

THE EMBODIED AND EMOTIVE ROLE OF THE ART GALLERY EDUCATOR

by

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### **Abstract**

This self-study outlines the uncertainties and insecurities that art gallery and museum educators face as our roles are defined by shifting policies and mandates in education as well as within the museum. I collaborated with a classroom teacher who observed a tour I gave her grade three class. After an in depth dialogue and ongoing correspondence reflecting upon ways of engaging students, I led her class through another exhibition to see if our collaboration and dialogue shifted my thinking and practice as an art gallery educator. As I searched for a way to articulate my role, I found the roles of collaborator, audience evaluator, and emotive catalyst to be just as valuable as engaging school groups in verbal dialogue in the gallery. The dialogue that was transformative for my thinking was the one outside of the gallery with the teacher. This self-study tells the story of the shifts in my thinking and practice. I learned to hold back information rather than focus on verbal dialogue to allow students to have their own ‘emotive embodied experience’ of learning in the gallery.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original and unpublished work by the author. The fieldwork and audio-recorded interview are covered by UBC Human Ethics Certificate number: H15-00228

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to Rudy Ruettiger and Ian Bowles.

“Make it Happen!”

## Chapter One. Introduction: What is the Museum Educator's Role?

The central task of the museum gallery teacher seems simple – to bring people and art together, but how that interaction is understood, and how a teacher is to bring it about turns out to be anything but simple. (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011, p. 48)

The research questions asked in this ever-evolving self-study began with a search to find out how art gallery educators can maximize engagement while touring groups of elementary school children through art gallery exhibitions. My methodology and intention shifted as I began studying museum education literature and collaborating with a classroom teacher. My initial instinct was that conversation/dialogue is paramount in gauging engagement, thus my inquiry started by focusing on the use of questions in the gallery to catalyze dialogue. I asked myself “what kinds of questions lead to what kinds of dialogues?”

My long standing beliefs in the importance of questions to catalyze participation were dissolved as I came across a chapter written by Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) entitled ‘Questioning the Use of Questions’ in their book *Teaching in the Art Museum, Interpretation as Experience*. It describes how “questions all too often reflect the interests, agenda and priorities of the instructor asking them, not the curiosity of visitors in search of their own understandings” (p.96). Simon (2010) also problematizes the use of questions. She is concerned that “many institutionally-supplied questions are too earnest, too leading, or too obvious to spark interest, let alone engagement” (p.139). Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) “propose that we stop asking our visitors questions and return to the artworks, not through lecturing, but through engaging our visitors in dialogues about and with the art” (p.100). My thinking about the value of questions to



catalyze dialogue and gauge engagement shifted since “Dialogue can be rich, even without questions” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011, p.100).

Burnham and Kai-Kee made me ask myself, ‘if I am not asking questions to create dialogue, then what role do I play as an art educator?’ I soon found that I was looking to the museum to form an identity, a clearly defined list of roles that will comprise my value, as an educator and as a museum professional. “The research suggests that museums are places where self-concepts can be changed, where self-esteem can be increased and where, potentially, a stronger sense of self can be engendered “(Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p.188), and it is not only visitors who can use the museum space to strengthen a sense of self. I entered this research looking for a way of defining and professionalizing my position and found out that I am not alone in the search. Talboy’s (2011) description of the museum educator resonated with me. He describes how museum educators are in a difficult position as they exist as museum professionals and classroom teachers, a “role that fulfills two functions and faces in two directions at once can be extremely difficult to cope with” (p. 24).

This questioning of the roles and goals of art gallery educators is repeated throughout museum education literature. In 1947, after 40 years of museum education’s development as a profession “Charles Slatkin could still ask, ‘How much should one lecture; how much discuss; query? Should one educate or inform; elicit information or submerge the listener in a glow or words?’” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011, p. 31). Museum educators such as myself are still asking similar questions to Slatkin’s.

The literature often questions the necessity and value of museum educators. Talboys (2011) surveys museum education history in *The Museum Educator's Handbook*, and asked a question that has continued to repeat itself: "There long existed the notion that a museum presenting artefacts for display was sufficient in itself to constitute education. What need, therefore, of specialist education staff?" (p.23). In 1992 Hudson asks 'Are museum educators necessary?' a provocative question. What was even more provocative was that Munley and Roberts asked "Are museum educators still necessary?" in 2006, describing "...a new paradigm that distributed education responsibilities across the museum and begged the question: "What has become of the role of the museum educator?" (2006, p.30). For Hudson "it is arguable that a really effective museum or museum exhibition performs its own educational function and that only the inadequate exhibition requires interpretation. This amounts to saying that museum 'educators' have no real function in a well planned museum" (1992, p.56). Czajkowski and Hill (2008) ask 'What is the museum educator's role?' while echoing Hudson's point about the strong interpretive design of exhibitions, since "new institutional priorities have emerged as museum missions have shifted. Interpretation is increasingly being designed to facilitate dynamic, dialogic experiences that will ignite the visitor's imaginations, ideas and emotions and encourage self-reflection and social engagement" (p. 256).

Worts (2003) argues the value of art educators since "more ambitious educational initiatives, such as those experiments in constructivist learning, usually occur with human mediation that helps to establish focus and generate reflection and dialogue" (p. 216).

Falk and Dierking (2012) found that “studies in a wide range of museums showed that when a staff member was available to answer questions informally for families, the time spent at individual exhibits more than doubled” (p.16). Hudson (1992) concluded that there is value in museum education by stating “someone who can make a child happy in a museum is beyond question a useful member of society” (p. 56). Falk and Dierking found that visitors have “the desire for a friendly knowledgeable person in the galleries to respond to specific questions and to provide explanations”(p.166). They believe there is value in giving the audience information, “Personalizing facilitation, though, seems to be critical” (p.166).

Burnham and Kai-Kee’s (2011) argument for the value of the role of the art educator is also placed on personalizing experiences. They claim “We provide access to artworks in ways that no online virtual tour or in-gallery handheld device ever could. We do much more than provide the human face of the institution that visitors most frequently encounter” (2011, p. 5). Audio guides and handhelds have become museum staples, and are offered as an alternative touring method to a dialogue with art educators. These methods may give audiences information, but Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005, 2011) argue for responsive, attentive co-creation of interpretation and claim that dialogue can achieve this (2011). However, gallery visitors can engage in personal, meaningful, interpretive dialogue amongst themselves if the artwork and exhibition design are evocative.

This questioning of the *value* of an art educator’s role and threat of displacement became the focus of my literature review, rather than my initial intention to inquire into art gallery educator roles of questioner, listener, speaker, dialogue catalyst. It is the

vulnerability of questioning my own value that became much more interesting to me than listing the roles that various theorists have called for in museum education. It seemed as though I could write in a way that is more engaging and emotionally evocative for the reader if I come from this position of insecurity and exposure. Finding that I am not alone in my search for identity has been transformative in my understanding of my practice. It is not my intention to outline museum education's history and discourse, but to look at the themes in the literature that have changed *my* perception of my roles. This has helped me to better understand the valuable roles we can take on as art gallery educators that will strengthen our confidence, personal practice and discourse.

I began by thinking about questions that catalyze dialogue, implying that my role as art gallery educator was to ask questions, and creating dialogue was my most important task. After understanding concerns with the use of questions in gallery education, I asked then 'what roles do I play as art gallery educator?' After finding a pattern of insecurity and need to articulate the value of museum education in the literature, my research question shifted finally to "What are the *valuable* roles that I play as art gallery educator?"

## **Chapter Two. Literature Review: From Insecurity to a Valuable Identity**

These are the best of times and the worst of times for museum educators. Many are engaged in projects that profoundly change the lives of young people, assist communities in addressing timely issues like race and evolution or partner with schools to use museum exhibitions and collections in the campaign to increase literacy among our children. At the same time, museum educators are called on to produce programs, of almost any genre, that draw large audiences, generate earned income; and stay away from controversy that could damage attendance or jeopardize relations with powerful donors. Given these daunting, and often incompatible accomplishments and demands, many thoughtful museum educators are grappling with issues of role definition and identity (Munley & Roberts, 2006, p. 29).

I chose to focus on museum education literature that describes the tensions within lived experiences of museum and art gallery educators as they attempt to define their roles. I found a theme of uncertainty as Slatkin (1947), Hudson (1992), Munley and Roberts (2006) and Czajkowski and Hill (2008), and Talboys (2011) ask if museum education is a necessary role. This questioning, along with the ever-changing role of the museum (Yellis, 2012), and a lack of theoretical grounding (Eisner & Dobbs, 1986; Tallboys, 2011; Yellis, 2012) seems to be at the root of the uncertainty of museum education.

