) identifies phenomenology as a method used in art education research, and I believe that this process helped to enlighten the experience of being an educator within the field of museum education (p. 1). Though phenomenology is generally considered a philosophical endeavor constructed by individual researchers, methods for producing phenomenological analysis have been identified and used widely in various fields of study, such as participant experiences of medical phenomena (Anderson & Spencer, 2007), and motion-sensitive phenomenology in educational research (Lloyd & Smith, 2006).

The benefit of beginning an inquiry into the lifeworld of an art museum educator through the use of phenomenology is that it presents, first, an opportunity for the investigator to reflect on his biases and assumptions of the inquiry, through an examination of personal experience, and second, an exploration of the participants. Moran and Mooney (2002) explain that:

Phenomenology may be characterized initially in a broad sense as the unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to consciousness, precisely in the manner in which

it so appears . . . The phenomenological approach is primarily descriptive, seeking to illuminate issues in a radical, unprejudiced manner, paying close attention to the evidence that presents itself to our grasp or intuition. (p. 1)

This descriptive approach, self-aware of internal prejudice, is applicable to my personal understanding of art museum educators. As a museum educator for the past seventeen years who has moved from being a museum educator to being an administrator of museum educators, I likely have assumptions that can cloud my interpretation of experience. During this study, my continual awareness of possible assumptions, prejudices, or illusions helped me to remain mindful about data from the participants and open to accepting their opinions and views, or as Moran and Mooney (2002) so eloquently summarized Max Scheler: “The phenomenologist attends to the personal way of viewing things and hence must purify his own heart before he can attend properly to intuiting something” (p. 201).

My understanding of the practice of phenomenological thinking begins with Edmund Husserl’s notion that a phenomenon should be studied broadly through deep reflection and reduced to its most simple essence, abstracted from surrounding associations that the mind places around the experience (Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 62). Zurmuehlen (1980) explains that Husserl believed this reduction of associations allows for the ability to “know types, structures, and connections of meanings” (p. 7) while Adolf Reinarch pushed this ability into analysis (Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 178). Broadening the scope of what must be analyzed within the phenomenological process is Martin Heidegger’s notion of beings existing in time and the important role of personal history in the analysis of experience (Moran & Mooney, 2002, pp. 246–247). Expanding phenomenology into the realm of sociological understanding, social scientist Alfred Schütz identified that, by creating typologies of particular experiences, we can

begin to identify the “actions of individuals” (Zurmuehlen, 1980, p. 7). This theoretical understanding of phenomenology infused my qualitative research undertaken with individual participants: Art museum educators are beings in time, with rich histories that inform their current practice and expectations of experience with student groups in museums.

Before entering the process of participant interviews, I completed an analysis of my history, projections, assumptions, and prejudices (see Chapter 1). I developed a list of possible interview questions as a flexible line of inquiry that illuminates the types of experiences investigated (see Appendix A). Hycener (1985, pp. 280–294) provides a loose structure for phenomenology to be practiced as a research methodology after participants have been selected and interviews conducted. The following methods were utilized in this study: transcribing the interview recordings, bracketing and phenomenological reduction of the data, listening to the interviews for a sense of the whole or conceptual trends, delineating units of general meaning, delineating units of meaning relevant to the research questions, eliminating redundancies, clustering units of relevant meaning, returning to the participants with the summary and themes, modifying the summary and themes, identifying general and specific themes for all the interviews, and contextualizing the themes.

With this framework in mind, I interviewed ten art museum educators who currently provide educational services to student groups in museums. I met these ten educators through an open response feature of a quantitative survey (outlined below) and through other directors of museum education in New York City. I selected the participants based on the diversity of the experience of the candidates. Prior to the interview process, I distributed consent forms to the participants (see Appendix C). Interviews of 30 to 60 minutes duration were conducted either by phone or in person and recorded using a Livescribe Smartpen. This tool has both an audio

recorder and a camera that tracks note-taking, so my notes taken during the interview were visible on a computer synchronized to audio playback. By reviewing the playback, I was able to indicate bias in my note-taking which did not reflect the actual accounts of what the initial educators were saying in the interviews. By watching my note-taking simultaneously occur with the playback of the recorded conversation, I was able to indicate when I stopped listening and jumped ahead to a different line of questioning based on my personal judgments that did not logically follow the accounts of the museum educator. As the interviews progressed my interview strategy became more open-ended. I listened to each of the interview recordings numerous times and transcribed them. Through the process of bracketing and phenomenological reduction (that is, being aware of my prejudices and being open to new perspectives), I read and listened to the material as objectively as possible. The texts from transcribed interviews were delineated or clustered into statements relevant to the research questions. I gave the results of my interpretations to the participants, and their subsequent comments were incorporated to broaden or illuminate my synthesis of the information.

To enhance the qualitative inquiry, I conducted a survey to solicit information about the field of art museum educators. Picciano (2004) explains that a “quantitative descriptive study uses numerical data to describe and interpret events, conditions, or situations that are occurring in the present. The purpose of a descriptive study is to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place(s) and time” (pp. 51–52). A broad survey of how art museum educators are educated (both formally and informally) and what types of student groups they work with and prefer to work with has yet to be administered to the field of art museum education. From 2009—2010, an online survey was administered by the Association of Teaching Artists, with the objective of revealing particular demographic information about teaching artists. The survey

included 298 responses about the teaching artists' artistic disciplines, education, work history, relevant resources, and perceptions of which cultural institutions were beneficial to their work as teaching artists. The results of this survey were compiled into a report produced by the research institute, NORC, at the University of Chicago to identify the scope of arts professionals and educators who work inside and outside of the formal education system in arts education (Rabkin, Reynolds, Hedberg, Shelby, 2011). I utilized a similar survey format but with greater room for cross-tabulation and discussion of findings (see Appendix B). This survey was constructed using SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>), a secure online data-collection service, and distributed by email. Through my experience as the head of education for the Rubin Museum of Art, I utilized connections that I have established with the American Association of Museums Committee for Education, the New York City Museum Education Roundtable, and the International Museum Theatre Alliance, as well as connections through my peer group of other art museum education directors, including the Noguchi Museum, the Bronx Museum of Art, El Museo de Barrio, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This survey was intended for art museum educators who were 18 years of age and older and were working in an art museum at the time of the survey.³ The participants held full-time, part-time, intern, or volunteer positions.

Below is an overview of the questions, methods, and sources of participants that informed this study: The questions that required a broad dissemination of a survey to art museum educators across the United States and quantitative analysis were as follows: Who are art museum educators (full-time, part-time, volunteer, academically prepared)? What types of

³ It is generally understood that some art museums employ students who are 18 years of age and younger to lead student groups. While these teens may be considered professional art museum educators due to specific stipends received, these programs are considered youth development programs that may lead to careers in museum education, and they offer an unusual balance of instruction in content and pedagogy as well as direct services that would lead to unclear or outlier data.

theoretical, methodological, and field-based sources of education do museum educators experience? How is preparation and professional developments balanced with service requirements in different museums? What resources outside of academic and institutional training (alternative institutes such as TIME, Lincoln Center Institute, VTS) are available for learning of theoretical, method, or field-based understanding of museum educators? The questions that required in-depth interviews with art museum educators and qualitative analysis were as follows: How do art museum educators perceive their experiences with art, with museums, and with others (students, teachers, and other museum staff)? How are museum educators educated while in-service in the field? How useful is this training for enhancing real-world experiences with student groups in art museums? How do art museum educators perceive their daily experiences with student groups in museums relative to their understanding of educational theory and method? How do art museum educators perceive their daily experiences with student groups in museums relative to their understanding of educational theory and method? How do art museum educators evaluate positive or negative experiences with students? Each of these questions will be addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This section of the study presents the results and analysis of findings toward the goal of exploring how art museum educators perceive and communicate their daily experiences with student groups in museums relative to their understanding of educational theory, method, and preparation. The first set of findings and analysis is concerned with the information collected through an online survey, to form an assessment of the present field of art museum educators. The survey included questions about demographic information, educational background, institutional preparation, professional development, and preferences in student engagement. The second set of findings and analysis is concerned with the qualitative inquiry conducted with ten art museum educators; here, the educators' interview statements and reported experiences are woven together as a descriptive narrative.

The findings from the quantitative survey offer a broad context for the more focused discussion of the ten interviews. I use the term *findings* purposefully as the quantitative survey was designed to reveal the landscape of the field more than the value of particular practices. The results within the descriptive narrative include responses to the questions within the qualitative interviews as well as the means with which to analyze the descriptive results.

Limitations of the Study

The survey utilized in this study was released using an online collection tool disseminated by various online communications vehicles used by museum educators as well as personal connections. While these tools are utilized by a large number of museum educators throughout the United States, they required the use of a computer and may have not reached a pool of individuals who do not have computer access, or do not choose to participate in online surveys. The participant responses included in the study reflect a wide range of ages, though

responses were not equally distributed across all age categories assigned. Demographic information collected in the survey did not include gender, race, or income levels. While the participants in the survey may not represent the entire field of art museum education, the number of participants ($n = 123$) served as a sufficient pool from which to draw conclusions. As with all qualitative studies, the personal response of the ten participants selected may not represent the entire field of art museum education, and the personal bias of the researcher may creep into the narrative that was constructed. I believe that the narrative created brings to light many issues within the field and is a useful contribution to the purpose of the study.

Survey Findings

The online survey was disseminated via SurveyMonkey to various membership list serves, including the New York City Museum Education Roundtable, the International Museum Theatre Alliance, and Museum-Ed, as well as to New York City museum administrators at the Noguchi Museum, El Museo del Barrio, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Queens Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. While this survey was sent to two different national list serves, most responses came from museum educators who live in larger urban areas, specifically those who live in and around New York City. The survey was available from July 1, 2011, until August 31, 2011. During this time, 123 respondents ($n = 123$) participated in the survey, with various response rates for each question.

Demographic information. Table 1 highlights the age demographics of those who responded to the online inquiry. Of the 123 respondents ($n = 123$), the majority of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 34 (51.2%, $n = 63$). The next largest group of

respondents was between the ages of 35 and 44 (14.6%, $n = 18$). The smallest group of respondents was between the ages of 65 and 74 years of age (2.4%, $n = 3$).

Table 1
Age Demographic of Participants

	N	%
18–24	11	8.9
25–34	63	51.2
35–44	18	14.6
45–54	17	13.8
55–64	7	5.7
65–74	3	2.4
74+	4	3.3

Utilizing the highest percentage (participants of ages 25–34, $n = 63$) as a marker for differentiation, I identified four age groups, based on response count: participants of ages 18–24 (8.9%, $n = 11$), participants of ages 25–34 (51.2%, $n = 63$), participants of ages 35–54 (28.4%, $n = 35$), and participants of ages 55 and older (11%, $n = 14$).

Table 2 delineates the demographic information concerning museum employment status. Definitions of the employment-status terms were not provided with the survey questions, and each respondent was required to identify as one status before proceeding to subsequent questions. The majority of the respondents (61.8%, $n = 76$) indicated that they were full-time employees of a museum while the lowest number of respondents (4.9%, $n = 6$) identified as interns:

Table 2
Employment Demographics of Participants

	N	%
Full-time employee	76	61.8
Part-time employee	29	23.6
Volunteer	12	9.8
Intern	6	4.9

Utilizing cross-tabulation between Table 1 and Table 2, I found the highest concentration of respondents who identified as full-time employees was between the ages of 25 and 34 (33%, $n = 41$). This age demographic was also the highest for those who identified as part-time employees (10.5%, $n = 13$). No participants above the age of 35 identified as interns, and the highest number of respondents who identified as volunteers (3.2%, $n = 4$) was 74 years of age or older.

Table 3 outlines the nomenclature of employment that the participants identified within particular institutions. While this study uses the term *art museum educator* to describe persons who have responsibilities that concern gallery experiences and student groups in art museums, this term is used differently at institutions throughout the United States. Respondents were asked to identify the terms that best describe the positions they hold at their institutions. These terms were not defined for participants, but they are commonly found within the literature of museum education and at various museums. This question was answered by 95% ($n = 117$) of the respondents, and 16 participants selected the term *Other*.

Table 3

Nomenclature of Position for Participants at Host Institutions

	N	%
Museum Educator	99	84.6
Interpreter	3	2.6
Explainer	1	0.9
Volunteer	2	1.7
Teacher	3	2.6
Docent	12	10.3

Of the 16 participants who selected the *Other* category, 43.7% ($n = 7$) indicated an administrative title such as *manager*, *director*, or *curator*; 31% ($n = 5$) indicated a title at the level of *coordinator* or *programmer*; 13% ($n = 2$) indicated *contractor* or *consultant* as a title; and 13% ($n = 2$) indicated being a specific type of educator relevant to a museum field (such as *zoo educator* or *arts educator*). Of the 99 respondents who identified with the term *museum*

educator, 70% ($n = 70$) indicated that they were full-time employees, 24% ($n = 24$) indicated that they were part-time employees, and 5% indicated that they were interns. No full-time employees identified with the position termed *docent*. For the 12 respondents who identified their employment status as volunteer in Table 2, 83% ($n = 10$) identified with the term *docent*.

Because the terms *education* and *museum education* may be perceived as signifying two different employment or career experiences, I provided two measures to examine this difference in perception. These results are indicated in Table 4. The largest percentage of respondents (35%, $n = 43$) reported having worked in the field of education for 6 to 10 years; however, 67% ($n = 81$) of those who responded reported working in the field for more than 6 years. For those who responded to working in the field of museum education ($n = 123$), the largest percentage of respondents (30.1%, $n = 37$) indicated that they had worked in the field of museum education for 3 to 5 years, while 52% ($n = 65$) of respondents replied to working in the field for more than 6 years.

Table 4

Reported Length of Time in the Fields of Education and Museum Education

Length of time in the field of education

	N	%
Less than 1 year	4	3.3
1–2 years	6	5.0
3–5 years	29	24.2
6–10 years	43	35.8
11–20 years	20	16.7
21+ years	18	15.0
TOTAL	120	100.0

Length of time in the field of museum education

	N	%
Less than 1 year	4	3.3
1–2 years	17	13.8
3–5 years	37	30.1
6–10 years	34	27.6
11–20 years	21	17.1
21+ years	10	8.1
TOTAL	123	100.0

In relation to formalized academic preparation, all participants ($n = 123$) had received high school diplomas and had some college experience. Of the respondents, 19.5% ($n = 24$) indicated that they had completed an undergraduate degree, 74% ($n = 91$) had completed a graduate degree, and 6.5% ($n = 8$) had completed a PhD. These types of experience were included in the term *formal education*, as compared to self-acquired professional development or professional development provided by the employer. As seen in Table 5, a query of coursework completed during academic preparation that related to work in art museums revealed that the majority of respondents, 87.8% ($n = 101$), had completed some form of art history coursework, followed by 77.4% ($n = 89$) of the respondents, who had participated in some form of education coursework.

Table 5

Formal Education Coursework in Relation to Work in Art Museum Education

	N	%
Art Studio	68	59.1
Art History	101	87.8
Design	30	26.1
Theory	70	60.9
Education	89	77.4
Philosophy	29	25.2
Religion	19	16.5
Anthropology	26	22.6

Of the respondents, 29 had taken additional courses that contributed to formal academic preparation in art museum education. From those responses, three other categories of formal education courses emerged: theater (14%, $n = 4$), non-specified history (17%, $n = 5$), and museum studies (24%, $n = 7$).

Table 6 shows other sources of professional-development coursework that exist for museum educators in the United States. Respondents were asked if they had participated in a particular professional-development program and, using a Likert-type scale (with value statements such as *not valuable*, *somewhat valuable*, and *incredibly valuable*), to indicate which experience was useful in relation to their work with visitors in art museums. The rating average was internally coded, with 1 being the lowest rating and 4 being the highest.