### **The Uncertain Profession**

My own insecurities regarding my role as an art gallery educator were affirmed as I came across a study by Eisner and Dobbs (1986) entitled *The Uncertain Profession: Observations on the state of museum education in twenty American art museums*. According to Rice (1995) “A general sense that art museums were still failing in their educative functions inspired the Getty Center for Education in the Arts to sponsor [this] study” (p.17). Eisner, professor of education and art at Stanford University and Dobbs, then professor of creative arts at San Francisco State University, interviewed 38 directors

of 20 large and mid sized museums/galleries across 11 states in 1984 to “understand the position, function, problems and achievements of museum education” (Rice, 1995, p.14). Eisner and Dobbs (1986) describe their intentions in undertaking this study as wanting “to understand how they see the situation in which museum education, as one function within museums, is performed” (Eisner & Dobbs, p.2).

The title of the study reflected Eisner and Dobb’s findings. They concluded that there was “a state of ignorance or confusion on the part of some museum directors concerning what museum education is...”(p.8). They describe Museum Education as a “stepchild discipline” (p.29); a practice that was born out of art historical knowledge/training and lacking educational expertise. I related to this notion not because I know how it feels to be a stepchild, but because what they are describing is my experience, having a foundation in studio art and art history, then placed in an educational role with no previous training in pedagogical methodologies.

Although I related to the insecurity that was outlined in 1986 by Eisner and Dobb’s, the study is based on interviews with directors of galleries, not necessarily art educators. Art Gallery directors come from many different backgrounds and often have a different skill set than museum educators do. For example, the director of the J. Paul Getty Museum in 1984 was “Harold M. Williams, former Dean of UCLA's Anderson School of Management and head of the Securities and Exchange Commission under President Jimmy Carter” (The Getty, 2013). Although “His vision led to the creation of the Getty as a multifaceted institution devoted to scholarship, conservation, education and the presentation of the visual arts,” (The Getty, 2013) he did not have pedagogical

expertise. The director of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984, William S. Rubin, was a collector and art historian and was accused of being "obsessed with the Museum's place in the history of art" (Dictionary of Art Historians, n.d.), which may have made educational practices a lower priority. Thomas Messer, director of the Guggenheim in 1984, was a military officer and stockbroker (Dictionary of Art Historians, n.d.). The Cleveland Museum of art director in 1983 was Sherman Lee, an artist and specialist in oriental art (Dictionary of Art Historians, n.d.), I am not suggesting that in 1983-84 there were not any directors of major U.S. galleries or museums that had pedagogical backgrounds. However, the directors of the largest museums in America at the time did not. I do not suggest that because these directors have differing backgrounds that they did not support museum education.

What I am suggesting is that museum education is complex and nuanced. Only those who practice teaching in museums and have reviewed its literature could have given Eisner and Dobb's (1986) a full understanding of what was happening in museum education practice in 1983-1984. By relying on directors of galleries to help them better understand functions of art educational practice they may have been slightly misled. The study could have yielded vastly different results had they talked to 38 art educators rather than their directors.

Rice (1995) declared the 1986 findings of Eisner and Dobbs to be 'misguided' (p.17), as they were academic art teachers with little museum experience themselves and failed to contextualize the roles of the museum educator within the shifting roles of museum culture as a whole. She stated that classroom teachers could not "truly

understand the many facets of informal education, one aspect being the enjoyable and experiential role” (p.17). Failing to place museum education within an understanding of the ever-evolving mandates and missions of museums is like studying dolphins without understanding the effect of the body of water around them. Museum education is always building its profession in relationship with the shifts in educational theory as well as the changes in the role of the museum. It is not my intention to outline a discourse of educational theory, or the history of museology but to see more clearly that a profession built upon two sliding, layered theoretical intentions is not a sturdy one.

### **Shifts in Educational Theory**

Garcia (2012) explains that in the 1960s and 70s “education theorists like Paulo Freire and Loris Malaguzzi, following in the progressive education tradition, created pedagogies that involved awakening critical consciousness and providing opportunities for self-affirmation through a co production model where both student and teacher create the educative experience” (p. 47). Hooper-Greenhill suggests that nineteenth century approaches to museum education were used to “produce a unified ‘good’ society,” and that “Education is no longer expected to fit individuals for fixed stations in life, and instead is shaped around ideas about lifelong learning, flexibility, resilience and self-realization“ (2007, p.13). Shifting pedagogical language, from the use of the word ‘education’ to ‘learning,’ “represents a major philosophical change in the way in which the educational functions of museums are being understood” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p. 4). Learning implies a process of activating the learner, and thus focuses on the visitor or learner rather than delivering ‘education’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007).



The shifts in the museum's role toward viewer experience were influenced by earlier shifts in education philosophy. This shift "is in the way we think about the role of museums in society and the nature of the visitors' museum experience" (Adams, Dierking & Falk, 2003, p.15). Hooper-Greenhill describes how this shift happened through the 1990s when "there [was] once more a strong emphasis on the educational role of museums, as attention shifts from the accumulation of objects to the use of existing collections" (1991, p.9). According to Hein (2011), "By shifting their mission in favour of the experiential goal, museums have sacrificed much of the authority they previously held when they professed to simply preserve precious artifacts, impart knowledge, and transmit cultural heritage" (p.181).

Rice (2003) perceived shifts and changes in the field of museum education, finding that "educators have changed their programs both in form and content, adapting to shifting currents within art history and educational theory, and reaching out to new constituencies by taking advantage of innovations in information technology" (p.8). In the 1990s Hooper-Greenhill (1991) declared "museum and gallery education is in the process of rapid adaptation and adjustment to take account of both positive and negative elements of change" (p.76). Her similar statements in 2007 seem to reveal that museum education was still negotiating changes, explaining that "this is a dynamic moment in museum and gallery education, at a time of rapid social and cultural change, when many of the old signposts for thought and action have been removed, and social and cultural landscapes are being remapped and rearranged" (2007, p. 5). She notes that "today museums are searching for ways to respond to the considerable changes that have occurred since their social and educational role was last declared important (2007, p.200).

This comment makes museum education and thus museum educators from the 2000s seem desperate to declare their value.

It is possible that this desperation is productive, a drive for us to search harder to constantly perceive, adjust and adapt to the shifts in our roles. The demand for evolution within museum education was still prevalent in 2011, with a concern looking forward as Talboys (2011) explains: “if these services do not constantly evolve to suit current needs, their ability to cope with present and future demands would be undermined and any attempt to set the pace of future thinking on education would be severely restrained” (p.13). To create services that suit needs, art gallery educators must first understand the needs of art gallery visitors.

### **The Valuable Role Of Audience Evaluation**

In her response to *The Uncertain Profession*, Rice (1995) describes the shift towards visitor studies to improve museum education since “very little was known about how visitors actually experience art in the museum setting and that any revision of museums' educative missions had to start with more information about the nature of that experience” (p.18). According to Czajkowski and Hill (2008) “educators are becoming more valued within these institutions for their expertise in how visitors learn, interpretive strategies that facilitate meaning-making, visitor research and feedback gathering, teamwork and collaboration, and success measurement tools” (p. 262). Kubarek (2015) believes evaluation of audiences is empowering, stating that “Rather than being passive recipients, trainings and resources have allowed education staff members to become confident, engaged participants in the evaluation process” (p.10). The value of gathering

audience information is summed up by Falk and Dierking's suggestion that "Institutional goals are sometimes incompatible with visitor needs and expectations, so they need to be reshaped, in ways that better overlap with what the field currently knows about visitors needs, interest and desired experiences" (2012, p. 250).

Eisner and Dobbs (1986) acknowledge that "one of the special skills of the museum educator is that he or she purportedly knows more about the character of the audience and what is likely to enhance their experience with works of art" (p. 9). However, audience knowledge is not so much a skill but a result of a museum educator's physical being in the gallery with visitors. The skill is in the relationships that museum educators create with audiences, and the ability to perceive the quality of their experiences. This implies that the role of audience evaluator is not just observing the behaviour of the audience, it is also about coming to know individuals through dialogue in order to understand their subjective goals. As audience evaluators, art gallery educators must analyze their observations to then decide between respecting an individual's silent reflection and engaging them in dialogue. Although "it is critical that staff understand their roles and how to best support the visitor experience, this may mean not facilitating the experience at all" (Falk & Dierking, 2012, p.172).

Museum educators are considered leaders while taking on the role of audience evaluation according to Munley and Roberts (2006). They suggest "with the aid of focus groups and surveys, more museums know their audiences demographics and preferences than ever before. Museum educators were among the first to embrace evaluation, with its focus on effective communication, clarity of message and visitor satisfaction" (p. 36).

Understanding the valuable role of audience evaluator has made me appreciate my position as interactive with the most important people in the art gallery, the viewers.