Table 6

Alternative Education Coursework in Relation to Work with Visitors in Art Museums

	N	%	RATING AVERAGE
Visual Thinking Strategies	97	82	3.32
Lincoln Center Aesthetic Education	17	14	3.18
American Association of Museums Conference	61	51	2.89
American Education Research Association	9	8	3.11
AAM Education Professional Network Committee	43	36	2.70
NYC Museum Educators Roundtable Conference	51	43	2.90
Face to Face Conference	20	17	3.15
Empire State Partnership Summer Seminar	4	3	3.00
Teaching Institute in Museum Education	28	24	3.71

The majority (82%, $n = 97$) of respondents indicated that they had participated in some Visual Thinking Strategies professional-development sessions (these may be onsite workshops at museums or other institutions across the country). The highest rating average (3.71) was given by participants in the Teaching Institute in Museum Education seminar facilitated by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (24%, $n = 28$). The lowest rating (2.70) was given to professional-development services hosted by the Education Professional Network Committee (EdCom), which provides institutes and meetings at the American Association of Museums annual national convention.

In relation to professional development (commonly called *training*) in art museums, the majority of respondents (35%, $n = 41$) reported having 1 to 2 hours of training time allotted per month. Of the respondents, 19% ($n = 23$) indicated having no time allotted by their employers for professional development, and the fewest respondents (6.8%, $n = 8$) indicated having the largest amount of professional development (more than 9 hours per month).

Table 7

Institutional Training Time Devoted to Professional Development Per Month

	N	%
0 hours	23	19.7
1–2 hours	41	35.0
3–5 hours	34	29.1
6–8 hours	11	9.4
9+ hours	8	6.8
Total	117	100.0

When cross-tabulated with the employment status of the 71 respondents who identified as full-time employees, 13% ($n = 15$) indicated having zero hours of professional development per month while the majority (18%, $n = 21$) of this group indicated having 3 to 5 hours of professional development per month. The majority of respondents who indicated having more than 9 hours of professional development per month were found in the part-time employee category ($n = 4$). Those who identified as volunteers all reported having some amount of professional development per month.

In relation to the types of training offered at institutions, seen in Table 8, 91 participants offered responses. The majority (85%, $n = 78$) of the respondents indicated that they were offered content training, followed by those who were offered pedagogical training (53%, $n = 49$).

Table 8

Types of Training Offered at Institutions

	N	%
Content	78	85.7
Pedagogy	49	53.8
Educational Theory	46	50.5
Methodology	43	47.3
Art Making	40	44.0
Administrative	21	23.1

Of the respondents, 13 offered individual responses, though no clear alternative strands developed.

In relation to quantity and types of work, participants were asked the number and types of tours offered by their employing institutions. As seen in Table 9, the majority (26%, $n = 32$) of the respondents facilitated between 3 and 5 tours per month, while the minority of respondents (3.3%, $n = 4$) gave 13 to 16 tours. Of the respondents, 21 facilitated more than 16 tours per month (17.1%). Those who facilitated more than 16 tours per month identified their employment statuses as full-time ($n = 10$), part-time ($n = 9$), and intern ($n = 2$). The majority ($n = 20$) of those who identified as full-time employees offered between 3 and 5 tours per month. While the average number of tours is between 3 and 5 (approximately 1 tour per week), the majority of respondents gave 2 tours per week (the sum of respondents indicating the facilitation of at least 9 through more than 16 tours), with 17% of respondents participating in up to 4 tours per week.

Table 9

Number of Tours for Students Led Per Month

	N	%
0	10	8.1
1–2	24	19.5
3–5	32	26.0
6–9	22	17.9
9–12	10	8.1
13–16	4	3.3
16+	21	17.1

Types of Tours

Thematic Tours	91	79.1
Exhibition-specific Tours	92	80.0
Scripted Tours	18	15.7
School Curriculum-based tours	82	71.3

The majority (more than 70%) of respondents ($n = 115$) offered thematic, exhibition-specific, or school curriculum-based tours, while only 18 respondents led scripted tours. The category of *Other* yielded 14 responses but no other significant types of tours.

Table 10 indicates the age range of students for whom the respondents facilitate tours in galleries. Tours for elementary school students, ages 6 to 10, received the most responses ($n = 106$), closely followed by middle school students ($n = 105$) and high school students ($n = 96$). As a type of student group, home school students received the fewest responses ($n = 60$).

Table 10

Types of School Groups

	N	%
Preschool (ages 2–5)	69	58.0
Elementary School (ages 6–10)	106	89.1
Middle School (ages 11–13)	105	88.2
High School (ages 14–17)	96	80.7
University (ages 18+)	76	63.9
Home School	60	50.4

Fifteen *Other* responses revealed two new strands: adult groups (60%) and special needs (27%).

Respondents were asked to provide a qualitative rating for their level of comfort with types of student groups, as indicated in Table 11. A Likert-type scale (with value statements such as *not comfortable*, *somewhat comfortable*, *comfortable*, and *incredibly comfortable*) was used. The rating average was internally coded, with 1 being the lowest rating and 4 being the highest. The highest level of comfort (rating average 3.79) was reported with elementary school students while the lowest level of comfort was reported with preschool students.

Table 11

Level of Comfort with Types of Student Groups

	N	%	RATING AVERAGE
Preschool	104	86	3.25
Elementary School	115	95	3.79
Middle School	116	96	3.53
High School	114	94	3.46
University	103	85	3.42
Home School	87	72	3.44

Respondents who selected *not comfortable* were asked to explain this selection through an open response inquiry. Of these respondents, 59% ($n = 41$) suggested their discomfort resulted from a lack of experience with a particular age group. These comments were then divided between respondents who lacked exposure and hands-on experience working with a particular group and those who lacked sufficient knowledge of the content for a specific group. Comments related to a lack of experience while working with a particular age range included:

“Lack of experience and time spent with specific group.”

“Not as much experience with that age group.”

“Less experience working with these groups.”

Comments related to a lack of content knowledge included:

“I feel my content knowledge isn’t necessarily strong enough.”

“My experience has always been working with younger students. I also do not have the content expertise required for higher level students.”

“I doubt my level of expertise when I give tours for high school groups because they are often art history students. I don’t have the depth of knowledge on particular subjects that they sometimes need.”

Respondents were asked which student groups they preferred to work with in art museums, and the results are seen in Table 12. Of all respondents ($n = 114$), the highest preference (67%, $n = 80$) was for working with elementary school students while the lowest preference (29.4%, $n = 35$) was for preschool students.

Table 12

Student Group Preferences

	N	%
Preschool	35	29.4
Elementary School	80	67.2
Middle School	56	47.1
High School	56	47.1
University	34	28.6

Qualitative Study

Using the online survey as a cultivation tool for my qualitative study, I reviewed the transcribed and sorted survey data and conducted follow-up correspondence with 28 applicants who submitted their information for further participation. I sent individual emails to each applicant, explaining the goals of the study, and the participant pool was reduced to 10 participants ($n = 10$). The participants were selected to provide a broad demographic spectrum of museum educators. Table 13 shows the demographic information of the participants in this study. Participants were disproportionately female (80%, $n = 8$), and their employment designations varied. Two members of the study were volunteers (V), two were part-time employees of a single institution (PT), two were part-time freelance employees of multiple institutions (PTF), and four were full-time employees (FT). The different employment statuses promised to convey a wide range of experience.

Table 13

Demographic Data of Interview Participants

	N	%
Female	8	80
Male	2	20
<i>Employment Status</i>		
Full-time (Single Institution)	4	40
Part-time (Single Institution)	2	20
Part-time/Freelance (Multiple Institution)	2	20
Volunteer	2	20
<i>Age</i>		
18–24	2	20
25–34	3	30
35–44	2	20
55–64	1	10
65–74	2	20
<i>Participants' Level of Education</i>		
Undergraduate Degree	2	20
Graduate Degree	8	80

I interviewed each participant in person or by telephone for 35 to 60 minutes. After transcribing the interviews and reviewing them multiple times, I developed a template of common subjects that accounted for the statements of each participant relevant to the study. I sent this completed template to the participants, and they were permitted to confirm its content, add comments, or delete information that they perceived as not pertinent to the study or to their experiences as museum educators. I combined the resulting statements into a larger template and sorted them into five major sections (and subcategories): the making of art museum educators; personal perceptions of art museum educators; the work of art museum educators (transitional experiences, gallery experiences with students, experiences with teachers, and negotiating studio experiences); experiences of method and theory; and experiences of camaraderie and professional development. I used selected statements to compose the following narrative that explores my findings of the experiences of art museum educators.

The making of art museum educators. Individual interviews with the 10 participants revealed their educational histories and professional experiences. The questioning process prompted the interviewees to remember arts experiences as far back as high school and to recall how that knowledge informed undergraduate and graduate school experiences as well as applications to work. Table 14 represents the educational histories of the participants and differentiates the types of degrees attained at the undergraduate and graduate level. Of the participants, all 10 graduated high school, 9 completed an undergraduate degree (1 participant was completing a final semester of undergraduate courses during the study and was included within the group that completed undergraduate work), 8 participants completed or were completing graduate degrees (7 completed graduate work and 1 participant was in the final year of graduate work during the study).

Table 14

Educational Demographic Data of Qualitative Research Participants

	N	%
Types of Art Education Course Work Mentioned/ Completed		
High School	10	100
Undergraduate	10	100
Art History	2	20
Combined Degree Art/Education	3	40
Combined Degree Art/ Other	1	10
Other	4	40
Graduate		
Art History	1	10
Education	6	60
General Education	1	10
Special Needs Education	2	20
Museum Education	3	30
Other	1	10

Of the participants who had engaged in graduate level work, 60% received or were in the process of completing degrees in education. Among those, 3 participants received degrees in museum

education from Bank Street College and 2 participants received degrees in special education from Teacher's College.

Through the process of qualitative inquiry, I learned the participants' professional histories (i.e., volunteerism, internship, and paid work). Work and educational histories were often connected, as many of the participants pursued graduate studies after completing particular volunteer, paid work, or internship experiences. Of the participants, 80% ($n = 8$) had exposure to jobs, internships, or volunteer positions in a formal school environment. While the duration and types of work in the formal school environments varied between participants, there were few positive comments about these experiences. Negative comments about the formalized school system included feelings of isolation from other teachers and complaints regarding minimal arts engagement in the curriculum. One museum educator, who had worked in the New York City public school system as a middle school teacher for more than 20 years before volunteering as a museum educator, referred to feeling isolated: "That's the nature of when you're in a classroom—you're pretty much alone" (female, 65–74, V). Another museum educator, who had worked in museums as a teaching artist and then in the New York City public school system as an elementary schoolteacher for 2 years before returning to museum education, explained, "When I was a schoolteacher, I felt like I was in a jail cell. Everything is so institutionalized. And this affects the children: They get very tense and aggressive and are like rats in a cage" (female, 55–64, FT).

The feeling that traditional school environments were prison-like or rigid was also conveyed by one museum educator who referred to her service in schools as "doing time":

I mean, I did two years in a classroom, and during that time I was kind of struggling: Do I want to go back to the classroom or not? And there was a big part of me that didn't

want to. Just having seen the restrictions of one school, I was kind of looking for a career that would allow me more flexibility and also to work in a field where art was kind of the focus than rather an afterthought. I really felt that all the teaching—everything I kept looking at, especially in the field of special education—art was an afterthought. And that’s something that’s really important to me. (female, 35–44, PTF)

Another museum educator, who also struggled with the tension between standard, rote learning and more progressive-minded schooling, witnessed hypocrisy in the school system:

The school I worked in was a textbook-free school, and what that meant was that they had no textbooks in the classrooms but an army of assistant teachers to photocopy class sets of each chapter, so the students could read the textbooks and do the activities the textbooks prescribed. So, there was this talk about progressive education in the school, but all I saw was rote learning, book learning, regimentation. Students who stepped out of line were quickly put back in line. (male, 25–34, FT)

One of the participants taught at the university level for a few years, but some of the museum educators did not pursue doctoral work that would lead to teaching at the university level. One museum educator, who interned for a museum’s school residency program and quickly took an administrative position in another New York City museum education department, explained, “I got into education because I was [in graduate school], and I was, like, ‘What am I going to do with my life, and how can I find a job in this field?’ And I’ve always wanted to be a college professor, but then I was, like, ‘I don’t know—a PhD and I can’t find a job’” (female, 25–34, FT). The perception that university teaching positions are difficult to find and maintain was also related by another museum educator, who was tutored by an art history professor about the difficulty of the university workplace:

I went to [the] professor who got me interested in art history . . . [She said,] “Whatever you do, don’t become an art history professor . . . it’s so cutthroat. There’s no guarantee of anything. Your work will be very underappreciated. It’s a very hard life; if I could go back in time, I would not have gone for the university professor rap.” She said, “You know, you’ve got a lot of talent going [for] you. Don’t go into academia!” (male, 25–34, FT)

For one museum educator who was exploring the possibilities of university teaching and completed a dual undergraduate major in art and education, museums offered an alternate, more appealing professional route: “In many ways, once I got [to the art museum], my eyes opened and I found a career path. I think, before, that I was maybe looking to teaching art at a university; I think [that] was probably my career goal or track” (male, 35–44, FT).

Once they were in the field of art museum education, the interviewees’ employment experiences varied over time. Table 15 indicates the types of jobs they held over the course of their employment.

Table 15
Types of Employment in Museums Experienced by Interview Participants

	N	%
Types of employment		
Volunteer	6	60
Intern	6	60
Part-time (single institution)	6	60
Part-time Freelance (multiple museums)	5	50
Full-time Work in General	7	70
Full-time Work in a Museum	5	50

To discover any commonalities in career paths for museum educators, I developed a string analysis, as seen in Table 16, to examine routes to the field of museum education.

Table 16
String Analysis of Employment Experiences in Museums (Interview Participants)

Key:

ED (Formal Education Experience); ME (Museum Education); TA (Teaching Artist); PT (Part-time, Single Institution); V (Volunteer); PTF (Part-time Freelance); FT (Full-time); Art (non-defined career in the arts)

Female, 65–74, V:	FT (ED) →	FT (Other) →	Volunteer		
Female, 65–74, V:	FT (ED) →	Volunteer			
Female, 55–64, FT:	TA →	PT (ME) →	FT (ED) →	FT (ME)	
Male, 35–44, FT:	Volunteer →	TA →	PTF (ME) →	TA →	FT (ME)
Female, 35–44, PTF:	Intern (E) →	FT (ED)	PTF (ME) →	FT (ME) →	PTF (ME)
Male, 25–34, FT:	FT (Art) →	Volunteer →	Intern (ED) →	Intern (ME) →	FT (ME)
Female, 25–34, FT:	FT (Art) →	Intern (ME) →	FT (ME)		
Female, 25–34, PTF:	Intern (ED) →	Intern (ME) →	PTF (ME)		
Female, 18–24, PT:	Volunteer →	Intern (ME) →	PT (ME)		
Female, 18–24, PT:	Volunteer →	Intern (ME) →	PT (ME)		

Of those who had completed some sort of an internship in a museum, 60% had secured a job as a part-time museum educator in a single institution, as a freelance museum educator, or as a full-time museum educator. Of the participants, 30% mentioned volunteering as a road to formalized internships within museums, and 20% began their volunteerism after leaving a professional career.

The interview responses revealed multiple paths for museum-education preparation and professional development: museum-specific preparation (training) programs, such as docent training and formal internship programs; hands-on, self-directed experiences, such as observation and implementation, and less formal internships and volunteer experiences; and special seminars and institutes not sponsored by an individual's employer.

As I learned from the interviews, museum-specific preparation programs manifested in three ways: long-term, formal, sequential programs provided by employers for adult volunteers; long-term, formal, sequential programs for undergraduate or graduate interns; and less formal, ad hoc opportunities for preparation of content or pedagogy.

The two participants who identified as docents, or volunteer museum educators, came to the field of museum education after having long careers in other professions. One museum educator who came to the field after leaving the finance industry discussed the general experience of ongoing institutional preparation:

The staff put together a training program for us . . . and we happened to have all kinds of different exposure to both [the] content and also to the skills. On the content side, we especially loved having the curators come and talk with us . . . throughout our training and our reading. And we're [provided] with a lot of written material and expected to do a lot of reading on our own. We come up with our salient points that we want to get across.
(female, 65–74, V)

This type of experience was echoed by another volunteer museum educator who came to the field after retiring from the public school classroom: “The [docent supervisor] gave the training. I remember being impressed with the level it was on; it was a very high-level art class. And there were lots of readings, lots of gallery work, gallery exploration” (female, 65–74, V). Both participants recounted training programs that were generated by the museum staff and that involved supplemental readings and assignments.