Language used in the literature such as ‘Advocate for viewer’ (Eisner & Dobbs, 1986; Hooper-Greenhill, 1991) underlines the importance of sharing information about the audience’s goals and expectations with the rest of the museum or gallery departments. As Eisner and Dobbs (1986) proclaim, “the museum educator is, as one educator put it, the advocate of the viewer, while the curator is more likely to be the advocate of the work (p. 6). Talboys (2001) describes the value of the role of advocate twenty-five years later, since “the unique aspect of education staff is that it is also their role to teach others about it...they are well placed to increase understanding about problems and assist in finding solutions” (p.20).

### **Difficulties of Audience Assessment**

Understanding and playing the role of audience evaluator may lessen insecurities regarding the value of museum education, however the difficulty of actually assessing subjective experiences complicates the job, placing museum educators again in uncertain territory. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) explains “the demand for evidence of effective performance is a major characteristic of postmodern society. With the recent prioritization of educational purpose and provision, cultural organizations have been subject to a demand for evidence of the impact of learning” (p. 62). Providing evidence of a subjective learning experience may be demanded, however it is difficult to assess.

Hein (2006) asks “if visitors are intended to make personal meaning from their museum experience, then how can the outcome be measured? What criteria can be

applied to distinguish a successful museum educational activity from one that is a failure?" (p. 349). According to Worts (2003), "it is one thing to declare a commitment to the service of public education and another to demonstrate that such a goal has been met" (p.215). Munley and Roberts (2006) describe qualitative assessment as a conundrum; since "it has never been about the numbers for museum educators. It has always been about learning, education, community service, and public value. It has always been about relevance and connections to people's lives" (p.35). They claim that "having to demonstrate success and worth using measures that do not fit the task or nature of the contribution faces the museum as a whole" (p.35).

### **Need for Discourse and Sharing of Experiences**

'Misguided' or not, what is interesting is that Eisner and Dobbs' 1986 findings are being echoed years later. One theme that is still being pronounced is the need for discourse; communication and sharing of art gallery education experiences that allow us to better understand our roles as co-learners. In *The Uncertain Profession* Eisner and Dobbs called for a network of communication in 1986 to stabilize, expand and professionalize museum education practice. They claimed that: "there is no viable network of communication and contact which reaches all museum educators and provides exchange of ideas and program resources" (1986, p.53). They declared a "lack of consensus among museum professionals regarding the basic aim of museum education" (Eisner & Dobbs, 1986 p.6). Twenty-six years later Rasmussen and Winterrowd (2012) comment on how museum education as a profession has grown since Eisner and Dobbs' study, yet they describe an anecdote in which conversations were still reflecting this lack of consensus: "Despite the friendly polemics, there was an implication that the skills of

educators have little value and that a cohesive understanding of the profession of museum education was lacking” (p. 7).

Since *The Uncertain Profession* “literature has amassed, journals established and training programs have proliferated. Much has changed in museum education since the beginning of the period under discussion” according to Rasmussen and Winterrowd (2012, p.8). Yet years later there are still questions being asked about what the roles and priorities are for art gallery and museum educators. Rasmussen and Winterrowd (2012) do not simply ask educators to communicate with each other about learning experiences, they go further to ask a bigger questions about priorities: “Is it important to share and implement the important information we have learned from our research? Is it as important for museum educators to do these things as it is to produce the next event brochure?” (p.10) They go on to question “how are we structuring our work and encouraging this to happen?” (p.10)

Moore (2015) encourages documentation by making it seem less intimidating. He offers informal ways to share experiences, “Whether the experience was a great success or epic failure, the insights you glean will propel the field of museum education forward as we learn from one another” (pp.145-146). Through further reading, I found that it is not just art gallery or museum educators that I can learn from to add value to my practice, but there are many opportunities that can be created to learn from classroom teachers.

### **Collaboration With Teachers**

The theme of collaboration with teachers was strong while searching out the role of the art gallery educator in museum education literature (Jones, 2014; Liu, 2000;

Rasanen, 2003; Sekules, 2003; Xanthoudaki, 2003). It is not surprising that Hooper-Greenhill (1991) discusses “the potential for learning in museums includes learning from objects and learning about museums and what they do. The realization of this potential involves careful and detailed planning and cooperative working between museums and teachers (1991, p.113). Nearly ten years later Liu (2000) studied collaborations between art gallery educators and teachers. She states “teachers comprise an important group with whom art museum educators should collaborate in order to provide effective school-oriented art museum education” (2000, p. 75). Yet she found that most “art museum educators were inclined to carry on one-sided relationships with elementary school teachers, in which art museum educators took the initiative to pass on their expertise to relatively passive, less-informed elementary school teachers” (Liu, 2000, p. 78). She described teachers in these collaborations as “serving only a marginal, supportive role. Clearly, such a polarization of positions and the hierarchy that it implies may be an impediment to real collaboration” (Liu, 2000, p.80).

Another theme found was collaborations with pre service teachers (Bobick & Hornby, 2013; Seligmann 2014; Stetson & Stroud 2014; Talboys, 2011). Stetson and Stroud (2014) use the term “mentor” for museum teachers, who “provide clarity and direction to pre-service teachers by modeling strong content and background knowledge, cueing children for smooth transitions, and utilizing appropriate strategies to re-focus student attention when necessary” (p.75). If the museum educators are operating as mentors for teachers than these engagements cannot be considered as the balanced collaborations that Liu calls for.

Bobick and Hornby (2013) discuss how “the perception of museums as service providers as opposed to true partners” (p.82) creates difficulties for collaborations. Clifford-Napoleone (2013) further describes this imbalance within collaborations: “For museum professionals, collaboration is more focused on the concept of ‘source communities,’ and the ways in which those communities can participate in the creation of their own representation” (p.188). Bobick and Hornby (2013) define various imbalances within collaborations. They differentiate between cooperation, (sharing related information), coordination, (a continued relationship based on understanding of the other’s needed outcomes) and collaboration, which is “achieved when each institution offers its resources and reputation and accepts a new organizational structure to reach a common goal with full commitment and responsibility” (p.82).

I asked myself how art gallery educators can create a balanced collaboration with teachers? Duclos-Orsello (2013) describes collaboration as “shared authority” because it “pushes beyond the idea of collaboration or partnership” (p.122). For Duclos-Orsello, imbalanced giver/taker relationships within collaborations are not exercising ‘shared authority’ (2013). If art educators fail to understand a balanced ‘shared authority’ with classroom teachers, we may be missing out on opportunities for professionalization. We need to remember that Liu (2000) found an imbalance in teacher/museum educator collaborations and as a result, the museum educator’s “lack of acknowledgement of the importance of pedagogical knowledge has been truly striking“ (p. 81). We also need to consider how “the teacher’s potential in contributing to art museum education should be harnessed, not wasted” (Liu, 2000, p.76). Sekules (2003) references Hein to describe “if



more fruitful integration between museum and school-based learning is to be encouraged, we will need to know better how to develop towards a surer understanding of the roles” (p. 147). It is possible that clearly defined roles within a museum education and teacher collaboration may level the imbalances that Liu found.

I have gained an awareness that our practice is embedded in a greater scheme of cultural production, as Rice (1995) critiqued Eisner and Dobbs (1986) for having forgotten. As museum educators, we will always be building a theoretical foundation in relationship with the shifting roles and goals of the museum itself. In coming to understand the shifts in museum culture and mission, we come to better understand why museum educators are still uncertain, searching to articulate their roles. Through audience evaluation and true collaboration museum educators become co learners in continuous pursuit of evolving their understandings of their roles and value.

Garcia (2012) believes that “now more than ever museums can (and must) articulate the value of an approach to learning that favors inquiry over achievement, intrinsic motivation over extrinsic, and free choice over prescription” (p. 50). By articulating what we do, art educators can prove the value of museum education, and enter into a discourse that will build confidence and history for the profession. Collaboration is one way to see our work through another’s perspective and articulate the value of our roles in new ways. We must be careful to create balanced collaborations with teachers that operate on a basis of ‘shared authority’ (Duclos-Orsello, 2013) rather than a teacher/learner engagement. Collaboration in the form of sharing our experiences with teachers can answer the continued call for adding to the discourse of museum education.

In this literature review I learned the value of audience evaluation and how it can be transformative for the museum educator, as “assessment involves the continuous gathering of information that allows you to make continuous improvements to all that you do. If it is not used in this way, it is a great deal of wasted effort” (Talboys, 2011 p.29). We therefore must be careful to not only observe and advocate for audiences, we must also change our practice in response to what we find. We must consider “the increasingly nuanced ways we have learned to think about visitors – who they are...what brings them in, what keeps them out, what provides them with better experiences – and about what we are doing, what we have to offer, what we might do” (Yellis, 2012, p. 59) to not waste our efforts as Talboys (2011) warns.