For two museum educators who participated in formal undergraduate internship programs in a single museum, the preparation experience also included hands-on work with visitors and training in administration:

I moved on to [formal undergraduate internship program], a pilot program at the museum working with undergraduate students, and [I learned] how to give school tours and integrate [the students] into the museum. . . . I worked at the front desk and learned how

to interact with visitors, how to work with school groups and teachers, and how to manage big groups of kids. (female, 18–24, PT)

The experiences of such programs differed from those of short-term volunteers or interns because they integrated the educators into culture of the museum, which included administrative duties and longer hours: “Being an intern for two days a week was so much different than being in [the museum] three or four days a week—fifteen hours—and having a dynamic set of responsibilities that I had never navigated before” (female, 18–24, PT). At the beginning of a museum educator’s career, these experiences had more impact.

For one participant, who interned to fulfill an academic requirement for a graduate degree, the in-depth nature of a formal program was enhanced with hands-on experience with students and museum colleagues:

I interned in [a museum’s school residency program] . . . One of the advantages of volunteer[ing] was that I had been [there] years before . . . When it came [time] to do my graduate internship at [the graduate school], I applied to the [same museum] to do it. They accepted me, and because I’d already gone through the tour training process, I could jump right in, and start leading tours immediately. So, I was leading about two or three school tours a week. (male, 25–34, FT)

For this particular museum educator, this internship experience was not only enhanced by the additional hands-on experience but also by the close interaction with other, more experienced museum educators: “I learned a lot of really great ways to engage groups in very abstract ideas, but with very concrete objects, and learned the importance of keeping your experiences in the gallery object-centered and object-focused, and building in personal perception and the importance of people’s lives” (male, 25–34, FT).

The participants described the less formal preparation or professional-development experiences as training in the museum that occurred periodically throughout the year, depending on the subject matter. One full-time museum educator explained two different training experiences. One is a collaboration that involves other educators: “In the fall and the spring, we gather all of the educators and we do a walkthrough of exhibitions” (female, 25–34, FT). The other is a more didactic, content-based experience led by a museum professional: “The curator will do a lecture of the exhibition and then a walkthrough” (female, 25–34, FT).

For one part-time, freelance museum educator who works in several museums each semester, experiencing the diversity of professional-development sessions at multiple museums is a benefit.

I think one of the great things about working at so many museums is that you definitely get exposed to professional development within each setting. Especially when I was first working as a museum educator, working at four different museums at once—everyone is teaching you a different similar methodology, and then you can take and use kind of what works the best for you. (female, 35–44, PTF)

She deemed the multiple preparation programs valuable because they offered access to different pedagogical experiences, which enhanced her skills in museum education.

The participants also mentioned that institutionally generated preparation sessions include ones devoted to facilitating programs for and understanding audiences with special needs. In these situations, the museums invite specialists from other organizations, who facilitate the sessions. One full-time museum educator explained: “We sometimes have access trainings. We’ll have someone from the outside come . . . into our compound (LAUGH) and do a training. And then, they are starting an Alzheimer’s group, so we have a training coming up soon for that”

(female, 25–34, FT). Part-time and freelance museum educators also mentioned this type of preparation:

Last year, [there was a] kind of a pilot program, [a] three-part program with this group of students . . . And, you know, I guess that person who trained us kind of talked about—not so much age-developmental milestones but, as a whole—what kind of things you would look for when you’re working with a person [who] has autism. (female, 25–34, PTF)

As reported by the interviewees, one alternative to lengthy preparation programs and occasional professional-development sessions is immersion in a museum education environment with little or no preparation. A full-time museum educator recalled this hands-on, self-directed experience or “trial-by-fire” during her museum internship that took place at a school:

I was just kind of thrown into it, and I don’t remember that there was any kind of training before that. It was just kind of, like, show up, and here you go. The teaching artist was really great because she would pick me up from the train. The school was [outside of Manhattan] and we would drive, so that’s how she kind of started to tell me about the program. (female, 25–34, FT)

As museums service the communities around them, museum educators are frequently asked to service schools through residency or alternative programs. One part-time, freelance museum educator noted that she was asked not just to assist but also to lead a program quickly and without much preparation.

They just asked me to do it. [The museum had] a small staff, and I think they just chose educators who they thought could [do it]. They just gave us training and sent us out to the school. I don’t know what their reasoning was, other than they thought I could do it. So they sent me to do it. There’s no record of that process. (female, 35–44, PTF)

A full-time museum educator who was quickly assigned a school tour also relied on the transferability of intrinsic museum-educator skills: “I was asked to lead on my second week of work. Luckily, I’m a person who likes that kind of thing . . . I picked three objects, and I researched them, and I would not deviate from those three objects, but other than that I felt very confident” (male, 25–34, FT).

Museum educators also shared their experiences with professional-development seminars and institutes that they sought on their own. Two museum educators attended seminars with Rika Burnham, the current director of education for the Frick Collection and a previous senior museum educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Burnham co-facilitates the Teaching Institute in Museum Education (TIME) at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. For one part-time freelance museum educator, a course with Burnham became a recurring event.

I took a training course with Rika, which is the first time I experienced [something] I didn’t have a name for. And even as a professional museum educator, now, I still go to her programs . . . with a friend who is interested in art history, [a] co-worker, or just a friend who’s an artist. I do really enjoy looking at [art] and talking about complications and interpretations with the person for an extended amount of time. (female, 25–34, PTF)

Another museum educator described the length of time he devoted to his work in museum education through his experience with Burnham at TIME along with training in Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS): “I did the TIME institute with Rika, so that was a full-week-long seminar. And, with VTS, it was also a week-long seminar” (male, 35–44, FT). Only one interviewee mentioned the Visual Thinking Strategies seminar, but many participants in the interviews referred to sessions in which specialist VTS facilitators were brought to their normally scheduled preparation programs.

Personal perceptions of art museum educators. Throughout the course of interviews, I asked the participants to describe their personal views of art and museums. This section is related to comments that the museum educators made about their perceptions of and preferences for the art museum experience and themselves. The participants responded to my questions—“What is an ideal museum experience?” “What is a negative museum experience?” and “How do you experience art?”—and I organized their responses into four categories: positive museum experiences, in relation to spatial and social dynamics; negative museum experiences, in relation to agency and authority within the space of an art museum; experiences with art, in relation to conceptual and visceral responses; and perceptions of themselves as art educators.

The participants described the physical space and environment of museums as important, and that unique environments contributed to a positive museum experience. Museums were perceived as spaces where engagement with art objects and emotional responses were allowed to happen. One museum educator explained that walking into an unknown museum stirred her curiosity:

It’s going somewhere that I didn’t know about first . . . walking in the doors and feeling like I’ve just found a precious jewel. And being able to go inside and explore freely and feel like I connect to things inside. (female, 18–24, PT)

For this participant, the museum is a space for exploration without a specific purpose; for another participant, the museum is a setting for social exploration:

We’ll often go someplace, you know, much like the Met or MoMA—someplace big enough where we can get lost, and where we don’t need to have an exact destination in mind, but where we can discover things happening, as we go. (male, 25–34, FT)

Another museum educator expressed feeling a sense of familiarity with the space of a museum, stating, “And I would just feel at home there” (female, 55–64, FT), and emphasizing the positive emotions generated by frequent visitations to the same institution. For one participant, who volunteers in a museum and had strong childhood associations with the institution, “A great museum experience results in [me] wanting to come back another time, [and] having some new perspectives on . . . some aspect of history that I hadn’t thought about. Some amazing object that I can’t imagine making myself. So that’s an element of awe” (female, 65–74, V). For her, memories, emotions, and locale were interrelated and together served as a catalyst to volunteering at her favorite childhood museum after retirement.

Participants also made positive statements in relation to social experiences, including: “When I’m at a museum, I don’t usually go by myself; I usually go with one person or with [other] people” (female, 25–34, FT), and “My friend and I are having our own private conversation that is . . . punctuated by periods of silence, as we come across something particularly interesting or noteworthy” (male, 25–34, FT). Some of these social experiences were directly linked to interactions with art: “I like to look at it and talk with my friends about what my first impression of it is. Whether that’s colors or if it reminds me of something else I’ve seen” (female, 18–24, PT), or “[The] thing I really enjoy in a museum is having . . . a Rika Burnham kind of shared experience with other people and having the art work open up for me” (female, 25–34, PTF). One full-time museum educator mentioned the influence of her work on her behavior with friends in a museum: “Now that I work at the museum . . . I’m aware of different things like family guides . . . If I’m with friends, I’m like, ‘Hey, let’s do this family guide’” (female, 25–34, FT).

When discussing negative museum experiences, many museum educators mentioned issues of agency or control of personal space. Museums can become crowded, often with people and sometimes with artwork. In one conversation, a volunteer museum educator noted that, “A poor museum experience might be [one] where the place is too crowded, where . . . it might be too noisy, you know, where the ‘environmentals’ are off” (female, 65–74, V), while another concurred that the quantity of visitors in a museum may confuse one’s understanding of the space: “It’s crowded, and you’re not really sure, like, how to navigate” (female, 18–24, PT). Two participants discussed the tendency for museums to showcase “blockbuster” shows that attract large quantities of people and affect the environment of the galleries. While commenting on the crowd at a blockbuster show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, one museum educator stated, “I saw the Alexander McQueen [show], and it was insane—so that was really terrible, and it was just way too crowded” (female, 25–34, FT). The presence of a large number of artworks in a given area can also contribute to the feeling of crowding. Another museum educator explained her impressions of crowding in relation to both the numbers of visitors and the quantity of artwork within an exhibition:

I do get frustrated . . . I feel like a lot of those blockbuster MoMA shows with timed ticketing and things like that—it gets so crowded that it is unpleasant. Crowded with people, but also crowded with work. I feel that you need to give people space to be with an artwork, but you need to give artwork a space to breathe. When everything is jammed in, it is a little unpleasant. (female, 35–44, PTF)

The statements related to negative interactions with museum employees were divided between the participants’ experiences with admission procedures and those with tours. One full-time museum educator said that a negative experience (from the public’s perspective) is, “One

where they are treated rudely or were not given an open welcome at the museum” (male, 35–44, FT). One museum educator compared an unwelcoming attitude from a museum’s admission staff to that of a commercial gallery: “When you go in and there’s just somebody sitting at a desk—that they don’t really, like, notice you” (female, 18–24, PT). In regard to tours, the same museum educator explained that, “You can definitely have a negative experience with a tour guide . . . [The guide is] not framing things in the right way, or not accepting that people have different views, or not acknowledging people’s views” (female, 18–24, PT). Another museum educator who also held this view stated:

I don’t like going to museums and participating in tours, because very rarely do I get a chance for an inquiry-based tour. For the most part, it’s being talked at or talked down to, and I find that . . . I’ve developed a zero-tolerance policy for feeling that way. It feels like my time is being wasted . . . It feels almost like, “You haven’t even taken the time to get to know who I am, so why would I participate in your monologue?” (male, 25–34, FT)

In these instances, the museum tour guides (who are also museum educators) were perceived as extensions of the museum’s authoritarian image or reputation.

The participants’ perceptions of the institutional authority of museums also yielded statements of negative experiences. Complaints of institutional authority manifested in comments about the degree of interpretive text in the galleries: “I don’t like a lot of wall text on things” (female, 25–34, FT); “I think, when there’s a lot of text, I don’t like that. I’m not there to read” (female, 25–34, PTF); “I really hate a lot of wall text. I don’t like having to go in and read things on the wall. I prefer to look at art objects” (female, 18–24, PT). For one participant, the

interpretive text offered unwanted information: “When it gets into the wall text interpreting the art for me, I don’t like that” (female, 18–24, PT).

Regarding how museum educators experience art, one full-time educator explained:

“I think, in many ways, it’s a very visceral and visual experience. I think my first response is visual; then I move more to conceptual. I really, kind of, try to understand [the] essence of the work [in] its own regard. Then, I think probably the third [step] after that would be understanding [it] in a historic context. (male, 35–44, FT)

Using his statement as a framework, I divided the participants’ statements about the art experience into the categories of visceral and conceptual.

In relation to a visceral experience with art, the museum educators regarded the interaction between a person and art object as a dynamic one. In one instance, a participant explained that the art experience was like a conversation: “I feel like the art works are talking to me. It is like I’m meeting people; I am meeting these art works and . . . I say I’ve got to go into this gallery and hear what the art work is telling me” (female, 55–64, FT), whereas another educator explained, “I like to hear what the object is saying. I like to go in kind of blank and in front of something and absorb it from all angles, if I can, and give it some time. I really just like to be with an object for a while, [...] just let it wash over me, and [I] take in whatever it’s giving before I go and find out more” (female, 35–44, PTF). This idea—that an art object is something active—was also mentioned by a museum educator, who stated, “I guess it’s just something that really grabs me visually. And then as I get deeper into it, it’s more like a reflection on what I’m thinking” (female, 18–24, PT). This visceral experience is not necessarily immediate; it can take time to develop, as one museum educator explained: “Sometimes it hits you right away, and sometimes you feel like this. You sort of don’t believe your eyes, so I think what you have to do

is accustom yourself or force yourself really to look at something that you think you don't like, or you think you don't understand" (female, 65–74, V).

The museum educators also made statements about moving from a visceral response to a conceptual understanding of a work. Describing an initial attempt toward a deeper comprehension of a work of art, one museum educator said, "I guess I try to connect to other things that I know" (female, 18–24, PT). This practice often begins with an extended period of looking at the object and then thinking of aesthetic connections, as one museum educator explained her approach to looking at and understanding a painting: "I guess I would look section-to-section and kind of analyze all of the details. And then, maybe go section-by-section . . . first in relation to what I know" (female, 25–34, PTF). This practice of looking was echoed by a full-time museum educator who utilizes "deep looking" with students: "I try to practice what I preach, and I try to focus on the object first, and then, when I feel I need more information, I'll go to the label, especially if it's an object that I'm familiar with, or it's from an area of art history I've studied" (male, 25–34, FT). The persistent examination of an artwork was also a rewarding challenge:

There's an intellectual process besides an intuitive process, and at the very least it's fun to look at the piece and try and put it into its historical and artistic timeline and context. So, even if you think aesthetically it's a joke, or not for you, there [are] still questions about it that come to mind, that are interesting to answer. (female, 65–74, V)

The above statements about the practice of looking at and thinking about artworks also applied to how museum educators used these techniques with students. Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed the idea of "practicing what you preach." The museum educators perceived themselves as exemplars of gallery activities as well as constant

ambassadors for the museum because of their public roles. One full-time museum educator explained that this role with the public makes a museum educator an important part of the institution:

As far as the institution [goes], I feel like [education] brings all the people in. So we are, and I am sort of—I don't want to say the face of the institution—but, you know, in a lot of ways, we have to interact with the public so much . . . so that's how I feel my role is, even when in the elevator. (female, 25–34, FT)

The feeling of being an ambassador was also clear to a volunteer museum educator:

I think we have a very important role in the museum. We're the contact points with the public, and I think it's understood within the museum [at the] staff and board level . . . and that's really important, so I believe that we're well respected. (female, 65–74, V)

Other perceptions of self in relation to being an art museum educator included the intrinsic love of art and the ability to be flexible in approach. In relation to her love of art, one museum educator exclaimed:

I'm someone who has always loved art, loved the act of making art. But it never came naturally to me, except for the fact that I loved it. So I did struggle with art making, even though I was always in art classes. (female, 35–44, PTF)

In some instances, this love of art is intertwined with one's identity with peers. One museum educator recounted, "I'm, like, the friend who knows about art museums. It's really fun to talk with them because they're willing and they want to know, and it makes for a very open conversation" (female, 25–34, PTF). This love and knowledge of art or art museums can be combined with versatility; as one freelance museum educator explained, "I always say that I hit the curve balls at [the museum]. I get the calls for the weird things. Basically I am a museum

educator there—[the] position is flexible” (female, 35–44, PTF). One volunteer docent explained that the freedom to be flexible in approach was a positive attribute of working in her museum environment:

I’m aware that in some docent programs the docents are supposed to follow some sort of script . . . and I would never survive in a program like that. I don’t like having to do the same thing again and again, and I don’t do the same thing again and again. That’s one of the things that I like about our program—that we’re encouraged to bring our own [selves] to it. (female, 65–74, V)

Being allowed to bring their selves into their work was an important factor for many museum educators who identified with the term *educator* more than *tour guide*. Judging from the interview responses, working as a museum educator is much more than reciting from a script.

The work of art museum educators. In relation to what museum educators do, one full-time educator explained: “I don’t think that other departments understand exactly what education does. I feel like—to be honest—I feel like curators kind of think, ‘Oh, they are just education,’ you know?” (female, 25–34, FT). The museum educators were clearly able to describe their work with students in galleries, and the course of interviews revealed four common components of their work: transitional experiences (which include orientations and departures), gallery experiences with students, gallery experiences with teachers, and studio (art-making) experiences. Overall, the art museum educators described a consistency in their work with student groups in museums. Many of their tours began with greeting a student group and providing a brief orientation, proceeded to exploring three to five works of art with the student group in the galleries, and then concluded with a summary of the experience before the group departed. In some instances, the museum educators mentioned conducting studio sessions in

conjunction with gallery tours and interacting with the teacher(s) leading the school trip before a group's arrival. All of the museum educators reported using some form of inquiry-based method with works of art and prioritizing the student experience of meaning-making during the tour.

Transitional experiences: Orientations and departures. The first part of the museum experience for student groups performed by museum educators is often labeled the *orientation*. This is when groups arrive and begin the process of admission into the museum. As experienced by a number of museum educators, an orientation not only provides a transition for students from the outside world into the museum environment but also encompasses several important tasks, including the collection of students' belongings, the announcement of museum rules, the description of the tour agenda, and the introductions between the museum staff and the student group. One freelance museum educator explained: "I think my experience starts the second they get to the door. Then we 'take care of business': coats and backpacks and that sort of stuff" (female, 35-44, PTF). Students often arrive with belongings that need to be stowed, as mentioned by another museum educator, who delivers orientations to the student groups in a theater: "If they have coats or bookbags or something, they can put them on the chairs, and there are also bins, and they can set them at the [edge] of the stage" (female, 65-74, V). Aside from the practical matter of stowing the students' belongings, orientation provides time for the division for large groups into smaller ones: "We divide groups here into squads of 12 to 18 students. So, the average class of 30 students will be divided into 2 groups. The museum has a maximum of two classrooms [that can participate] at once" (male, 25-34, FT). As described by another museum educator, once a large group has been divided, she conducts a quick introduction in conjunction with "taking care of business":

We bring them over to the barrels, where they take their [coats] off. We say to them, “Put your stuff away. Sit down, make a circle,” . . . “look at me.” And they look at you, and then you say who you are and that you will be their guide. Sometimes, you ask what their names are, if they are a small group; sometimes you don’t. (female, 65–74, V)

The orientation was also referred to as an *introduction* by one part-time museum educator: “We do the introduction . . . in the first 5 minutes—like, if you don’t have them on your side, it’s really hard to kind of bring them in after that” (female, 18–24, PT).

Taking care of business in the introduction or orientation includes establishing rules for the museum: “We go into the galleries after dropping their things off, and then I’ll do the museum rules” (female, 25–34, FT). Different museum educators explained strategies for laying out the rules to different groups.

How I go about that would be different [depending on the group, if] it’s a young preschool group, middle school, high school, or adult group. I am basically going over the “Don’t touch, don’t run; we are here to have a conversation”—what my expectations are . . . The age of the group [affects] how much I solicit [from] them and how much humor is involved to [explain] why you don’t touch things. (male, 35–44, FT)

Another museum educator requested the students’ participation in discussing the rules:

I would ask them to tell me some rules that they think are important to the museum—that might be different from the classroom—and [I] invite them to share the rules with me, which usually works and they have a ton of ideas. (female, 18–24, PT)

This same museum educator went on to say that she offers explanation to help students to understand certain rules:

We go over the no-touching, and I like to tell them why they can't touch and explain that only a few people in the museum can touch the art, that it's not just [about preventing] them [from touching]. [I say,] 'I still can't touch the art'—they're always shocked by [that]. (female, 18–24, PT)

While establishing rules for students is a shared experience for museum educators, so is creating a welcoming environment for students. One educator explained:

It's important to establish that you're in a safe space, that this is a place where your ideas are going to be valued, so I tell groups, right off the bat, "We're going to be on a tour together, but I'm not going to be talking at you. I want your ideas. I want to hear what you have to say." I want to have a conversation, and I'll adapt this to their age, depending on what, you know, who I'm talking to. (male, 25–34, FT)

This museum educator went on to explain the importance of establishing placidity in the students: "I've taken to having groups just breathe deeply a few times together, and it does help calm that outside energy down a little, and [I] set the tone for how I expect the next 60 minutes to go." Another full-time museum educator also explained the transference of "outside energy" into calm curiosity: "Often I am asking them to slow down. So, whenever I bring a group [to the galleries], typically it's getting them acclimated, and it also is about getting them out of their school [behavior]" (male, 35–44, FT). A freelance museum educator further explained why the students may have nervous energy:

I think it's really important to meet the kids right when they get into the door, because you never know what their experience is in a museum. But a lot of kids say that this is their first time at [the museum], or at a museum, and it might not be a place [where] they are comfortable. (female, 35–44, PTF)

Once the students are inside the museum, this same educator locates a tranquil space: “I usually like to find a quiet corner, somewhere in the lobby, [...] before we go upstairs, and actually sit down in a place that’s not too overwhelming, a place that’s not too distracting, a place where there is no art.” She found this method necessary, to stop with the students in a visually quiet area.

Time management is also an important factor in the museum tour experience. Most participants discussed leading tours of 60 to 75 minutes in duration. With this in mind, the participants often thought of the orientation as something necessary and best quickly facilitated. As one museum educator stated: “Well, of course, we’d like it to be as [short] as possible, simply because it would take away from the tour. The groups are encouraged to come a few minutes early, so that they can do those things before the official start time of the tour” (female, 65–74, V). For this museum educator, the primary experience should be the actual tour and not the orientation. Some participants felt that orientations that are too long diminish the students’ enjoyment of the museum visit. As one museum educator recounts:

It’s only a 60-minute tour, so it’s important to take the time to do orientation but not waste the time. I try to keep it [to] 5 to 7 minutes, tops. If a group is orienting for 10 minutes, it’s tedious. (male, 25–34, FT)

Many museum educators assuage the students’ feelings of tedium by explaining the tour’s agenda. One museum educator summarized setting the agenda as:

I’ll introduce the museum to them and give them an idea of what we are going to be doing—telling them that we are going to be looking at three or four works of art together, and then we’ll have a chance to do some sketching [in] the galleries and [some] exploring on their own. (female, 18–24, PT)

Another full-time museum educator felt strongly about agenda-setting:

One of the other crucial parts of an orientation is letting people know how their time is going to be used . . . I tell them, right off the bat, “We’re going to look at three or four works of art. We’re going to have conversations about them. I’m going to tell you some stories.” And I try to make sure that every group that I work with gets to do something with their hands. (male, 25–34, FT)

The participants perceived that setting the agenda manages the students’ expectations and leads to a satisfactory experience. One freelance museum educator said that she provided this overview, “Just so there are no surprises. Some kids are like, ‘Oh, we only saw three things.’ I just want them to know that’s what we’re going to do” (female, 35–44, PTF).

To transition student groups out of the museum, the museum educators summarize and reflect on the experiences of the gallery tours, as well as manage tasks such as unpacking bins and helping the students to put on their coats. One museum educator explained:

I thank them all and bring them back down [to the entrance], do a little recap of what we saw, and take out their coats or bags one at a time, instead of letting them all grab through all the bags. (female, 18–24, PT)

Other museum educators elaborate on the students’ departure by posing questions to the entire group. One museum educator said, “[I like the students to] tell me one thing they learned, or one thing they liked here at the museum today” (female, 35–44, PTF). Another museum educator described a system of gratitude interrelated with a series of questions:

Before we go, I . . . wrap it up again. I tell them how great they are, what a unique and distinctive group (everybody is that). [I say,] ‘Who wants to come back? Who feels they

could have spent more time? If you could, what would you do? What would you bring home with you?’ (female, 65–74, V)

Echoing the other participants’ statements, one museum educator added that this is a consistent experience that is repeated multiple times per day.

Then we have a conclusion, and I usually ask them to think of one thing they learned or thought was cool: “What did we talk about today? What did we think about today? What did you think was cool today?” And then I summarize what we talked about—objectives, et cetera. And then I bring them back downstairs, and I take the second group of students, and I do the same thing again. (female, 25–34, PTF)

The gallery experience with students. Once the orientations to the museum are completed, the educators move the students into the galleries to begin the process of looking at art. Generally the museum educators visit between 3 and 5 works of art for about 10 to 20 minutes each, sometimes on multiple floors. The museum educators reported that, despite looking at only a small number of works, they have to exercise a tremendous amount of flexibility with their tours’ paths, based on other activities occurring in the museum and the wants, needs, and expectations of the students and the teachers. One museum educator explained the necessary types of adaptation:

There’s flexibility based on their own questioning, and then there’s a lot of flexibility based on how many other tours may be happening on that day. Sometimes we have a ‘bunch-up day,’ where we have a number of groups going around, and we have to do sort of a little dance to go around each other because the museum is not really that big, and you want to keep the attention of the kids and not have them totally distracted by another group. (female, 65–74, V)

Another museum educator further explained:

I never know which works of art I'm going to have access to. You can't reserve specific works of art. You can say, 'I'll be on [a certain floor of the museum],' but even that may not be true, so—all this to say—I commit to broad strokes, and then, during the tour, I adapt on my feet. (male, 25–34, FT)

Being flexible in using the gallery space merges with being flexible in responding to students' needs. When describing a tour route, one volunteer museum educator explained:

[I normally work with] a good five pieces, maybe six, depending if they are really little kids and [if] they have the attention span. You can tell when they are sort of falling apart. You can move them on to something else. You can do a drawing activity. It depends on the temperament and the age. (female, 65–74, V)

One museum educator explained the variability of the experience as something intrinsic to the nature of teaching:

I've never done the same tour twice. I've very rarely had the same conversation twice. It's a big challenge for me. Teaching is very organic. I always make a tour plan. I'm always very prepared. And I would say I stick to the plan maybe once out of every 60 times. (female, 35–44, PTF)

When educators navigate a group's experience in an art museum, looking at art objects plays an integral role. Many museum educators explained that, with student groups, they begin with looking exercises instead of immediately explaining works of art. One museum educator summarized her initial experiences with looking:

I have a 10-second rule. And I look at my watch—that doesn't have a second hand—but [I] say, 'For 10 whole seconds, we will do nothing but look. Look with your eyes; look

with your ears.’ At the end of it, I will . . . ask a question that anyone can answer:

‘What’s one thing you notice?’ (female, 65–74, V)

Another museum educator uses this type of looking exercise to slow students down and help them to see aspects of the artwork that they may have not noticed:

Often, my first approach when I bring any group in is, really, just to get them to slow down. We often stop in front of one work, and a big part of it’s just asking them to look. We start very slowly and allow things to unravel and reveal themselves as we go along. As we move on, they realize they can see things in the work of art, and they each have ideas to share. (male, 35–44, FT)

One museum educator felt this type of exercise was revolutionary:

I do the silent observation because I think that if I had been offered that in middle school, it probably would’ve changed the way I looked at things—just being able to look at it first by myself without other people talking. (female, 18–24, PT)

This type of close observation can lead to discussions about the artwork. One museum educator noted: “I ask them to look silently for 10 seconds. To look for details in the artwork and then just invite them to share what they noticed, which usually launches into conversation about the artwork” (female, 18–24, PT). Another museum educator explained having to instruct the process of guided or “slow” looking to students who are not accustomed to this type of exercise: “Actually, it involves slow looking. I take them—I take their eyes through—looking down, going down, ‘Go up, up, up, up, look at the ceiling, stay there, turn your body, come down and look down, down, down, down’” (female, 25–34, PTF).

The museum educators noted the importance, while leading close-looking exercises, of directing “meaning-making” conversations and that this is an integral component to their work.

Meaning-making is student-centered and requires listening to individual student responses and responding accordingly. One full-time museum educator stated:

I'm interested in meaning-making and, in addition, what the students are interested in, and we're going to try to find out where they're going. And often themes will emerge, either based on the curriculum they're studying, or based on their personal interests.

(male, 25–34, FT)

This process requires close listening as well as flexibility on the part of the museum educator.

I try really hard to listen, first and foremost—like, my teaching is more listening than anything else—like any good teacher—and listening to what the students are saying, but listening to the overarching trajectory of the conversation. And I usually end up saying, “Oh, this conversation is going to another conversation that I had planned, so this would be a better object to use.” (female, 35–44, PTF)

Aside from looking at artworks, other activities also occur in the galleries. One museum educator reported: “We go to a third work of art, and at that point I usually do some kind of art-making activity, be it sketching, writing, touching material, and stuff like that” (female, 25–34, PTF). Drawing with dry media was one of the most common activities discussed by the interview participants. One museum educator noted this activity for its ease of explanation to groups: “With only one hour, and using only dry media, and you can't get that elaborate, so whatever action you take has to be something you can explain in a minute or two” (male, 25–34, FT). Another museum educator used the drawings as catalysts for conversation with the students:

I'll walk around and try to talk to each student about what they're drawing, and then we'll all come back together, and they have a chance to share their drawings and anything

else interesting they noticed while they were walking around, that they wanted to talk about. (female, 18–24, PT)

The museum educators were asked to report their preferred student-age groups and to explain why certain age groups were challenging. All of the museum educators said that they were capable of serving multiple age groups. One museum educator enjoyed working with preschool and kindergarten classes because, “They’re very uninhibited; they are very open in their response to things. And I think that they are eager for a fieldtrip experience, so they’re usually happy to be there” (female, 65–74, V). This same museum educator also explained that she enjoyed working with fourth- and fifth-graders because, “Their attention span is just longer and . . . you can keep them moving along, so that they are eager to keep looking at some additional things. You can keep more of a story going with them.” Another museum educator also enjoyed elementary school students because, “They’re just starting to really look closer, and they can understand the broader concepts and make connections outside of just themselves. So, they understand that there’s a world out there” (female, 18–24, PT). For one museum educator, the students’ ability to explore their ideas was also coupled with the perception that fifth-graders possess a newfound openness: “We always say [fifth grade] is right—before they hit puberty, and . . . I feel like they’re the most free to ask questions” (female, 18–24, PT). This openness to exploring new ideas was also mentioned by a museum educator who contrasted these students with high school students:

I like fourth- and fifth-graders, and sixth-graders right at the beginning of the year. It’s right when they are able to wrap their heads around some really big ideas, but they are not teenagers yet, and they are not too cool for school. (female, 35–44, PTF)

While some museum educators preferred elementary school students, others preferred to work with high school students. One museum educator held this as a simple personal preference—“I like working with high school [students]. I just prefer working with that age group” (female, 25–34, PTF)—while another had a more robust explanation:

I think my favorite [age group] is high school, like eleventh and twelfth grades; students [who] are on the verge of moving into their adult life. They are at a period where they have very strong opinions, but there is still so much they don't know about the world.

So, there are these great moments where things open up for them, and they see things in new ways. It's just great excitement at that age. (male, 35–44, FT)

Even museum educators who are hesitant to work with some teen groups suggested that not all teen groups are the same. If the teens have been properly prepared for the museum experience, they can be satisfying to work with: “Sometimes we get teen groups that are brought by the art teacher, and those types of groups are ones where there is a real eagerness to be at the museum, and that's not so tough” (female, 65–74, V).

The course of interviews also illuminated the challenges of working with particular age groups. For one museum educator, difficulties arose from inconsistent developmental readiness in elementary school students: “I think it's because, at that age, the children [...] can be at different levels. Some of them can still be very, very young, and some of them can be moving into more advanced developmental stages. So, that is [an] area where I sometimes struggle to figure out how to modify [my] language” (male, 35–44, FT). For some museum educators, very young visitors (preschool and kindergarten) also provided a challenge: “I'll do some family programs with, like, babies, or even kindergarteners at the beginning of the year . . . It's harder for me to figure what they need because they are not good at expressing themselves” (female,

35–44, PTF). One museum educator explained her difficulty working with middle school students:

I really don't like middle school . . . I think I don't know how to . . . empathize with them. I don't know how to relate to them because they are usually as tall as me. They are like big people . . . Maturity-wise, they're not there, so it's hard for me to sort of gauge what they know and what they don't know. (female, 18–24, PT)

Teens seemed to be challenging for one museum educator, who expressed that, “[They] often [have] a very considerable self-consciousness about speaking out or speaking up, so that I have found that [using Visual Thinking Strategies] is a struggle” (female, 65–74, V).