What is missing from the literature are specific descriptions of how collaborations with teachers or pre-service teachers, affected the personal understandings of the art gallery educator. A great deal of writing discusses the importance and value of teacher/museum educator collaborations assessed through the outcomes achieved by the students (Jones 2014; Liu, 2000; Rasanen, 2003; Sekules, 2003; Xanthoudaki, 2003). I found no literature specifically discussing what an art gallery educator learned from classroom teachers. I found one self study by Uzelmeier, (2006), in which the author describes how his thinking changed through a process of collaboration with other museum professionals. Uzelmeier discussed personal reflections and his own insecurities (2006, p.211) that resonated with me, however, his study focused on the collaboration between himself, museum staff and the visitor, rather than on collaboration with a teacher. It would be useful for art gallery educators to hear about personal experiences

that created new understandings for themselves rather than using the behavior or activity of the students to gauge the success of collaborative efforts.

### **Chapter Three. Methodology**

When we start with ourselves and our students, we start with what is most meaningful and most useful. Then we move on from there. (Hobson, 1996, p.16)

I wanted to do research that reflects the subtle nuances of art gallery education. I wanted to “capture a glimpse” (O’Donoghue, personal communication, February 2015) of my practice as art gallery educator. To do so I embarked on a study that is personal, reflective and relational. After reviewing museum and art gallery education literature, I wanted to use “naturalistic methods [that] aim towards understanding a phenomenon, rather than explaining it; emphasize experiential knowing rather than statistical data; and focus on observation rather than measurement” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, p.130). According to Hein (1998) “naturalistic researchers employ an alternative approach that capitalizes on the unique quality of human experience” (p.72).

I wanted to choose a methodology that was both personal and practical. Leggo (2008) writes that “we need to write personally because we live personally” (p.5). I was drawn to the narrative inquiry methodology, in which I can discuss my experience and findings as a story to be told, to keep this study not only personal but also shared in a way that is reflective and open rather than empirical and didactic. The narrative inquiry methodology is reflective of the shifts, changes and sways in perceptions rather than a dissemination of research findings. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) describe narrative inquiry as the “study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in

their own and other's stories" (p.2). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) describe the differences between self -study and Narrative inquiry:

Through internal conversation and dialogues with others, self-study researchers arrive at their focus point. The emphasis here is on self in relation to other. While narrative inquirers tend to consider reasons for a study's importance within the spheres of the personal, practical, and social (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007), self-study researchers tend to situate self in a primary place within the study. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p.107)

Although I write about my findings in a narrative way, the focus of the study is on my own shifts in perception of my role as art gallery educator. Thus, according to Pinnegar and Hamilton's description, this is not a narrative inquiry, but a self-study. I chose Self study as it is "is largely driven by participants' questions, issues, and concerns, self-study, it seems fair to suggest, offers the promise of research that is immediately applicable to practice" (Beck, Kosnok & Freese, 2005, p. ix).

### **Self-Study**

While searching for a coherent understanding of the roles that I play as art gallery educator, I wanted to look closely at my self, to construct a deeper understanding of what I do in my practice as an attempt to construct an identity within the museum field. Self-study seemed to be the best choice for methodology, since "We construct our identities through the stories we tell about ourselves...The construction of self is a study of transactional relationships within which one's story is in constant change...Selfhood turns from noun to verb" (Rasanen, 2003, p.188). Understanding selfhood as a verb, as

Rasanen outlines, creates a sense of constant evolution of self. This can only be revealed through a constantly evolving inquiry. For Kosnik, Beck and Freese (2005) self-study captures an evolution as it "...portrays character development in the face of serious issues within a complex setting, gives place to the dynamic struggle of living life whole, and offers new perspective" (p. 6).

### **An Existential Methodology**

In this study that is rooted in a question of identity/insecurity, it is useful to use a methodology that can capture existential concerns and evolving perceptions of self. For Feldman (2003) "An important implication of this existential orientation is that for us to change how we teach requires us to change who we are as teachers" (p. 27) He also describes how "An existentialist orientation leads us to focus on...the decisions that we make and the actions we take that construct who we are, ...This leads us to study ourselves, not as navel-gazing but to understand the way we are teachers" (p. 27).

Coia and Taylor (2005) believe that Self Study's primary feature "is that it brings to the forefront the importance of the self. It is the problematic nature of our awareness of our selves and of our being in the world that is the most fundamental concern of existentialist thought" (p. 46). They distinguish Self-study from other qualitative methodology stating that the self is not only the subject of inquiry, it is also "made problematic in some way in the analysis" (p.47). Russell's (2005) shifting perception of self was caused by conducting self study "... interpreting those actions through self-study generated important shifts in my personal perceptions of my own teaching and learning as well as the learning of those I was teaching to teach" (p. 16). Put simply "if we are to

understand ourselves in practice, we must examine closely our experiences and the choices that we make” (Coia & Taylor, 2005, p. 46).

### **Minding The Gap Between Theory and Practice**

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) describe self-study as a “Reconsideration process. Once the data collection process begins, we engage in a reconsideration process as we move from the field to the texts and back again” (p. 106). This process seems to describe a gap between theory and practice. According to Russell (2005) it was Schon’s 1983 work on reflective practice that began “reemphasizing the importance of attending to the gaps between our professional goals and our professional practices and by suggesting new perspectives for thinking about the processes of professional learning in and from practice” (p.5).

For Pinnegar and Hamilton “In self-study, the self has a part in the work, but the focus occurs where self, practice, and context (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004) intertwine a third space (Bhadha,1994) that serves to diminish the gap between theory and practice (Bullough,1997; Hamilton, 2004)” (2009, p.104). They explain that self-study requires the challenge of listening to ourselves and others since “We study what is problematic, selecting points where we deny our values and beliefs in our practice or places where our beliefs and actions do not match. Thus, actively seeking to capture the voice of our practice may require that we listen...” (p. 111).

### **Self Study for Improvement of Practice (bridging the gap)**

Improvement of practice is another focus of mine that aligned with the self-study methodology. Russell references Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) guidelines for high quality autobiographical forms of self-study research to remind us "the autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other" (2005, p. 17). Part of why self-study offers opportunity for researchers to improve their practice is because they "offer fresh perspectives on established truths" (Russell, 2005, p.18). For Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) "what we study is not just about understanding what we do and how we do it, but also about how we can improve it (practice). In this way, we stand in a place of growth and change" (p.4). Feldman (2003) also believes that self study is about change "Although this has rarely been stated explicitly in the self-study literature, it should be clear that self-study recognizes at least implicitly that to improve our teacher education practices we need to change our ways of being teacher educator" (p. 27).

In his response to Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) guidelines, Feldman (2003) explains "why self-study is the natural direction for all of us who seek ways to improve schooling, why validity as well as quality is important in self-study, and what can be done to make self-studies more trustworthy" (p. 27). He suggests that we "must provide reasons why others should trust our findings (p.27). For Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), valid and trustworthy self-studies are formulated alongside a theory of self-study that they call S-STTEP. This research utilizes "Provocation, exploration, refinement, identify focus, design of the study, reconsideration process, ethical action, and presentation. We



embed further explanation about them within a description of the S-STTEP research process” (2009, p. 105). Feldman claims the importance of validity. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) seem to equate validity with transparency of process:

Sometimes researchers believe they have done a self-study of teaching and teacher education practice if they simply create a narrative record of their reflection on their practice after the semester is over or because they are suddenly struck by an insight into their practice that they reach at the end of a semester. However, this is neither S-STTEP [self study] research nor evidence. We assert that researchers are not in a strong position to make claims about their learning if they do not capture their learning in the process of that learning. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 112)

To embark on quality, valid self-study I want to keep Feldman (2003), Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2009) thoughts in mind. To create credible research I capture my learning in the process of learning, as transparently as possible, by outlining my thinking process and self-reflection clearly. To do this I will focus on data that offers me a glimpse of my learning and teaching, things that I have never placed awareness on before, and through this study felt a new understanding emerging. I analyzed data in which I noticed various aspects of myself and my practice as it changed and grew.

### **The Process**

I gained a new understanding of the importance of collaboration with classroom teachers as I reviewed museum education literature, thus I began recruiting teachers whom I could engage. In our collaboration we would both observe, reflect upon and

discuss gallery tours that I give their classes. Although self-study focuses on the self as the primary subject of research, it is not undertaken in isolation. Russell (2005) reminds us that this methodology also “relies on interaction with close colleagues who can listen actively and constructively. Self-study also relies on ideas and perspectives presented by others and then taken into one’s personal teaching and research contexts for exploration of their meanings and consequences” (p. 5). I decided to facilitate the tours as I would with any other class, keeping naturalistic research methods in mind as recommended by Adams, Dierking and Falk (2006), Hein (1998) and Hooper-Greenhill (1991). The only difference in the self-study research tours is that I would have the teachers respond to what they observed in notes and elaborate on these ideas in a focus group.