In response to the question of self-evaluating one's success with school groups, one museum educator expressed her ability to discern if things were going well by the students' responses: “I feel like I'm trying to drive home a point, and I keep doing it, and they are not getting it. I'm like, ‘Oh, maybe I should not be working so hard to relate that point to them’” (female, 25–34, FT). One full-time museum educator described the acts of quickly noting the students' muted responses and dynamically trying to spark their interest:

I imagine there are decisions that I am making in my teaching that I am not necessarily reflecting on that drive me to shift it in a different direction. How do I re-engage them? Or, you're hearing a response, and you realize, ‘Oh, they are not getting this, or they are getting something totally different that I didn't expect.’ How do I adjust to that? I don't know if I articulate it. It's much more in the practice of it. (male, 35–44, FT)

Generally the educators' evaluations of successful experiences were aligned to keen observations of student behavior. One museum educator noted that positive feedback took the form of activity and engagement: “They jump up and down (LAUGHS) and they can—they just—it's hard to

make them raise their hands and call on them because they are so enthusiastic about it, and they're not afraid to say what they see" (female, 65–74, V). Opposite to "jumping up and down," there can be a more quiet metric of success: "They listen to one another, they listen to some things I might say, they don't fidget . . . You can tell they're paying attention" (female, 65–74, V). One museum educator explained that these observations are connected to body language:

I think, a lot of it is looking at body language, and really observing, and recording the behavior of the students around me. If students are rolling around on the floors, and looking away from what we're looking at, chances are it is time to move to another object or transition to another activity. (male, 25–34, FT)

Experiences with teachers. Aside from engaging the students during tours, museum educators also work with the students' teachers. Some museum educators make concerted efforts to engage with teachers before tours arrive at the museum. One museum educator said, "I always talk to them before they come, to sort of get a sense of why they chose the tour that they did and what they expect," and at the institutions where she works, it is an established practice: "It's really encouraged. If there are two of us teaching, one person will talk to the teacher" (female, 25–34, FT). Many tours are arranged for the museum educators by a third party (such as a reservationist). This person provides the tour details to the museum, and it is the museum educator's responsibility to contact the teacher. One museum educator discussed that this pre-tour communication was important to the crafting of the tour experience: "I actually talk to every teacher [beforehand], if I can. Talk to them about what they are doing in the classroom, talk about what their goals for the museum visit are, and then I create a tour that supports their educational goals" (female, 35–44, PTF). Sometimes teacher engagement is an institutional norm for establishing curricular connections:

We talk to the teachers before [the tour]. At [the museum], it is really important for the institution to have everything be tied to the curriculum, and I think that, too. I feel like I am there to support the teachers in whatever they are doing, so however I can make their museum experiences really enhance what they are doing in the classroom, I feel that it's really important, all around. (female, 35–44, PTF)

In one program, museum educators are sent to schools before the tours, which provides them well-rounded views of the school's culture and environment:

We're going in and navigating their classroom and then having them come to us. But first going to them and seeing where they come from . . . and talking to them about the museum, [learning] if they'd ever been to a museum before, and just giving them a sense of who we [are] and what we [are] going to be doing here. (female, 18–24, PT)

For one museum educator, who did not mention engaging with teachers at the schools, briefly meeting with the teachers before the tours at the museum began was beneficial, and more time allotted for these meeting could further improve the tours:

I usually try to check in with a teacher quickly before a tour, to see if he/she has anything they would like me to cover. I wish I had the chance to gather more information from the teacher because I think this would allow me to use that information to mold the group's experience in a more meaningful way. (female, 18–24, PT)

During the tours, the teachers are additional participants in the experience of leading tours. One museum educator summarized the complexity of working with teachers:

In the gallery, many teachers see that as [an] opportunity to check out, and you're in charge. Others want to actually lead the tour for you, and you have to find that balance. I enjoy engaging the teachers as well and pulling them into the experience with their

students. I think it's a unique opportunity for teachers—whether they are in the art studio with the students or on the tour—for them to play different roles with their students. To be—not necessarily a peer, but to be relieved of the responsibility of being the teacher for a moment—allows them to observe their students in different ways and interact with their students in different ways. I enjoy that component, of being in the gallery with the teachers and their students. (male, 35–44, FT)

Building trust and allegiance was a common theme in my discussions with the museum educators about working with teachers. One museum educator was sympathetic toward teachers:

A lot of teachers have had their time wasted in a lot of museums and feel an incredible need to make it work. So, building that trust with the teacher, and letting them know, 'You're in good hands, I know what I'm doing,' . . . I try to make them [allies] as quickly as possible. (male, 25–34, FT).

This allegiance-building can happen at the beginning of the tour, as one museum educator explained: “When I meet the teacher for the first time, I try warmly to invite the teacher's engagement in what we're going to be doing—that's helpful” (female, 65–74, V). Including the teacher from the beginning of the museum experience is one museum educator's strategy for creating a successful tour:

I always include the teachers in the introduction and invite them into the circle with us. I think it's important that they feel like they are parts of the group as well, and I think this helps them to stay engaged and not check out. I believe teachers' reactions, responses, and body language are important indicators for the students, of how they should behave. That's why I think it's important to engage the teacher—if you get them invested, hopefully the student will be invested as well. (female, 18–24, PT)

As one museum educator mentioned, “The success [of a tour] often relates to the engagement of the classroom teacher who goes along” (female, 65–74, V). Museum educators can maintain this engagement during tours by looking at the teachers: “I actually look at them when I’m speaking to the group. I’m looking around. I always like to make eye contact and engage them because I want the adults [who] are [there] to also like it” (female, 25–34, FT).

If actively engaging the teachers is a key to the success of the tours, teachers who harshly criticize their students quickly derail the tours:

Sometimes the teachers are very critical of the kids, and I really dislike that, intensely . . .

The kid will come up with something, and the teacher will bosh it because it’s not the answer the teacher would have been looking for. And I don’t care what the answer is; I want to hear what the kid . . . thinks or speaks or feels. (female, 65–74, V)

This type of teacher behavior is antithetical to maintaining a safe and welcoming environment:

This comes to some of my own biases as an educator, but I don’t like punitive [behavior]. [Some] of my biggest struggles working with teachers [are]: working with a “screamer,” or a teacher who threatens his or her kids, or makes the space unsafe, makes it unsafe to share ideas, a teacher who will contradict students who make [observations] that [s/he disagrees] with, or who perhaps are taking the conversation off-topic. (male, 25–34, FT)

Making a safe space for all students to be able to respond to his prompts is something that this museum educator holds dear. His comments also allude to the fact that he, as well as many other museum educators, comes into contact with many teachers every day, which leads to experiencing a wide range of teacher behaviors and to moments of self-reflection and self-evaluation. This situation differs from that of many classroom teachers, who seldom have opportunities to observe other teachers at work.

Negotiating studio experiences. Many of the museum educators mentioned a studio or art-making component, in addition to the gallery experience. These experiences generally happen after or before the gallery tours, but they require museum educators to negotiate for time and resources. One museum educator summarized the logistics of such a session:

Quite a number of our tours involve a studio component and a gallery component. So, if it's a particularly large group, about 40 to 50 students, half of those students will be [brought] into the art studio first, and the other half will go up into the gallery with an educator like myself or one of our tour assistants. And then, after an hour, those two groups will switch [places]. (male, 35–44, FT)

One museum educator deemed the studio component to be valuable:

Having a dedicated studio space and a discovery room made it possible to demonstrate authentic art techniques, [to build] an appreciation for cultural diversity, which often mirrored the students' own diverse backgrounds. These programs became one of the annual 'not-to-be-missed' trips. (female, 55–64, FT)

One museum educator said the studio component was valuable for the groups, based on the difference between professionals and volunteer docents: "I think the studio component is definitely being valued as the stronger component in the visits of the people [who] are coming here. Those are being taught by paid educators who [can offer a higher quality lesson], and the expectations for the volunteer component of the tours is the one that is going to need to be reviewed" (male, 35–44, FT).

Adding a component to the museum visit complicates agenda-setting and leads to a negotiation for time:

Well, if they are late, then we have to work it out. Let's say they are 15 minutes late, and we're down to 45 minutes—maybe the studio person would give us another 5 minutes, so now we're up to 50 minutes. We just try to have as much time as possible. (female, 65–74, V)

One museum educator explained that, in her institution, the studio-art session is truncated if the gallery component runs overtime: “It's hard to do less than an hour in the galleries, and I think that, a lot of the time, it just happens and what suffers is the art project” (female, 25–34, FT).

For this particular museum educator, the quality of the studio experience is also inconsistent:

There's not a lot of time for [the] creative art process. Sometimes it happens and it works really beautifully, and you are like ‘Oh, my gosh—wow—you created this.’ But a lot of the time it's just [over] so quick, in that fifteen minutes. (female, 25–34, FT)

Experiences of method and theory. Two concepts are crucial to this study: how art museum educators have come to understand educational methods and theories and how they apply this knowledge to working with student groups in the galleries. For one volunteer museum educator, who had taught more than 20 years in the classroom, working in the galleries triggered a change of technique: “I sort of had to let go of my habit of lecturing . . . being the sole speaker . . . the questioner. I didn't even lecture that much when I was teaching, with the workshop model . . . But you can't do that [in the galleries], necessarily” (female, 65–74, V). As opposed to a lecture-based model, many museum educators employ an object-centered, inquiry-based strategy of facilitation that utilizes a student-focused approach. The method that the participants discussed the most was Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which was judged positively and negatively. As one museum educator explained:

I can't say I like VTS, and that's what I do—I didn't even know what [it] was for a long time. I feel that it's something people either really hate or really love. And I'm not really sure exactly what it is because we don't have anything related to [it], because I think our director of education really hates it. But I feel like we kind of incorporate it anyway because it's sort of starting out [with a question]—"What do you notice about this?"—and letting the issues that come up in discussion, that are related to the artwork and letting . . . the students drive the discussion. (female, 25–34, FT)

The museums prompted their educators to use Visual Thinking Strategies: "We have been repeatedly encouraged to use [VTS]. I do think that's an excellent approach, and I do try to use it to the extent that I can in my tours because I understand it to be a way of creating an interactive experience with kids" (female, 65–74, V). Visual Thinking Strategies seems to be synonymous with inquiry-based experiences in art museums, though the name and process can be confusing for some museum educators:

When I was first starting working at [a particular museum], they were really in the heart of VTC—so that's kind of like a VTC training? . . . Now it's Visual Thinking Strategies, but at the time it was Visual Thinking Curriculum—and now it seems to be more VTS. (female, 35–44, PTF)

While VTS is commonly employed, museum educators mentioned the limitations of this method:

I value the open-ended inquiry approach of VTS, but one of the things that [it does] is [it removes the educator]—you [become] a facilitator; you're not part of the conversation. [But] I feel like I am actually a part of the conversation. I am there with these people. So, [I'm] trying to not lead the conversation or dominate it, [...] still playing a facilitator

role in that way, but acknowledging that I am there. And that I may have certain information that, if dropped at the right moment, could allow some new things to blossom in the conversation. I model my approach very much on the VTS approach. But, I do value adding information at key points that will kind of allow conversations to blossom.

(male, 35–44, FT)

Another museum educator mentioned the limitations of VTS with particular artworks: “These open-ended conversations are great for contemporary art—for more abstract art—but for an object that has information attached to it, you do need a little more structure” (female, 35–44, PTF).

The major benefit of VTS for museum educators is its student-focused approach. One museum educator indicated its value:

It is student-centered; it’s object-centered. Here’s this methodology that is letting the majority of the learning come from the object itself and the student’s perception of the objects and the thoughts and ideas that they generate themselves. I was really glad that someone was creating a teaching methodology with the way I was thinking anyway.

(female, 35-44, PTF)

Another museum educator currently enrolled in an education studies program compared VTS to working with the Socratic method:

[Socrates] emphasizes that he’s not the teacher and the learner answers [his] own questions. I see a lot of that in museum work. There is a context there that we have to be aware of. It’s like VTS: you rely on the learner to keep pulling out these thoughts and experiences that they have, and that’s how they connect to the art. But then at some

point, I feel like you do want to give them a little bit of a story on the context. (female, 18–24, PT)

When discussing the benefits of this method, the museum educators always balanced their comments with questions of how to disseminate content that contextualizes particular objects. The participants all agreed that methods that promoted open-ended, inquiry-based conversations were helpful to students, but they did not necessarily align their thoughts with articulated theoretical frameworks.

I asked the museum educators what theories of education they knew about or had experienced. The major theories discussed were didactic learning (in the form of the lecture), constructivist learning experiences, the theory of multiple intelligences, differentiated instruction, and object-based learning. One museum educator explained her distaste for didactic learning:

I am not a subscriber to the cram method, of seeing how much stuff can be crammed into the minds of the people, because I don't think that people remember facts that are thrown at them. I think they remember their reactions and impressions. (female, 65–74, V)

In contrast, she preferred the work of Jerome Bruner and the theory that everyone learns at an individual ability level:

I remember being exposed to this concept—that any material could be presented to any person, of any age and circumstance, if you could just find . . . the right way of doing it. I think it was Jerome Bruner who [had that idea], and it's freeing in that . . . every person [is] potentially able to access whatever it is [that's] going on. (female, 65–74, V)

For one museum educator who received a dual degree in art and psychology, Howard Gardner's book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, was integral to her

theoretical learning: “I mean, Howard Gardner is kind of fundamental to everyone, at this point” (female, 35–44, PTF). This particular museum educator went on to receive a graduate degree in special education and felt that differentiated instruction was important to her student-centered approach:

It’s something that you have to do in a special education classroom because you are working with kids of different levels. And I think that’s why I work that way, just because that kind of intersects everything I do, at this point. (female, 35–44, PTF)

Another museum educator who completed a graduate degree in special-needs education also mentioned the use of differentiated instruction: “You have a question, then think of the questions the same way you could have asked from a higher-functioning [or] lower-functioning [student]” (female, 25–34, PTF).

One museum educator who completed a graduate degree in museum education mentioned the use of constructivist learning:

I was very interested in student-centered constructivist learning. I really had come to believe that knowledge is socially constructed. I think facts exist outside of us, but knowledge, the ability to build wisdom out of these facts . . . We do that with other people, and you do it in a lot of different ways, but one of the ways that fascinates me most is experimentation. (male, 25–34, FT)

Another museum educator, who is completing a graduate degree in museum education, is investigating object-based instruction connected to school curricula:

I am really interested in building up more curriculums, such as school curriculums, and incorporating museum education techniques. So, even if teachers can’t bring their kids to the museums, museums can send things to the schools. Teachers can learn to get

resources from museums to practice . . . looking at objects and helping kids be curious about things, instead of the traditional lecturing type of education. (female, 18–24, PT)

This participant did not explain what she meant by “museum education techniques,” but one interpretation can be derived from a consensus of the interviewees, who all placed the interaction between student, group, and object as the primary goal of their work and deemphasized the authoritarian role of the museum educator as the primary information provider.

Experiences of camaraderie and professional development. In relation to camaraderie among peers in the workplace, one volunteer museum educator mentioned that the docents feel a strong connection to the museum: “I would say that there is a deep bond of affection towards the institution among the docents” (female, 65–74, V). Her awareness of the docent community’s opinion of the museum reveals that a community has formed there. In contrast, another volunteer museum educator who identified as a docent expressed a feeling of loneliness:

I felt a little isolated . . . There were times [when] I came in and did a tour, and none of my friends were around, and as I left, I felt—it felt a little . . . like a letdown . . . not a letdown—I don’t know how to explain. I came in and did the tour and left, or if I didn’t leave then, I did research and I looked at something, but it was very—I felt isolated, sort of useless, sort of plugged-in and then let go. (female, 65–74, V)

Her statement of isolation was echoed by a full-time museum educator who wanted to have more group experiences with other team members: “I would be very curious to—to have a more regular . . . I don’t want to call it a retreat—but a proper chunk of time to struggle with a problem together” (male, 25–34, FT).