As the process began I recruited a teacher that was very interested in my inquiry and had been bringing her class to the art gallery for many years. We began an email correspondence that opened my eyes to the uniqueness of our emerging relationship. This teacher, Janet, had not only had a Masters in Museum Education degree and 30 years of teaching experience, she was also a Cézanne expert who had lived in Aix En Provence, (the home of Cézanne’s muse Mt. St. Victoire), which embodied her understanding of the painter. It was no more than coincidence that the gallery was exhibiting the Pearlman Collection, *Cézanne and the Modern* at the time of my research tour. I quickly realized that I had little to offer her students that she could not. I did not have a greater understanding of museum or art gallery education theory, methodology or practice than she did nor could I offer more contextual information than she.

I began to again question the value of my role and desperately seek out ways that I could add to her students experience. I started looking for something special that I

bring. I asked myself ‘what can I offer learners that teachers (especially this one!) could not?’ This question led me to an answer that soothed me for a while. I had the artworks. I had access to original paintings that had surface textures, scale and brushstrokes that could not be seen in slides or textbooks. My insecurity caused by not being the expert, led me to questions that shifted my perception of my role as art gallery educator; from dialogue catalyst, to collaborator and evaluator (as learned through a review of research) to content expert (as revealed in my reverence for Janet’s expertise) to facilitator of close looking.

I re thought my *Cézanne and the Modern* tour and minimized the content information. I wanted to maximize the students’ experience by focusing on close looking strategies and their own experiential responses to the surfaces of original master works. What kinds of questions I asked, or how dialogue was catalyzed seemed trivial now that I began questioning my value in a deep and vulnerable way. This developing relationship with one teacher catapulted the way I thought about the roles I play as art gallery educator and made me see the potential in having deeply reflective discussions about our practice.

I stopped recruiting teachers and shifted my research towards working solely with Janet’s class on two separate occasions for research purposes (having already worked with her class for the *Emily Carr and Landon MacKenzie: the Woodchopper and the Monkey* exhibition earlier in the same school year). Janet’s class was a wonderful group of grade three students, she describes them as “a very motivated, fun and hardworking group of Grade Threes” in our initial email correspondences. She also noted in her

booking comments, as teachers often do, that there were many English Second Language (ESL) learners in her group. I noted in my journal that her grade three class's prior knowledge and critical thinking skills was at a grade 5 or 6 level. Her class had also been to the gallery once in that same school year, making the students more comfortable with the museum environment as Talboys (2011) and Hein (2008) suggest. I worked with a group of 8 students and Janet for both tours while the rest of the class was paired with 2 other docents.

The two tours that Janet would observe and reflect upon were indeed the *Cézanne and the Modern* exhibition (April, 2015) and *Beyond the Trees: WALLPAPERS in Dialogue with Emily Carr* (June, 2015). In our tour of *Cézanne* we looked at a collection of Modern paintings in which students discussed brush strokes that they noticed, surfaces of the canvases and looking from up close and far away. I led the group throughout the exhibition facilitating looking activities such as sketching and matching games that compared paintings to their art historical influence. Students were given time to look around each room, and choose the work that they would like to collect. This tour was one hour long and the students were then brought to a workshop to do their own paintings led by my colleague.

The *WALLPAPERS* tour was a collective of digital artists and animators that projected their works directly onto the gallery walls. These installations were curated in dialogue with a group of Emily Carr oil paintings and charcoal drawings. In this exhibition we explored the space using ipads to interact in various ways. We focused on how each work showed movement, line, shape and repetition as a theme for the

exhibition. This tour also lasted an hour and the students then had a pastel workshop in front of the Emily Carr paintings led by my colleague.

My interest was not in comparing the two tours since “each group will be different, even the same group visiting on different occasions will be possessed of a different dynamic” (Talboys, 2011 p.69), rather my interest became seeing what changed within my abilities of perceiving experiences and understanding engagement, not just catalyzing it.

### **Data Collection**

To inquire into my own practice I chose journaling, interview and field notes as data collection methods. As my collaboration with Janet became my catalyst for new ways of thinking about my practice, I realized that the dialogue that had most value were those between her and myself, through email correspondences as well as a lengthy audio recorded interview conversation. This in depth conversation happened after her observation of the *Cézanne and the Modern* tour and before the *Beyond the Trees* tour. I read her (2012) thesis carefully to inform the questions that I would ask her in our reflective dialogic collaboration (audio-recorded interview).

I wanted to maintain Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2009) description of self-study while considering interview; “Expansion of this method by self-study researchers comes in the ways that researchers position themselves. In a self-study research researchers carefully situate self, explore positionality, and attempt to walk alongside the interviewee, even if the interviewee is the self (p. 117). They distinguish this from field notes, as these “serve to record and/or recollect what is happening in the study” (p.124). They describe

how time affects the impact of these field notes since “Researchers generate a more detailed version after leaving that moment of time in a study when more time can be taken to add details and recollect occurrences that might not have been recorded in that moment of time” (p.119). A journal, however “ seems to be more free flowing about feelings, interpretations, and judgments. As a writing tool, a journal offers a place for writers to expose their personal feelings and perspectives” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p.123).

Journaling and analyzing our audio-recorded conversation gave me the opportunity to see if my thinking had shifted based on our conversation. This audio recording was then transcribed by me, while I journaled my response to the recording. I analyzed the way I perceived my role in the conversation as well as when I saw shifts in my own thinking. Journaling became a resource for data collection that captured my responses and emotions through the entire research process. Hobson (1996) describes this as a tool for deeper meaning making since “a journal can be a means by which we bring into fuller awareness, both for the students and for ourselves as teachers, some of the deeper processes through which we make meaning” (p.9).

For me, journaling is the most personal data collection method, and was helpful in thinking through my insecurities and anxieties. Journaling includes “the details of the day and the events of teaching, along with the reflection upon and the interpretations of practice” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p.124). When it was time to work with Janet’s class I nervously sat in the gallery lobby awaiting their arrival. Journaling offered a method to capture my emotional responses to the whole research process, and the anxiety

that I felt about not being the ‘expert’ in this particular circumstance. I scribbled down field notes during the tours when I had a second to do so, reflecting on happenings or interactions with the students, as well as my own emotional responses to these interactions.

Through personal reflection, journaling, a recorded audio conversation and other correspondences with one teacher, I was able to gather enough data to find something special about the work I was doing. I selected data from the audio recording of our interview conversation, field notes and journals. I chose to analyze data that revealed subtleties in my roles as art gallery educator that I had not noticed before, and also when I saw and felt myself learning and changing. I compared my old patterns of practice with changes that I saw after reviewing museum education literature and my in depth interview conversation with Janet. As I gathered the data my thinking shifted and swayed, which further encouraged a naturalistic approach. The flexibility I experienced even at the methodological level of this study allowed me to see me more clearly, the first step in eliminating identity insecurity.

## Chapter Four. Findings: An Embodied Emotive Engagement

The theme of collaboration that I found in museum education literature was applied to my research process. The importance of collaborating with classroom teachers was proven by my collaboration with Janet, which caused a transformation of my thinking and actions. The shift is in my evaluation of audience engagement: from assuming dialogue as the gauge for a meaningful experience to experiencing the silent emotional responses of students in the form of sketching. It is this shift in perception of engaged experiences that I find most interesting about this study; a honing of awareness and sensitivity to not only respond to students rather than lead, but to know when and how to respond...or to understand when to not respond at all!

My collaborative dialogue with Janet after our *Cézanne* tour, and themes in the literature made me aware of the role of emotional response in art gallery education. As I thought about preparing the next tour with Janet's class of *Beyond The Trees*, I wanted to focus on giving students free choice and ownership over their learning experience (agency) throughout the space and observing their emotional reactions. *Beyond the Trees* was an exhibition in which the digital art of the *WALLPAPERS* collective was displayed in dialogue with Emily Carr paintings and charcoal drawings.

In the first room of the exhibition the walls around us were transformed by projected animations by the *WALLPAPERS* artists. I wanted to give the students freedom to create their own interpretations of the work and explore it with their bodies. I noted in my journal that I gave less content information than I ever have in a tour. This made me uneasy, experimenting with the balance of what Janet calls "exploration and



explanation.” I asked the students to ‘look up close, look from far away’ and to ‘explore the space with their bodies.’ Hooper Greenhill (2007) describes that “ the research data shows the power of active bodily engagement to generate enjoyment, knowledge, understanding and enhanced self-confidence”(p. 171). For me, embodiment means exploring with ones body; moving through the space, looking from different perspectives, moving hands, using body language or the engagement of touch.

The students were activated and embodied as they played with shadows on the wall that they created and laughed at how the projections appeared on each other’s clothes and faces. They were given tablets and asked to ‘think about composing or creating pictures that show how they interact with the artwork.’ They were enthusiastic about creating poses and taking pictures, however when it came to talk about the artwork and how they interacted they were more interested in looking at themselves or the funny faces created in the pictures than in the artwork.

In the next room another set of projections covered the walls. We connected the work of Emily Carr to the animation artists through discussion of movement, pattern, repetition and shape. In this space we used an ipad to play music while discussing repetition as rhythm. Students were asked if various rhythms from the music made them see the projections on the walls in different ways. The students loved switching from swaying along with a slow mellow song, to moving their hands or shoulders to the rhythm of a pop song that they recognized. This experience allowed for embodiment, and brought the room to life through movement and rhythm. However, the focus was not on the artwork or how the music changed our interpretation of it, rather the focus was on

moving bodies to music. Janet strongly stated the importance of allowing students an embodied experience of the gallery, but I question if this is interpretation if they are not also looking closely at the art works. How can students have an embodied learning experience while still focusing on close looking? The next room allowed me some insight.

In the third and final room of the *Beyond the Trees* exhibition were works by Emily Carr. In this room we compared Emily Carr's repetition, pattern, movement and shape to that of the WALLPAPERS digital artists. The students were asked to walk around the room and find examples of this in the works. After discussing what they know about Emily Carr and First Nations people we talked about a charcoal drawing, *Nootka*, a favorite of mine. Finally it was their chance to choose an artwork that was interesting to them and sketch it with a new material, a chunk of graphite. I modeled the many ways we can create lines with graphite on a piece of paper, and their sketches revealed that they accepted this invitation to experiment. I assumed that I would notice the value of giving agency over learning in the WALLPAPERs digital art rooms in which we moved our bodies through the space however we pleased. I expected to notice emotional responses in the form of awe and wonder in the digital spaces of the exhibition. It was very interesting to find out that I perceived an embodied emotive engagement where I would have least expected it, sketching from Emily Carr paintings:

The silence while they were sketching was palpable... I wanted it to last as long as possible as I felt this was a moment of pure engagement. Often in discussion groups are silent...educators often assume that this silence, or lack of verbal

response means that students are not engaged. It was interesting when silence was the gauge of engagement for once, and the density it created in the once loud and lively room. (Author's personal Journal entry, June 4, 2015).

I remember how the squeaking sound of sneakers and pitter-patter of quick footsteps gave way to the rustling of sketch paper, and the odd drop of a pencil. And then...nothing. Nothing was heard. That is not to say that nothing was happening, quite the opposite. I remember the density of the concentration and the palpable heavy silence. The students' eyes moved back and forth between looking at what they were creating and what was inspiring it. They recorded what they noticed while they explored the possibilities of a new material (graphite) to express it.

When students are sketching I often speak over them, showing my "discomfort with silences" (Author's personal Journal entry June 24). I offer advice such as "It's not about making your work look perfect or exactly the same as Emily Carr's, it is about showing what you notice," or sometimes "Don't worry about mistakes, a sketch is not like a finished drawing, sketches are used to capture what you notice..." I was about to open my mouth to say something when I realized that even my tongue was sharp enough to burst the bubble and the deep engagement in close looking would end. In that moment I remembered my reading and recalled that:

Every artwork we look at exists on an infinite horizon of possible interpretations. In the moment we begin to speak about it, that horizon of interpretation begins to contract. Every piece of information we present to a group of viewers - every

idea, every point of view- changes and limits the way the participants see the work of art and interpret it. (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011,p .95)

I bit my lip instead of speaking, and in that instance I became aware of what I was learning.

As the bubble of what I referred to as “pure engagement” in my journal was still floating and expanding, it began to take up the whole room. I felt the power of this engagement, and was in awe of the extended silent looking and sketching. These kinds of learning experiences are for Burnham (2013) “what we want, this prolonged engagement where in we really come to know the work of art” and in which “a sense of time suspended of total absorption of engagement with a work of art.” I met eyes with Janet, we exchanged wide-eyed glances, and I could see the same awe in her body language.

In this moment my most important role as an art gallery educator was revealed; the role of perceiving audience experience. This reminded me of what I learned from reviewing the museum education literature about the importance of audience evaluation. I was reminded of Falk and Dierking’s (2012) comments about “not facilitating the experience at all” (p.172) and it resulted in my action of stepping back as to not pop the bubble. My dialogue with Janet, close reading of her work, museum education literature, journaling and self-reflection had shifted not only my thinking but my *actions* within my practice. I realized that through this process of inquiry I had learned to not only perceive (with my emotions and senses) a certain quality of engagement, but also to step back and *allow* deep engagement to happen rather than attempting to catalyze it.

For Burnham (2013) the art educator's role is "about enabling, sustaining engagement and affective experiences. These qualities: time, absorption, imagination, knowledge, all need to be on the increase. These are the conditions in which objects disclose and reveal themselves. This makes possible experience and acts of interpretation" (Burnham, 2013). Whether through silence or verbal expression, the important thing is that I was able to perceive experience, to feel it deeply and even emotionally. What I learned was all made evident by watching and *feeling* the engagement of these students as they sketched in silence. I gained a new ability to perceive a depth of engagement without dialogue, and to respond in a way that gave them agency to further explore. In this case my response was biting my lip until the 'bubble' popped on its own.

### **The Emotive Role of the Art Gallery Educator**

*Having reflected on the talk and the work, I think the student's emotional response is more relevant than the content or the context of the work. (Janet, email correspondence May 22, 2015)*

Can art educators provoke emotional responses? Is that the artist's job? How do we combine an emotional response with closer looking? Sketching? Where did emotional response fit into my tours? How have I evoked an emotional response without asking "how does it make you feel?" (Author's personal Journal June 8)

One of the key findings in this collaboration is the importance of emotional response in art gallery learning, both in my learning as the educator and also in the students' learning. My conversations with Janet revealed this important theme. In the

early 1990s Hooper-Greenhill (1991) concluded “the play of imagination and of feeling is more important than the transmission of facts” (1991, p.52). Hudson (1992) elaborated: “This new attitude to museum presentation constitutes a complete break with the previous widely-held belief that the museum has a duty to remain objective and that learning is based on the responses of the brain, not of the heart” (p. 55).

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005) opposed a hierarchy between emotion and intellect in art gallery learning. They call for a balance of the two since “we know that the encounter of artworks is as much a matter of the heart as of the mind, that learning about artworks is motivated and held together by emotion as much as by intellect” (2005, p.74). deBolla (2001) also claimed the balance of intellect and emotion while describing his notion of ‘wonder’ or ‘affective experience’ as a “state of *inbetweenness*’ as it were, part physical and part mental in the orbit of the emotive yet also clearly articulated or potentially articulable within the higher orders of mental activity” (2001, p. 3).

More recently, Falk and Dierking (2012) are cautious of art gallery educators evocation of emotional response, stating “the importance of moderate levels of novelty and emotion to memory formation,” yet “museums should design exhibitions and programs that slightly nudge the visitor emotionally and experientially, but avoid excessive emotion or novelty since these can hinder memory and satisfaction” (p. 217). They describe emotional experiences as eliciting “awe and reverence” (p.193) but in art gallery education practice we need to “insure that those feelings are not gratuitous, but directly contribute to the messages and goals the museum wishes to communicate” (p.193). This caution with emotional stimulation is important, as it is not our role as art

gallery educators to manage irrelevant emotional outbursts, though I have seen a few! We need to perceive embodied emotional engagements and ensure their authenticity and relevance to the original artworks at hand. With these warnings in mind, “museums should not underestimate the emotional qualities of museums – feelings of awe and reverence are essential components of most people’s museum experience. The emotions elicited, either intentionally or not, strongly influence resulting learning and meaning-making” (Falk & Dierking, 2012, p.192).

The literature showed that a focus on emotional response was relevant to my study of students in grade three. Hooper-Greenhill (1991) found that “themes used with primary school children tend to be large scale and related more closely to everyday life, such as food, transport, celebrations. Methods are often emotionally explicit in a way that older children would find difficult” (p.123). My journal reflected my thinking about how I could incorporate this new understanding of emotional response in learning into my practice without evoking feelings that are irrelevant or gratuitous:

Is there more at stake in an art historical exhibition if I leave out content and context and prioritize emotional response, as Janet implied? Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005) discussed co-exploration and learning along with the students. They wrote about the importance of knowledge...but using the skills of observation (responsive teaching) to see when introducing information will offer the optimal experience. Did I do this? (Author’s personal journal June 4)

This journal entry exposes my self-reflexive attitude, the emerging themes in my research and how my reading and research influenced my thinking. Asking myself

questions led to more questions, and eventually I was able to see actions that reflected a shift in my understanding. The emergent theme that I found most interesting was that of emotional response since “many contemporary educational theorists describe how emotions are inevitably bound up in learning” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p.175). In my research with Janet’s class I observed emotional response in the forms of sketching, agency over learning, embodiment, and enjoyment/laughter.