Aside from a deeper sense of community, the participants also desired more professional-development opportunities: “We don’t do a lot of professional development outside of the

museum, which is something that I've asked for" (female, 25–34, FT). And when self-funded professional-development opportunities arise, it is difficult for freelance employees to participate in them: "[The TIME institute] didn't accept me . . . because I wasn't [a full-time employee at a] museum" (female, 25–34, PTF).

The greatest request for more professional development was focused on developmental learning. One volunteer museum educator explained:

I would like to have more information on child psychological development or something like that—if art can be presented to kids [at] different ages, then what are the kinds of things that kids of this age [can do], the elementary versus the middle school versus high [school]. I don't think I have [as] good [a] sense as I could, [for] what the most challenging and appropriate things would be for those different age groups. (female, 65–74, V)

Another part-time museum educator, who was completing a graduate degree echoed this request:

I think it would be helpful to have more information and more background on child development, into what kids know and can understand at each age or developmental level . . . I started to get child development in one of my classes. I realized that there are really major differences each year . . . I think knowing that information can really inform the museum educator on how to talk to the kids—what they can possibly understand. (female, 18–24, PT)

In addition to developmental learning, the museum educators thought that incorporating knowledge of student capabilities in tour planning was necessary. This was described as “lesson planning” by one museum educator who holds a graduate degree in special-needs education; she referred to elementary school students creating art in the classroom, in conjunction with a gallery

visit:

I think lesson planning has to be part of it. I think developmental training and also educational training . . . If you know that about the art they're making, you will be more likely to choose a work of art that deals with that topic because you know that's what they're interested in. If you've never taken that, you'll have no idea. (female, 25–34, PTF)

This museum educator brings to light the differences between those who have a thorough preparation in educational studies and those who come to the work of museum education through alternative routes. When both parties are intermixed in the museum environment, tension may arise.

While *educational training* is a rather technical reference to the preparation of a museum educator, the term does suggest the struggle between content and pedagogy inherent in the work of museum education. If the learning of content about art objects is necessary for a museum educator to interpret those objects, and if this process is the priority, when and how is pedagogy or curriculum addressed or evaluated, and how is the museum educator to know where the institution places priority? As expressed in the data present in the findings, the work of a museum educator, while consistent in form, contains many variables that make preparation for art museum education complicated.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter, I will present a synthesis of the information from the survey and the personal experiences that museum educators related in the interviews. In the second section, I will examine five forms of preparation that were noted by both the survey and interview participants as instrumental to improving the experience of working with students in an art museum. And in the final section of this chapter, I will recommend areas for further study to improve the field of art museum education.

Statements of Importance

In analyzing and synthesizing the survey data and interview responses, I uncovered four meaningful statements: art museum educators are educationally and professionally experienced; art museum educators come from diverse educational and professional experiences; art museum educators must adapt to the circumstances of their working environments; when visiting museums, art museum educators prefer open-ended experiences that can promote social interaction. This type of experience is evident in the educators' enacted pedagogy with students in art museums. Exploring how art museum educators understand their experiences unveiled how they perceive and practice educational theories and methods while working with student groups and how their preparation aided or hindered their abilities.

Statement 1: Art museum educators are educationally and professionally experienced. While no part of this study examined negative perceptions about art museum educators, I return to a comment that one full-time museum educator professed about the perception of education within her institution: "I don't think that other departments understand exactly what education does. I feel like—to be honest—I feel like curators kind of think, 'Oh, they are just education,' you know?" This perception—of other museum departments not

knowing the daily activities of the education department—illuminates the general lack of understanding of the professional credentials and experiences that are necessary to facilitate successful student engagement in art museums. The credentials of other professions within the art museum might be easier to comprehend. For example, one could imagine that to be a curator, a PhD in a specialized art historical field might be required. But this assumed possession of academic prowess or lengthy professional experience does not necessarily accompany the general perception of educators who work in art museums. Furthermore, other fields within a museum may also require specialized certifications (e.g. finance, collections management, facilities management). While there exist degrees and certificates in museum education or museum studies, these are not nationally required for museum educators. Further enhancing the confusion is survey data that say many museum educators participated in art historical coursework versus that of education. This fact could contribute to a negative perception of museum educators from schoolteachers, who have established degrees and certificates for teaching and who participate in museum educator programs.

Utilizing the demographic data from the survey of 123 art museum educators, I defined the two largest age groups as 25–34 (51.2%) and 35–54 (28.4%). In the entire pool of participants (of which 61.8% were full-time employees), 74% had completed a graduate degree. Of this group, 67% reported working in the field of education for more than 6 years, while 52% responded that they had been working in the field of museum education for 3 to 5 years.

While the study did not provide information about the racial or economic profiles of the participants, the survey's broad dissemination and large number of responses do offer a general insight into the educational and professional background of the persons performing educational services for students in art museums. The data creates a snapshot of an early- to middle-age

adult who has a graduate degree in a particular field and has had a longer experience in the field of education than museum education. While the phrase “work in education” was not defined for within the study, the responses from the qualitative inquiry with the interview participants provide a glimpse of what types of educational environments museum educators may have experienced prior to working in art museums. They may have completed school internships within formal teacher-preparation programs, been placed in schools as teachers after completing teacher-preparation programs, or—as was the case for one volunteer docent who entered the field of art museum education after retiring from a 20-year career—been teachers in formal school settings. In the accounts provided by the educators who chose to leave the school system (but not the field of education) for the art museum, they looked upon the school system as a rigid environment that did not accommodate flexible, progressive pedagogies or arts education. Statements from the interview participants—such as: “There was this talk about progressive education in the school, but all I saw was rote learning, book learning, regimentation”; “Everything is so institutionalized. And this effects the children; they get very tense and aggressive, and are like rats in a cage”; “Art was an afterthought—and that’s something that’s really important to me”—confirmed a perception that many art museum educators were dissatisfied with the school system but not the theory or mission of education.

This is not to deduce that everyone who enters the field of museum education is a disgruntled teacher fleeing the traditional school system. Many teachers leave the school system on their own for various reasons. In a 2004 staff report of the New York City Council Investigation on Teacher Attrition and Retention, teachers discussed salary and safety concerns as reasons for wanting to leave the field (Council of the City of New York, 2004). This study separated teachers into three career categories: new teachers (1–5 years of experience), mid-

career teachers (6–24 years of experience), and eligible retirees (more than 25 years of experience). Of the museum educators who responded to my survey, 67% had more than 6 years of museum experience, qualifying them as mid-career teachers, following the 2004 report's categories of professional experience. As the interviews revealed, museum education was also a second career for those who worked in an art or school profession.

Statement 2: Art museum educators come from diverse educational and professional backgrounds and experiences. There is no one academic track that produces an art museum educator. As seen in Table 5, my survey of 123 art museum educators identified multiple areas of study as contributing to the base of knowledge used in the field of art museum education. While the highest number of respondents completed coursework relating to art history and education (87.8% and 77.4%, respectively), many participants mentioned coursework in design, theory, philosophy, religion, and anthropology, and other respondents cited the fields of theater, history, and museum studies. The type of coursework that is valuable to a museum educator may relate to the type of collection in a given museum. Not all museums are the same, so there is no one superior academic system for educator preparation regarding content or pedagogy. In relation to pedagogy, participants noted the helpful roles of internships and institutional preparation programs that offered diverse interactions with students and opportunities to practice in low-risk, fixed environments, as well as ongoing professional development connected to particular museum collections and institution-tested pedagogies.

In the qualitative study, participants considered internships a valuable resource. Of the 10 participants, 6 had some form of internship in museum education. While these experiences varied, they offered the participants insights into the field and practice working with students and colleagues that later remained valuable. For 3 participants, the internships led to further

employment or more robust responsibilities. Many of these internships were available for graduate-level students. For those who prepared to enter the field of art history, museum education was an alternative to a life in academia, which some perceived as a difficult career path with few available positions and unfriendly working environments. Internships are also encouraged by the current trend in teacher certification programs of requiring observation and student teaching, though the number of required intern hours and responsibilities in museums varies by institution.

From examining the qualitative data, I found two general kinds of preparation programs facilitated by institutions: those for volunteer museum educators coming to the field from another career, and programs for undergraduate or graduate students requiring numerous hours of in-museum service. In both kinds of programs, the preparation covered art historical and contextual information deemed important by the institutional organizers to interpret the collection as well as pedagogical strategies for working with multiple audiences. Within a training group, content and pedagogy are simultaneously practiced in mock tours and then implemented in actual ones, followed by evaluation (generally the training leader gives feedback to the trainee). However, one volunteer museum educator exclaimed that, after the tour-training process was over, she was not formally evaluated again. While these types of preparation programs are present in museums across the country, there is no current national standard for quality or maintenance of such programs.

Some full-time and part-time museum educators reported that institutions did not require consistent levels of preparation from new employees. The interview participants noted that they were assumed to possess skills and were “dropped-in” to the system with little evaluation. Their professional preparation consisted of observing current strategies and then immediately

implementing them, based on the assumed transferability of museum educator skills. This dubious assumption may have been assuaged with the promise of standard institutional training for museum educators on a weekly or monthly basis. Of the 117 respondents to the question of time dedicated to professional development within their host institutions, the majority of full-time museum educators had 3 to 5 hours of professional development per month (see Table 7), and the majority of the respondents reported that content training sessions were offered at their institutions (see Table 8). Pedagogy, educational theory, methodology, art-making, and administrative training were other topics of training sessions that were offered by particular institutions.

None of the interview participants mentioned the presence of an institutional strategy for developing both content knowledge and pedagogical skill. Many agreed that one hour of tour preparation per week is not sufficient, so this raises the question of when that preparation occurs. As one museum educator recounted: “I was asked to lead on my second week of work. Luckily, I’m a person who likes that kind of thing . . . I picked three objects, and I researched them, and I would not deviate from those three objects, but other than that I felt very confident.” The tour preparation can occur after museum hours or during regularly scheduled preparatory time. For example, at the Rubin Museum of Art, full-time museum educators, known as museum guides, are allowed 1 hour of preparatory time per day (5 hours per week) and part-time museum educators are allowed 2.5 hours per week (usually within a shift of 20 hours per week). This time is for individual research outside of one hour of group preparation per week. While this time may include learning and tasks associated with any full- or part-time job, it is not necessarily perceived as time for professional development, nor does it occur on a regular

schedule due to the demands of scheduled tours. The professional life of an art museum educator seems to be filled with many variables.

Statement 3: Art museum educators must adapt to the circumstances of their working environments. The participants of this study identified a major difference between the work of a classroom teacher in a standard school environment and an educator in a museum environment: a classroom teacher usually works with a fixed age group for a long period of time in the same location whereas a museum educator, who facilitates learning experiences for students, may work with a wide range of ages for short amounts of time in various locations, including multiple museums and schools. A museum educator must always be aware of three variables: differences of age and cognitive capacities in groups, differences of gallery experiences with changing art exhibitions, and negotiating shared spaces and activities among multiple school tours. Table 10 indicated that the majority of the survey participants worked with elementary, middle, and high school students, while a large minority also facilitated university- and preschool-level tours. Combining these experiences, one sees that museum educators work with students who are 2 years of age and older, and mainly with those of ages 6 through 17. In the survey, museum educators indicated the highest comfort level with students in elementary school (ages 6–10). A larger percentage of museum educators (87%, $n = 78$) indicated the presence of content preparation at their institutions, and a smaller percentage (53.8%, $n = 49$) reported the presence of pedagogical training. It seems that institutions emphasize content training over age-appropriate strategies for working with students and art.

With regard to the diversity of museum experiences, many of the interview participants outlined a common structure of a student tour: an orientation into the galleries; facilitated, student-centered experiences with three to five works of art; and a conclusion or transition out of

the galleries. Many of the interview participants also mentioned facilitating an art-making or studio experience that was in conjunction to the gallery experience. When multiple tour groups are in the same space at the same time, and each group has a different agenda, museum educators must possess logistical flexibility.

While the interviews produced diverse responses about the museum educators' degrees of comfort with certain student ages (most had preferences or misgivings for students of ages 5 through 17), the common request was for more training about developmental learning. Statements such as, "I would like to have more information on child psychological development," were repeated by volunteers, freelance part-time educators, and permanent part-time educators. One museum educator who was completing a graduate degree in museum education explained the importance of this knowledge: "I started to get child development in one of my classes . . . I realized that there are really major differences each year . . . I think knowing that information can really inform the museum educator on how to talk to the kids—[knowing] what they can possibly understand." In relation to working with elementary to high school students, no interviewee wanted to have more training in content, though this was a concern for some survey participants who were hesitant about working with university-level and adult groups in galleries.

Utilizing flexible, student-centered or sociocultural approaches to the facilitation of gallery experiences may also be necessary to make students feel welcomed in unfamiliar spaces and to help to navigate congested situations in the galleries. Though the interaction of a museum educator and a student group is usually one hour in length, a fair amount of this time is spent in orientations and transitions within the museum. During the orientation, the museum educator announces the tour agenda and duration and institutional rules to the group and, as one museum

educator said, “takes care of business”—stowing hats, coats, and belongings, as well as dividing large groups into smaller ones. The tour concludes with the students’ reflections on their experiences, which serves as a transition out of the museum. The interview data revealed that, within a one-hour tour, approximately fifteen minutes were devoted to this transition, which left museum educators with about forty-five minutes to work in the galleries.

Regarding the time spent in the galleries, the interviewees prioritized the students looking at art versus listening to what the museum educator has to say about the art. While it is assumed that looking at art is what one does in a museum, the emphasis that the educators placed on the strategy of quiet looking revealed that this is an integral part of the tour experience. Much of this looking is done in silence and is used to both calm the students and encourage observations that might not result from a casual glance. As noted in the interviews, museum educators cannot reserve artworks for their tours and often contend with more than one group navigating the same space. Since deep-looking exercises can be performed with multiple types of artworks, they offer a flexible strategy for a variety of tour paths. In these exercises, museum educators ask open-ended questions following a period of observation—questions without specific answers, such as those utilized in the Visual Thinking Strategies method: “What do you notice about this painting?” or “What’s going on in this picture?” These kinds of questions allow students to respond from their individual understanding of the questions. The museum educators said that, through the act of careful listening, they are facilitators of a larger experience, one that happened individually with a student or within the context of the class curriculum. This flexible approach allows museum educators to adapt tour routes to accommodate the varying availability of artworks and to meet the needs of students, teachers, and class curricula.

While there was no consensus among the museum educators about the easiest or most difficult age group, they said that each age group provided its own challenges to tour facilitation. The success of a tour can be inferred by the presence or absence of verbal responses or physical movements: squirming or lethargy suggests disinterest, and excited gestures suggest interest. When the students' verbal or physical responses are listless, museum educators change their strategies to re-establish a connection with the students. This flexibility of method illustrates that dynamic alterations to a prescribed tour strategy may take place based on individual or group needs; however, museum educators must also satisfy the needs of the teachers who accompany all groups.

Interacting with a wide range of teachers requires educators to be adaptable. The interviewees regarded teachers as allies, combatants, hindrances, and inactive presences during tours. Museum educators demonstrated flexibility through paying special attention to curriculum needs while interacting with teachers before the museum visits or before the tours and while conducting the tours, by listening to teachers' responses. The educators felt that placing teacher or curriculum needs before the goals of an exhibition or museum creates the best experience for the students, but it complicates their tasks of contextualizing various works of art. Museum educators are often responsible for delivering content about the artworks—such as artist, medium, historical context, and the role of the artwork in an exhibition—in the context of a non-museum, school-based curriculum that is unfamiliar to the educators. The educators' remarks on their personal experiences of art and museum visits also revealed a struggle between content delivery and pedagogical strategy.