### **Making an Emotional Connection with the Students**

What is my role in encouraging emotional response?”(Author’s Journal, June 24)

Through this collaboration I have learned that art educators need to connect with students first and foremost to enable any sort of engagement or emotive response. This is not new information for the field of education, rather a deeper understanding that I gained. This connection can set the stage for learning/interpretation to take place (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). In 1992 Hudson declared “a new movement in education believes... through an appeal to the emotions, and that only after contact with visitors has been established in this way can an attempt be made to transfer information” (p. 54). Over a decade later Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005) describe art gallery educators as having the ability to ‘harness’ emotions to connect with our audiences, since “it is through emotion above all that we engage our audiences; we harness the impetus of emotion that marks encounters with works of art- interest, like, dislike, puzzlement, curiosity, passion- and strive to maintain the momentum emotion provides as we further explore the works” (2005, p.74).



What does an emotional connection with a visitor or student consist of? Janet's response about how I evoked excitement within the students about their gallery experience revealed some insight into the importance of emotionally connecting to students. I again want to recall Falk and Dierking's (2012) warnings about the kinds of emotion we evoke (relevant and not gratuitous), but my dialogue with Janet made me re-think excitement as an emotional connection. She made me understand that getting to know the students in the 'huddle' (introduction) to the tour was part of "*building that community, just getting to know them using their names*" (conversation May 20). I found that the simple component of using names can connect us all as a learning community. In my June 4<sup>th</sup> journal entry I noted that I felt connected to them by "having them call me by name and feel comfortable calling me over to show me what they noticed or asking me questions."

For Talboys (2011) "one of the great skills to be learned by any museum educator is how to 'read' a group and, within a few minutes of first encountering them, have a good general idea of their temperament" (p.69). Getting to know the students' names and possibly their temperament does not necessarily mean that the students have become emotionally connected. Hudson (1992) includes likeability in his description of an emotional connection since we learn from teachers that we like. He describes the museum educator's "prime duty, so far as the general public is concerned, is therefore to use every means of making themselves liked, to build emotional bridges across which information can eventually cross" (p.55).

I asked myself if likeability is an art gallery educator's priority and if this is a "low goal" that Burnham discusses in her 2013 lecture 'Acts of engagement'? Hudson is describing the value of likeability as it is the first step of building 'the emotional bridge'. However, likeability is subjective and variable, no matter how much energy or emotion the art gallery educator infuses the group with. What we can do to enhance an emotional connection is evoke feelings of appreciation, comfort and excitement to connect with students.

### **Evoking Appreciation**

"Appreciation- can we instill this? How? By appreciating other's experiences? [by] listening? (Author's personal journal June 24,2015).

In our conversation Janet explained that it was the simple things that evoked appreciation in the students. She describes the students' awareness that they are appreciated as 'huge' even if it is not verbally expressed:

*You can't change their personality to make them talk to you about what they are thinking...it is their own experience. I think just the awareness that they are appreciated as visitors to the gallery like 'we are so glad you are here!' all of that is HUGE because most families don't bring them to the galleries as much as they bring them to something like Science World. So [it is about] just making them feel welcomed (conversation May 20, 2015).*

Janet describes how she perceived and created a space for appreciation in her own research. In our conversation she explains "*there was a huge appreciation of each other's experiences because there was no right or wrong.*" This idea seems to swap

right/wrong empirical information or validation of being correct with an appreciation of experiences. She described in her thesis that having her students present ideas and artworks to their peers created a feeling of valued ideas and thus appreciation. She found “The presentations made by each student introducing their chosen object to the rest of the class were done with pride and the belief that they had something to say and their ideas were valued” (Logie, 2012, p. 36). If art gallery educators are modeling an attitude of appreciation and openness, (explaining that there are no right or wrong answers) that appreciation will be fostered in the students. It is a mutual action, as Hooper-Greenhill reminds us “where extended involvement occurs on the basis of mutual respect, museums can have a powerful impact on individuals” (2007, p.192).

### **Creating Comfort**

Even this has an emotional intention, to make students comfortable. (Author’s personal Journal June 24, 2015)

Hein (1998) explains that “being relaxed, comfortable, not preoccupied with other concerns does not assure that people will learn, but it’s a necessary condition: the opposite feelings definitely hinder learning” (p.160). Time spent by visitors is noted as interconnection with comfort (Hein, 1998; Logie, 2012; Talboys, 2001). Hein (1998) found that “the simplest way to extend visitor time, without changing any other aspect of an exhibition, is to provide for visitor comfort” (p.172). Talboys (2011) discussed student comfort levels as increasing over time, since “to begin with at least, most students will not have the necessary background to carry out independent study based on material culture, so that the museum educator will be more involved with direct teaching. As time goes by, however, this should ease ( p.73). It is known that multiple visits to the same

space create a comfort for students and encourage learning experiences (Hein, 1998; Logie, 2012; Talboys, 2011). Repetition of class visits to the gallery are factors that the art gallery educator has no control over, however Talboys (2011) suggests to museum educators that “the ideal that you should work towards is that students become as familiar and comfortable with museums as they are with text-based learning in the school environment and the library (p.73).

Burnham discusses her time as an educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in which two goals were put in place for art gallery educators, to make visitors have fun and to make visitors come back again. In her lecture *Acts of Interpretation* she describes these as “low goals” (Burnham, 2013). To think of creating a visitor’s physical and mental comfort as our main role as art gallery educators could be considered another ‘low goal.’ However, as Hein (1998) describes above, it is a “necessary condition” (p.160) for learning.

What the art gallery educator can do to create a comfortable learning condition is “be able to empathize” (Talboys, 2011, p.37) with students who have not yet been to an art gallery and remember what it is like to be uncomfortable in a space. This empathy will help art educators decide what is the best action to take to enable a comfort level, foster appreciation or build excitement. By doing something that is as simple as “making them feel welcomed” or “using their names” as Janet describes, we build emotional connections to the students that set the stage for embodied emotive experiences.

## Creating Excitement

Janet's excitement for my project gave me a new excitement and confidence that what I am doing is useful...(Author's personal Journal April 15)

*Janet: ... the way you asked them questions and got to know them so quickly just in that little bit...you were excited that they knew stuff and then that got them excited even more because you were excited that they know it! (Conversation, May 20)*

There are many stimulating and exciting aspects of coming to the art gallery that are not fostered by the art gallery educator. "For all students, going to a new place, meeting new people, experiencing new approaches to gathering information and encountering real things can be very stimulating and motivating, and can put the knowledge that they have gained at school into perspective" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, p.152). However we can create an energy and excitement. Creating excitement with a group of grade three students can be as simple as creating anticipation, gauging what the students already know and linking the discussion towards their prior knowledge, as Janet described. The students were excited to have prior knowledge about Cézanne before our tour, but their excitement was enhanced when I showed my excitement about what they knew.

*Janet: Well I think the huddle under the stairs is kind of exciting itself.*

*Me: What did I do in particular that caused that excitement?*

*Janet: ...for example that opening of the introduction of Cézanne Cézanne when you went out in the little rotunda...They were all anticipating something, and it's really a great feeling that little first huddle before you go in. ...[and then they say] 'oh ya! we are going to see this!' and it makes them even more excited as you don't get to see it right away....*

Calling our introduction to the *Cézanne and the Modern* tour a ‘huddle’ made me see these moments anew. The ‘huddle’ that is often cut short or rushed through (Janet noted “I think we were rushed right upstairs last time...”) I now value as integral to the connections we make as a group. Here we are “*building that community*” or setting the stage, building the emotional anticipation and excitement for what is to come.

**Maintaining the Momentum Emotion Provides** (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011, p.15)

To engage emotions by asking students how they feel is not, in my experience, useful or appropriate. Students at a grade three level may even be a little bit too comfortable with sharing their unrelated feelings, and heavy emotional issues could erupt. We never know what is going on in a student’s life. I suggest that by giving agency over a learning experience, creating situations where students can collaborate with their friends and by encouraging enjoyment and laughter art gallery educators can set the stage for embodied emotive engagements that are relevant to the artworks at hand.