Statement 4: When visiting museums, art museum educators prefer open-ended experiences that can promote social interaction. This type of experience is evident in their enacted pedagogy when working with students in art museums. Turning to the Interactive Experience Model that Falk and Dierking (1997) provide to examine how museum visitors' personal, social, and physical contexts contribute to the interactive experience within the museum, the interview participants expressed statements about how they interact and experience museums that fit within each of the three categories. Falk and Dierking propose three spheres, of personal, social, and environmental interaction, that intersect to compose the total museum experience (Falk & Dierking, 1997, pp. 1–7). Regarding personal interactions, when looking at works of art as individual viewers, the interview participants reported using their learned museum educator methods to examine works of art and to value the art experience first viscerally and then contextually, either through their own knowledge of art history or through using gallery resources such as wall texts or tours. Generally museum educators wanted to contextualize artworks utilizing their own thoughts and personal experiences, and then turn to an institutional resource if they needed further explanation. Some educators felt that a negative museum experience results from their perception of an imposing institutional voice or authority, as it crowds out one's personal agency of experiencing a work of art or an exhibition.

The participants felt that environmental interactions are important components in assessing a museum experience. Galleries that are crowded with people or text or art on the walls were not considered favorable, though some participants considered the presence of text to be helpful. With regard to social interaction, many participants prefer to explore museums with a small group of friends so that they can share their ideas or to use the museum and its contents to frame social experiences. While navigating the museum in a small group induces social

interaction, being led by a tour guide does not, and the educators noted that they rarely encountered inquiry-based, facilitated experiences for adults in museums. The one exception was the mention of tours facilitated by Rika Burnham (either at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Frick Collection), whose tours are considered to be facilitated dialogues for adult audiences.

Once a person has become a museum educator, it seems their museum-visiting experience changes, reflecting the dialectical visitor/educator relationship. The museum educators reported ongoing comparisons of their own visiting experiences to the experiences that they facilitate for others. Some educators visit other museums to try out family guides or guided tours and to learn how other museums construct student tour experiences.

While working with students in the galleries, the interview participants generally favor utilizing a sociocultural framework for combining multiple methods infused with object-based learning, constructivist theories, and curriculum-based instruction. As Ebitz (2007) indicated with the phrase “transacting theory,” museum educators must use multiple theories because they are working with such a diverse range of students who have individual and group (i.e., school) needs. A radical constructivist approach may work with a particular group of students, utilizing the open-ended inquiry method of Visual Thinking Strategies, but that may not work for a classroom teacher’s curriculum objectives or with the art presently on display. Likewise, based on student interest and agenda, a group may lead an art museum educator to an artwork that is unfamiliar but can be interpreted utilizing methods of open-ended inquiry.

When discussing what types of theories and methods were known and integral to the act of museum education, the participants reported knowledge of multiple theories, including didactic learning (i.e., lecture), constructivism, inquiry-based learning, object-based learning, and

differentiated instruction, and they preferred theories that espoused a student-centered approach such as differentiated instruction or constructivism. Those educators who had been academically prepared with graduate degrees in education were able to articulate their understanding of theory to a greater extent than those who had moved into museum education from an art historical background. While the educators commonly intermingled constructivist theory with differentiated instruction, they overwhelmingly perceived that they are responsible to help students derive meaning from art objects. For the museum educators, the art object seems to be the catalyst for meaning; however, the meaning or importance must come from the student, not from the educator dictating why a student should think that an object is important.

The methods employed by the educators to help students create meaning varied but generally followed inquiry-based instruction with open-ended questions about objects and the delivery of object-specific information. No museum educators were able to verbalize a method that was used for every opportunity, but many educators mentioned the initial questions posed by the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) method—“What is going on in this picture?” and “What about that picture made you say that?”—as starting points for inquiry-based work. For museum educators, the difficulty in utilizing a pure VTS method is that it does not allow a facilitator to introduce facts about the artwork into the conversation. The focus of the method is the development of critical-thinking skills, not structured, object-based learning; this seemed to inhibit some museum educators who participated in the interviews. As one museum educator explained: “I model my approach very much on the VTS approach. But I do value adding information at key points that will kind of allow conversations to blossom.” This adding of information appears to be negotiated along an axiology of a museum educator’s personal theory of learning or given circumstances. For museum educators who prefer a student-centered

theoretical framework, the question of how they navigate their own preferences in relation to curriculum, museum, and environmental needs was left unanswered.

Alternative and Academic Professional Development: Exemplary Examples

The museum educators described how and under what conditions they became educators in their museums, and they expressed common types of formative experiences to understanding theory, method, and practice, as related to institutes, internships, and academic preparation. For the interview participants, four programs of institutes and internships and one academic program (Bank Street Graduate School) were impressive experiences. These programs have been selected for their noted contributions to positive museum educator experience with students (and with the general public) in museums.

In the survey, museum educators could respond to a list of “alternative education coursework in relation to work with visitors in art museums” in regard to participation and quality (see Table 6). From this list, two types of alternative preparation were notable: Visual Thinking Strategies received the highest rating for attendance (82%, $n = 97$) and the Teaching Institute in Museum Education had the highest rating for quality (3.71 rating average, 4 being the highest). The respondents indicated varying participation in the other coursework listed, including: Lincoln Center Aesthetic Education, American Association of Museums Conference, American Education Research Association Conference, AAM Education Committee Professional Development, NYC Museum Educators Roundtable Conference, Face to Face Conference, and the Empire State Partnership Summer Seminar. Many interview participants mentioned Visual Thinking Strategies training seminars, and two interviewees had participated in the Teaching Institute in Museum Education.

The Teaching Institute in Museum Education (TIME) is a one-week intensive program held at the Art Institute of Chicago, in coordination with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is facilitated by Rika Burnham (the head of education for the Frick Collection) and Elliott Kai-Kee (an education specialist in gallery teaching at the J. Paul Getty Museum). This application-based program accepts 15 museum educators per year for a summer institute. The institute “proposes that a dialogical model of gallery teaching provides unrivaled opportunities for people to see deeply and to think together about works of art. TIME embodies the belief that good gallery teaching helps visitors to find uniquely valuable pathways to the experience and understanding of a museum's collections and special exhibitions” (School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2012). Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) propose that “temporary communities” are formed in museum galleries and that “dialogue allows people to talk and think together about art” (p. 87). Utilizing a model developed by William Isaacs, Burnham and Kai-Kee categorize individuals in a tour group as “movers, followers, bystanders and opposers,” each having specific roles in conversation. In understanding and addressing the different roles visitors may play in a gallery conversation, museum educators can use this method as an evaluative tool (Burnham & Kai-Kee, pp. 87–89).

TIME is unique for its intensive nature, allowing museum educators a full week to experiment with their own practices of gallery teaching, and the program is free for accepted students, including housing. This in-depth seminar goes beyond a short workshop or isolated conference sessions and utilizes a cohort model that challenges a group to experience and question their practices together. As one museum educator mentioned: “I would be very curious to [learn from]—I don’t want to call it a retreat—but a proper chunk of time to struggle with a

problem together.” This lengthy experience allows room for museum educators to explore their individual practices in a collegial environment, alleviating isolation and creating a community.

According to the survey, the most frequently noted non-institution-sponsored preparation program that museum educators attended was Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Visual Thinking Strategies is a “student-centered school curriculum and teaching method,” that has been incorporated into gallery teaching and tour experiences (Visual Thinking Strategies, 2012). VTS offers a variety of workshops and institutes, and these are conducted in locations across the country. Workshops may happen at museums or at training centers, and participants can choose from formats that reflect progressive experience, including 2-day VTS practicums, 4-day institutes for school trainers, and lead-teacher institutes (2- and 4-day seminars). In addition, there are VTS research institutes that offer data analysis from audio- and videotaped transcripts of student/facilitator experiences. VTS seminars offer educators in-depth time to study and practice a particular student-centered method as well as provide rigor through supported and structured preparation and evaluation experiences.

Visual Thinking Strategies also creates a community of practice for a particular method that is shared by traditional schoolteachers and museum educators, and it could be compared to the Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) professional development seminars, in which both types of educators also participate. Some survey respondents mentioned LCI seminars as useful to the work of art museum education, but LCI received a lower participation percentage than VTS.

Through the interviews, two internship models emerged as paths to becoming a museum educator. Internships in the Learning Through Art program at the Guggenheim Museum as well as the Apprentice Museum Educator program at the Rubin Museum of Art proved to be valuable

for participants not only in learning pedagogical strategies and theories but also in gaining valuable experience with students both in classrooms and in the museum.

Learning Through Art (LTA) at the Guggenheim Museum is a program in which teaching artists solicited by the museum engage in classroom partnerships throughout New York City in 10- to 20-week arts residency programs (Guggenheim Museum, 2012). These programs integrate the arts into the curriculum of a school, and interns may assist the teaching artists in the classrooms and at the museum. One museum educator in my study found a listing for an LTA internship through a college-employment list serve, and it provided the necessary bridge between her academic training and a burgeoning interest in museum work. This type of internship was never mentioned during her coursework in art history. After experiencing the internship, where she had exposure to classroom residencies and worked with teaching artists, she was hired as a museum education administrator for a different institution. Another museum educator, who had gone through a tour-training program at the Guggenheim, participated in the LTA program to satisfy a required internship for his graduate degree. This museum educator stated, “I could jump right in and start leading tours immediately. So I was leading about two or three school tours a week at the Guggenheim.” This opportunity gave the educator valuable hours of hands-on training through supervision, which later proved useful when he was hired elsewhere as a full-time museum educator and was asked to lead a school tour with little preparation. The exposure to hands-on experiences with students through the Learning Through Art program aided in the transfer of his abilities from one environment to another.

The Apprentice Museum Educator (AME) program at the Rubin Museum of Art was established in 2009 as a paid internship program for undergraduate students interested in the field of museum education. The program’s founders sought to reconcile the difficulties that student

employees faced when trying to balance school and pertinent work experience. At the time, the Rubin Museum had been employing undergraduate students both for a variety of paid positions (such as working at the admissions desk, the coat check, the gift shop, and as museum guides) and for unpaid internships within the education department. Given the students' school commitments and availability, the museum found it difficult to ensure that all undergraduate employees were receiving quality preparation. The AME program was initiated and incorporated with Youth Development initiatives in the museum. Each school year, four students are selected to participate in 15 to 17 hours of work and study. The program is application-based, and students from various colleges in New York City have participated (including Hunter College, City College of New York, Eugene Lang College, Parsons School of Design, New York University, Barnard College, and Columbia University). As the Rubin Museum focuses on religious works from Himalayan Asia, the applicant pool has varied, from those in art history and studio programs to those in religious and cultural studies and educational studies. Students are required to have 2 hours of professional development per week, 1 hour of independent study (which generally is composed of independent reading), and 12 hours of direct services (either giving school tours or assisting with educational programming, including K–12, in-school programs, or afterschool programming). In addition to working directly with the education staff that facilitates audience-specific student services, the apprentices work with the visitor experience department, facilitating admissions services and adult tours in special internships during the winter breaks and the summer. The program provides an hourly stipend for both service and preparation.

Two interviewees participated in the Apprentice Museum Educator program after they had taken unpaid volunteer positions in the institution, and the program later led to paid part-time

positions within the museum. The benefit of the AME program to the institutional longevity of undergraduate workers is unique in that it prepares them in both school and visitor experiences, offering multiple career paths for the art museum educators. Each apprentice participates in more than 400 hours of direct student service in the education department as well as 100 hours of service with the visitor experience department, all the while learning about the range of employment experiences in the museum.

Many of the interview participants noted the Bank Street Graduate School as an important academic program for refining their work in art museum education. Of the 10 participants, two full-time museum educators had graduated from the Bank Street program, one part-time museum educator was completing the program within the year of this study, and one full-time museum educator had completed a dual undergraduate enrollment program facilitated between the Pratt Institute and Bank Street College. According to Bank Street: “The Museum Education programs prepare graduate students for two professional roles: that of a museum educator knowledgeable about children and schools, and/or that of a classroom teacher skilled in integrating museums and museum teaching methods into the classroom” (Bank Street Graduate School, 2012). There are three programs in Museum Education at Bank Street: Museum Education: Childhood, which offers participants the opportunity to be both a museum educator and a school teacher who utilizes museum techniques; Museum Education (Non-Certification), designed for participants who want to deepen the practice of museum education; and Leadership in Museum Education, which prepares future administrators and educators for work in museums. In this study, the museum educators associated with the Bank Street program were able to articulate their understanding of student-centered constructivist learning and the necessary ties to school curriculum to make the museum experiences relevant to groups either before or after their

museum trip. The graduate program with teaching certification also provides a required internship (300 hours) for museum educators to work in a museum for a full semester (in addition to required school placement for certification), which provides a holistic experience for educators to have hands-on experience in both areas.

Recommendations

The facilitators of educational experiences in art museums generally have either art history backgrounds or education backgrounds. Rarely is there an academic program that introduces the museum education field to both constituent groups, which requires those in the field to complete multiple degrees or programs in order to accomplish a robust and thorough learning experience that balances content and pedagogy. Lee Schulman (1986) explains that there are multiple experiences of knowledge that an educator should navigate: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curriculum knowledge (p. 9). These knowledge strands differentiate what an educator knows and how that educator makes sense of content, how an educator picks and solicits what types of essential information useful to transmitting a base of knowledge to learners, and how best to create an arc of experience for learners that develops over time. Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992) further push Schulman's multiple strands of educator knowledge to include "craft knowledge" as a blending of "pedagogical content knowledge and pedagogical learner knowledge derived from considered experience in the practice setting" (p. 387). After considering how museum educators formulate their understandings of theory and methodology as enacted with student groups in art museums, I posit the following recommendations to encourage the craft-knowledge process and overcome the current limitations of academic preparation, institutional preparation and professional development, and alternative professional development. Not one of the preparation programs

discussed in this study holistically develops art museum educators or arms individuals with the strategies to self-educate with an eye towards the field until a person is already established in the profession at a particular institution.

Recommendation 1: University art history programs must include or create curriculums in museum education as additional strands that focus on theories of sociocultural learning, appropriate student-centered methodologies, curriculum connections, and hands-on tour experience (e.g., internships). This recommendation is based on interview data that careers in art museum education were not presented to candidates in art history programs, who have deep content knowledge. Though individual content knowledge is demonstrated by completion of a standard degree in art history, there are no explicit routes to determining pedagogical content knowledge (aside from brief workshops offered at particular universities, which discuss teaching for the college classroom) or learner knowledge. For one museum educator who completed an advanced degree in art history but had no theoretical or methodological preparation aside from an internship or in-museum preparation, evaluating student response was a perplexing scenario: “I feel like I’m trying to drive home a point, and I keep doing it, and they are not getting it. I’m like, ‘Oh, maybe I should not be working so hard to relate that point to them.’” While the educator knows that something is amiss, she is unable to verbalize why students might not be engaged.

Supervised internship components would introduce art history students to important ideas—developing content, pedagogical, and curriculum knowledge in changing museum environments, and diverging from content-specific knowledge gained from a focused study in art history—while developing their craft knowledge in a low-risk teaching and learning environment in one place. The number of required internship hours in education should be standardized

among institutions of higher learning; the current discrepancy prevents the uniform assessment of internships in out-of-school environments. For example, for-credit internships at the undergraduate and graduate level require 60 hours per semester within the City University of New York system whereas certain programs at the New School, New York University, and Bank Street College require 300 hours of internship experience to qualify for credit.

Recommendation 2: Formal art education programs must include or create curriculums in museum education that include museum studies, object-based learning, and hands-on tour experiences. As I discussed with my first recommendation, academic programs do not currently address skill gaps for individuals seeking art museum education careers. While art education programs prepare students in curriculum knowledge and pedagogical learner knowledge, these students lack content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge that hinders them from progressing into careers in art museum education.

One route into museum education for art educators is through the alternative positions of teaching artists or studio educators, whose experience with students is more process-based. As the qualitative data shows, many educators who work in museums have to negotiate studio experiences for students. For one museum educator who received a dual degree in studio art and art education, working as a studio educator in a museum inspired him to explore new possibilities: “In many ways, once I got [to the art museum], my eyes opened and I found a career path.” The studio or classroom is also not a gallery and developing hands-on experience with learners through internship programs or parallel work can strengthen the ability of art educators to create learner-centered museum experiences that connect to curriculum or content.

Recommendation 3: Museum-provided or internal preparation and professional development must include increased and equal focus on developmental learning, pedagogical

content knowledge, and curriculum connections. In the survey, many museum educators ($n = 78$) indicated that content training was offered at their institution but fewer ($n = 49$) indicated the presence of pedagogy training. The ongoing development of content knowledge is important to the art museum educator when exhibited artworks are constantly changing; however, little was said from the interview participants about how that content should be presented for various age levels. From the findings, museum educators seemed hungry for more information about developmental learning, perhaps because this type of information was never presented during their academic preparation. By stressing pedagogical content knowledge and curricular connections, art museum educators currently in service can create stronger connections between learners and the museum.

Furthermore, I propose that the term *training* be reconsidered for the type of preparation and professional development that museum educators receive from their employers. While *training* is used by many internal programs, it is inconsistent with current practices of professional development for educators and is a pejorative term, creating an unequal relationship between museum educators and other arts professionals who work in the museum. Does one train on art as on a machine? Even more perplexing is that, in many museums, education departments offer “professional development” to schoolteachers but “trainings” for their own staff members. Appropriate terminology should be used so that the act of professional learning is not cast as a curator training an art museum educator on a work of art. A curator shares knowledge through a lecture (or, one would hope, a learner-centered method), not through manual programming.

Recommendation 4: Informal museum-education pedagogical-preparation services such as Visual Thinking Strategies and the Teaching Institute in Museum Education (TIME) must

broaden their outreach efforts, and museums should make more of an effort to send educators to these types of programs. These alternative professional-development programs are important because they offer intense experiences for art museum educators that broaden their pedagogical content knowledge in variable settings and their craft knowledge with reflection and practice within a professional community. While each program produces publications, online resources could be developed to access a larger audience. Working in-person or virtually within a community of practice outside of the museum provides a rich personal learning experience.

As discussed with the example of TIME, one of the major benefits of the week-long immersion program is that it offers a group of museum educators the opportunity to grapple with new strategies or to revisit their practices with community feedback. While TIME is a free program, the cost of the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) institutes—shorter sessions range from \$300 to \$800 throughout the country—may be out of reach for some museum educators. As noted by the interviewees, VTS was brought into a number of museums to instruct large groups of educators in-house, but these experiences fell short of expectations or were obscured within larger schedules of professional development sessions. To sustain the practice of museum educators, institutions must consider and provide time and funding for the educators' professional development outside the confines of the museum.

Recommendation 5: There must be more collaboration between national committees of art museums, academic institutions specializing in art history or art education, and alternative professional development programs to establish guiding principles of curriculums for successful art museum educator preparation. The Standing Professional Education Committee of the American Association of Museums (2005) established museum education principles and standards for both institutions and individual museum educators. These principles and standards

are stratified to cover issues of accessibility, accountability, and advocacy. Under the topic of accountability, the Education Committee requires excellence in content and methodology:

Museum educators have a solid grounding in the history, theory, and practice of the disciplines relevant to their institutions. They demonstrate knowledge of human development, educational theories, and teaching practices related to the personal and group learning that takes place in museums. (p. 11)

Unfortunately, the Committee does not strategize a system for achieving these goals or even suggest a list of best practices. The American Association of Museums does offer a definition of best practices gleaned from the American Productivity and Quality Center, which identifies the difficulty of trying to standardize a curriculum that suits all museum needs:

There is no single “best practice” because one “best” is not best for everyone. Every organization is different in some way—different missions, cultures, environments, and technologies. What is meant by “best” are those practices that have been shown to produce superior results; selected by a systemic process; and judged as exemplary, good, or successfully demonstrated. Best practices are then adapted to fit a particular organization. (American Association of Museums, 2005, p. 12)

Perhaps museums are victims of their individualities and cannot develop a best practice curriculum for all museum educators. But I contest that the same issues of mission, culture, environment, and technologies are inherent in the standardized school system, yet common standards exist for certification at state levels.

In 2012 the National Arts Education Association (NAEA) adopted the Position Statement on Excellence in Art Museum Teaching that offers further suggestions but no requirements, stating generally: “Excellent museum educators help people see and understand the world in

diverse ways and provide them with knowledge and skills to face an ever-changing future” (p.

1). To achieve this level of excellence, art museum educators should have:

Deep knowledge of individual works of art and their makers; knowledge of aesthetics, art history, art practice, art criticism, and other disciplines as they relate to works of art; knowledge and application of education history, theory, and research relevant to museum learning and the needs and characteristics of learners and museum audiences including pre-K–16, families, and adults; [and] professional development and ongoing learning to enhance their effectiveness as art museum educators. (p. 1)

The Position Statement outlines a broad range of skills required of an art museum educator, but it does not outline a strategy for acquiring these skills or a system for museums to evaluate the credentials of art museum educators. While I am not in the position to determine if a national certification process should be required in the field of art museum education, I do believe that an institution with national reach (such as the American Association of Museums or the National Arts Education Association) should begin to outline a process for preparation that could be accepted by museums.

While complex bureaucracies exist within national committees of art museums, academies specializing in art history or art education, and alternative professional development programs, it is evident that art museum educators care about their work and are interested in advancing their practice as professional, educated individuals. Collaboration is never easy, but there are examples in which the above three types of institutions were able to jointly offer development experiences and strengthen theoretical understanding and methodological practice. For example, an initiative to strengthen pedagogical skill for art museum educators with adult immigrant learners and their families titled Culture and Literacies Through Art for the 21st

Century (CALTA21), is being funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences and includes three museum partners (El Museo del Bario, Suffolk County Museum, and the Rubin Museum of Art), two community college partners (Queensborough Community College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College), and Visual Thinking Strategies. Also, collaboration between academic and museum institutions is the proposed goal of a museum education strand within the art history department of Brooklyn College that partners museums (Jewish Museum, Brooklyn Historical Society, and the Rubin Museum of Art) and college students to introduce and explore careers in art museum education.

Areas for Further Research

While this study explores and examines how art museum educators experience their work with students in relation to learned theories and methods, there remain many areas for further study. At the heart of my research were the personal perceptions of art museum educators about their professional preparation and their daily experiences. Throughout the course of the interviews, museum educators illuminated issues of agency and authority and questioned the perceptions of museum educators held by other art museum professionals. I return once more to the statement one museum educator made, about the perceptions of educational staff: “I don’t think that other departments understand exactly what education does. I feel like—to be honest—I feel like curators kind of think, ‘Oh, they are just education.’ You know?” What are the actual perceptions of art museum educators among other staff, and how are those positive or negative perceptions expressed through language, salary, benefits, or disciplinary action? Furthermore, how do classroom teachers perceive the work of museum educators in relation to student learners? What positive or negative perceptions exist about the interrelation of art museum

educators and students by classroom teachers and chaperones, and how do these perceptions affect the overall arts environment for students?

While both the survey and the qualitative study revealed information about the age, education, and professional histories of the participating museum educators, the demographic analysis fell short of indicating information about gender and ethnicity. Further analysis on the ethnicity and gender of museum educators would inform comparisons of educator preparation at the national level.

In relation to professional preparation and development, another area for further study is if and where alternative sources for art museum educators exist—ones not related to internal institutional preparation, academic preparation, and museum-specific independent preparation. Does the Internet have a role in the professional preparation of art museum educators? Can an online preparation program satisfy content knowledge acquisition or developmental learning strategies? How do the roles of internships and hands-on learning interact with the Web environment?

The diversity of art museums provides an inherent challenge to determining what kinds of theories and methods are needed to create successful education experiences. As each museum is reliant on the content within its collection, the balance of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, and craft knowledge should be studied within typologies of museums. With regard to craft knowledge, how many hands-on training hours with students should art museum educators complete before being considered skilled? As art museums have different kinds of objects within them, how transferable is the skill of tour facilitation from one institution to the next? Does completing the tour training at the Guggenheim Museum, which is rich with abstract works of art, transfer to successfully working with sacred Himalayan art

objects at the Rubin Museum? Or does learner knowledge trump content knowledge during short, one-hour tours? To address these questions, another line of research into the transferability of art museum educator skill could enhance the overall outcomes of preparation programs.

Conclusion

In early 2012, I was invited to participate in a Smithsonian symposium on the service role of museums to early learning. The museum that employs me is considered a Smithsonian Affiliate, a partner in a program that includes museums across the country. My role was to represent the perspectives of both Affiliates and art museums as we discussed the challenges of how to address the needs of early learners and their families. Of the participants, which included multiple representatives from science, history, and children's museums, the responsibility of the arts fell on my shoulders. While the core themes of this particular symposium did not directly question the research in this study, a scholar from a university at one point voiced: "What makes museum educators qualified to educate? Doesn't education happen in schools and universities?" From my research, I was able to immediately address this question with clarity and represent all of my museum colleagues in the room. I explained that through various means, museum educators are prepared to serve the communities that surround them. The educators who work in museums understand the complicated educational landscape that exists, and our presence contributes to the overall well-being of the visitors who enter our doors and participate in our programs.

When explaining this field of study to those outside art museum education, I have found it important to stress the complicated ecosystem of arts education in its relation to art museum educator experience, preparation, and development. The sad reality of the present condition of

arts education in the United States is that it simply is not considered a high-value endeavor when other subjects such as math and reading skills are facing low student achievement. Following the recent economic misfortunes, our nation faces several challenges in the coming years, but they are challenges that the whole world faces, of struggle and hopeful rebuilding. Intermingled in this struggle is an acute necessity to confront our identities as we navigate challenging times. What makes us uniquely American is our unwavering ability to imagine a brighter future. The arts can be a key developmental tool to preparing and exercising the mind to establish pathways through this uncharted territory.

The types of programs and experiences that exist for students in art museums are just one part of the puzzle but an ever-growing piece that necessitates careful study and evaluation. The art museum educators who facilitate these experiences must no longer be seen as ancillary automatons, doling out scripted tours that simply parrot specialist jargon to introduce aesthetic taste, but considered as experienced educators who seek to create learner-centered dialogues between the groups who visit museums and the art within them. Art museum educators are dedicated, experienced professionals who embrace the flexibility needed to address the ever-present demands and the continuous changes that they encounter in their daily work. This flexibility is what must be examined for the formalized process of teacher education. If a schoolteacher can adapt as easily to changing environments and social situations as an art museum educator, wouldn't that be a tremendous benefit to a school system that seems to never know what it wants?

Biased by my love for the arts and the amazing art museum educators who surround me daily, I see the work that museum educators do with students and can attest to witnessing life-changing experiences in the galleries. I know that those students compose just a small portion of

the population that traverses the school system. With further research into the impact of art museum experiences on the total student experience, the school system could utilize an incredible resource. This research aims to spark the necessary influence, first, of universities to bridge the fields of art education and art history to prepare future art museum educators and, second, of museum administrators to recognize that museums are cultural and educational fulcrums where transformational experiences for both students and educators take place.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Introductory/Personal:

- What do you think is a great museum experience?
- What do you think is a poor museum experience?
- How do you experience art? Personal Museum visits?
- How long have you been working at a museum educator? As an educator?
- What is your educational background? What kind of educational experience did you have? Did you study formally? Art History? Art Education? Education?
- What type of training are you offered at your current institution? What is your experience of training/education programs for museum education at your institution?
- Tell me about your work as a museum educator? What is your day to day like? Who do you work with? What ages? What times? How often?
- How do you experience museum education as a profession? Within your institution? With your family? Do you feel accepted as a museum educator?

Theory:

- What is your experience with learning and using theory?
- How do you apply theory to your practice as a museum educator?

Method:

- How did you develop your style of teaching/facilitating/ mediating art experiences in the gallery (pedagogy)?
- How do you evaluate your impact with students?

Social:

- How do students affect your tour?
- Tell me about an exceptional experience with a student group.
- Tell me about a bad experience with a school group?

Physical:

- How do you navigate the museum with students?
- How do you think the museum environment affects your tours? Your students?
- Why do you choose to go where you go?

Challenges:

- What do you find the most challenging about your work?
- What would better prepare you for working with students?

Appendix B

Survey

Please read before continuing with this survey.

Consent:

My name is Marcos Stafne and I am student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled, “Art Museum Educators: Unveiling Perceptions of Theory, Method and Preparation.” This is a research study of how Art Museum Educators encounter their understanding of daily experiences working with school groups on gallery floors. The study is expected to illuminate Art Museum Educators’ lives and understanding of educational theories and methods, and discover differences and similarities in how Art Museum Educators are prepared to work with students.

The risks from participating in this survey are no more than encountered in everyday life and your employment status will be in no way be affected by a decision to participate or not to participate. The benefit of your participation is that I hope to add to the generalized knowledge of how Art Museum Educators are prepared to work with student groups in museums. This online survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

It is my goal to obtain at least 100 responses from different museum educators across the country. I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or museums, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (PHONE NUMBER) or (EMAIL) , or my advisor Nicholas Michelli at (PHONE NUMBER) or (EMAIL). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (PHONE NUMBER, (EMAIL).

Thank you for your participation in the study.

By clicking on the next page, you indicate that you are at least 18 years of age and consent to participate in this project.

1. Please list your age range:

- 18 – 24
- 25- 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54

2. Please list the status of employment at your institution:

- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee
- Volunteer
- Intern

3. What term best describes your position in your institution?

- Museum
- Interpreter
- Explainer
- Volunteer
- Teacher
- Docent Educator
- Other (please specify)

4. How long have you been at your current institution?

- Under 1 Year
- 1 – 2 years
- 3 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11- 20 years
- 21 + years

5. How long have you been in the field of education?

- Under 1 Year
- 1 – 2 years
- 3 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11- 20 years
- 21 + years

6. How long have you been in the field of museum education?

- Under 1 Year
- 1 – 2 years
- 3 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11- 20 years
- 21 + years

7. Please list your highest reached level of formal education?

- High School
- Some College
- Undergraduate Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Post Graduate Degree (Ph.D)

8. What types of formal education coursework have you participated in in relation to your work in art museum education? (select all that apply)

- Art Studio
- Art History
- Design
- Theory
- Education
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Anthropology

Other (please specify)

12. How many tours for students do you lead or facilitate per month?

- 0
 1 - 2
 3 - 5
 6 - 9
 9 - 12
 13 - 16
 16 +

13. What types of tours do you facilitate at your institution?

Please select all that apply.

- Thematic Tours
 Exhibition Specific Tours
 Scripted Tours
 School Curriculum-based tours

14. Which types of school groups do you give tours to? Mark all that apply.

- Preschool (ages 2 - 5)
 Elementary (ages 6 - 10)
 Middle (ages 11 - 13)
 High School (ages 14 -17)
 University (18 +)
 Home School

Other (please specify)

15. Please rate your level of comfort with each type of student group you accommodate.

	Not Comfortable	Somewhat Comfortable	Comfortable	Very Comfortable	N/A
Preschool					
Elementary					
Middle					
High					
University					
Home School					

If you marked not comfortable or somewhat comfortable, please list some reasons why you feel this way with a particular age group.

16. What age group of students do you prefer to accommodate?

- Preschool
- Elementary
- Middle
- High school
- University

17. If you live in the NYC area, are 21 and older, and would like to have a follow-up live interview about your role as a museum educator, please fill out the following information, if not please just click done:

Name:

Address:

Address 2:

City/Town:

State:

ZIP:

Country:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

My name is Marcos Stafne and I am student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled, “Art Museum Educators: Unveiling Perceptions of Theory, Method and Preparation.” This is a research study of how Art Museum Educators encounter their understanding of daily experiences working with school groups on gallery floors. The study is expected to illuminate Art Museum Educators’ lives and understanding of educational theories and methods, and discover differences and similarities in how Art Museum Educators are prepared to work with students. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences with student groups in museums, and send you two follow up emails (or phone calls is preferred) containing my understanding of what we and other art museum educators that are being interviewed have discussed. I will be creating a synthesis of these responses, and would like you to indicate, add, or comment on anything that you feel was not covered by my synthesis.

This interview will take one hour, and the follow up phone conversation or email review will take an additional hour. With your permission, I would like to audio-record this interview so I can record the details accurately. The audio files will only be heard by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored on a password protected folder on a personal computer. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your participation is that I hope to add to the generalized knowledge of how Art Museum Educators are prepared to work with student groups in museums. There will be approximately 10 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or museums, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (PHONE NUMBER) or (EMAIL), or my advisor Nicholas Michelli at (PHONE NUMBER) or (EMAIL) If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (PHONE NUMBER), (EMAIL).

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio recorded please [circle one]:

Yes No

Participant’s signature

Date

Investigator’s signature

Date

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