**Giving Ownership to Evoke Emotional Response: Janet’s thesis**

*Janet: well I think just validating, just saying what you said to them like ‘oh that’s a good idea...somebody said something and you said that you ‘hadn’t thought of that.’ That is a great thing for me, that acknowledgement that ‘that’s a great idea,’ (long pause) it’s just validating, its just encouraging and letting them look (Conversation May 20).*

Janet told me that I often say while touring “I’ve never seen it that way before!” many times which gave the students a “feeling of confidence and agency.” [This is] a good example of how I was learning and exploring the works with new eyes along with them. (Author’s personal Journal, June 8.)

For Hooper-Greenhill (2007) “Emotions are personal; they are our way of claiming something as our own. An involvement without emotion is distant, unengaged, essentially uninvolved” (p.176). Agency and ownership over the learning experience were found to be of great importance in this study, both in the museum education literature, my collaboration with Janet, my journals and my observations. I repeated a pattern by asking how to create the conditions for agency and ownership of experience in an art gallery tour. Janet discussed ownership as the “teacher’s responsibility...but what are the tools to create this?” (Author’s personal journal June 24, 2015).

Janet’s thesis was a large influence on my new understandings of the value of my role in creating agency and ownership. She claimed that “feeling in control of their learning in the museum and the outcome of their masks increased their overall confidence in their understanding. This positive effect on their affect and understanding added to increased curiosity and each anticipation as the visits to [the museum] continued” (Logie, 2012, p.36). Janet references Griffin (1999) stating the importance of “providing purpose, choice and ownership” (p.17) and wanted to create a situation that would involve “having the students discover their own museum” (p.2). In our May 20<sup>th</sup> conversation she described discovering as story making, *“and that’s what they should do in any art gallery or in any place they go where they have to make their own story, their own sense of it, so I’m not going to tell [them] what I think.”* Hooper-Greenhill (2007) conceives of ownership as self-determining and active, “In being active, actions are generated from within; in being reactive, actions are a response to something outside you. Only by being active is one self-determining rather than passive, an independent agent” (p.179). Janet describes emotional responses of the students when “ provided with openings to take

ownership of their own learning...They took advantage of the opportunities by exploring, examining, inquiring, constructing and sharing their discoveries, artwork and stories joyfully and enthusiastically” (Logie, 2012, p.38).

Janet applied Falk and Dierking’s (2002) principles of ‘free choice learning’ as “the goal was to empower the students to understand that there are ways of knowing and learning in the museum other than the transmission of information-based methods” (Logie, 2012, p.3). Based on her conclusions, this goal was accomplished. In our conversation she explained how her students chose their own inquiry topic:

*They liked the masks, OK so let’s find out about the masks... and it was awesome! It worked out way better because of the stories. It could have been weapons, it could have been anything...it could have been the guns...but that’s what they sort of went to (May 20<sup>th</sup> Conversation).*

Free choice learning can be conceived as applying the emotions, as according to Adams, Dierking and Falk (2006), ‘free choice’ is “learning that is intrinsically motivated and reflects the learning individuals do because they want to, rather than because they have to” (p. 324). This assumes that students who are engaging in this kind of learning are also engaging emotions of liking or appreciation; feeling something or being drawn towards a certain object or artwork.

#### **‘Un-tour’ vs. the ‘Whatever’: How Free?**

*Me: I like how you called it the ‘un-tour’ of the museum. What did that mean for you? How did you create that space?*

*Janet: The un tour was really hard because I was still...guiding them...’OK Angus show us what you think, what you are interested in?’ They had to make*



*some notes and have something for us to look at to learn about what it was. By having them show us pictures, or [share] something that they [thought] we wouldn't have noticed...and then everybody goes 'Whoah!' because they hadn't looked closely ... It's them guiding the tour, that's the 'untour', they find something."*

*Me: "That's lovely! So it's basically just you stepping back..."*

*Janet: "Ya and it's harder to do."*

In the passage above, Janet is describing a learning experience that she facilitated for her thesis research. She created an open format for mandate-free exploration of a museum that she described as the 'un-tour'. Hudson warns of an art gallery tour with a mandated curriculum or structure; "The visitor, of whatever age, must feel welcome and free to roam and to choose for himself the exhibits that interest him. His reactions cannot be guaranteed and any attempt to achieve this, by means of theme exhibition or in any other way, is both arrogant and foolish" (1992, p. 59). Janet found in her review of museum education literature the importance of free choice learning, "however there is evidence that students on guided tours are given very little free-choice"(Logie, 2012, p.13). While considering the second class tour, *Beyond the Trees*, I wanted to create a space allowing for choice, agency and exploration rather than overwhelming grade three students with questions to catalyze dialogue.

In journal entries I noted "my discomfort with the unstructured tour," and after the experience I was concerned that there was "less info[rmation] given than ever, we didn't even talk about the artists names... [I was] more interested in questions asked by students and their curiosity" (Author's personal Journal, June 4). Janet and I discussed the difficulty of leading an 'un'-tour, and that it is about balancing the personal inquiry/exploration of the students with explanations /art historical information. I noted in

my journal after the *Beyond The Trees* tour that “I tried to sit in front of what they were interested in...but it’s hard to choose whose interest to follow!” I asked her if the art historically rich *Cézanne and the Modern* tour might have required more information than exploration:

*Janet: well no, because without looking, without talking they are not exploring, they are looking at something else...they need some explanation to hang it on to, so my exploring is look at it and you tell me what it is, and then I will tell you.”*

*Me: And then discuss?*

*Janet: Yep. The explanation after.*

Janet’s conception of the ‘un-tour’ does not mean that the students run around exploring the space without intention. She does not espouse what Mezsaros (2007) condemns as the ‘whatever’ art gallery tour experience. As Janet describes above, her ‘un-tour’ was about the students speaking to their peers and buddies to make meaning, and exploring with intent of communicating a finding. The idea of the ‘whatever’ is a critique of constructivist methods that prioritize the opinion and experience of the viewer in meaning making (Mezsaros, 2007). Her critique is that the ‘whatever’ learning experience fails to acknowledge the value of “received ideas and language” (p.18). She claims “it is received ideas (in all their myriad of forms) that give us the capacity to have any interpretations at all (p.18). Talboys discusses the balance of giving viewers didactic information and open exploration in metaphor:

...Nor is it enough for a museum to take one of Ruskin’s ploughshares, make a few furrows, and see what seeds the wind blows in. That way lay chaos – an open house inundated by groups who do not know how to make proper use of the

resource and who stifle the museum's chance to innovate because they make narrow demands. (2011, p.10)

Museum education research data supports the concept that “personal meaning making is a significant factor in visitors' responses to museums, even when the visit is highly structured” (Black & Hein, 2003, p.117). Falk and Dierking (2012) reference Birney to declare the different types of learning that are associated with various models of art gallery tours; “highly structured visits appeared to result in greater cognitive learning, but less structured visits appeared to produce more positive attitudes” (p.158). Thus, the type of learning that is achievable with school groups in art gallery tours is dependent on the methods we choose. Hooper-Greenhill (1991) advises when “deciding on the methods and content of the visit, the need for exploration should be borne in mind” (p.123).

Mezsaros concludes her critique of open ended ‘whatever’ gallery education by encouraging art gallery educators to “shift from constructivist models of learning to those of critical pedagogy, which assert that educators must make content meaningful to the individual in order to make it critical, so that it will be transformative” (2007, p. 18). If transformative engagement is what we are trying to encourage, then as art educators we need to think about what kinds of tour structures create personal experiences and elicit positive attitudes, yet are balanced with information that helps the students understand the artwork's meaning.

### **Encouraging Laughter and Learning with Friends to Create Lasting Impact**

When I think about times that I did work with my best friend (in Gr 3) there was more learning - we were trying to impress each other with our ideas and acquired knowledge, which resulted in fantastic projects and idea generation. There is an emotional aspect here...because almost 30 years later I remember those projects, those presentations with Lindsay Brown where she could use her reading skills and I would use my art/creative skills to engage the rest of the class with laughter and creativity. There is a component of learning that is not just about being comfortable, it's also about knowing each other's strengths and building those skills by the confidence we give our friends and that they give us. (Author's personal journal, June 24)

In her research Janet explains that “Students were told to look at things that were interesting to them and they did. Importantly, the students wanted to share their findings with their friends (Logie, 2012,p. 38). I still have strong memories of working with my best friend; creating an Alexander Graham Bell project that we presented through sign language, creating talk show platforms that re created Sally Jessy Raphael or Oprah to present findings on a topic. The fact that the memories of these experiences are still with me 25 years later shows long-term impact. The laughter we shared with silly inside jokes or references to pop culture is what cemented these learning experiences to memory.

Falk and Dierking (2012) note that “several studies suggest that recognizing and accommodating children's social agendas can result in significant learning; when children have opportunities to explain their learning to other children ...” (p. 158). They

suggest the important influence that social experiences have on memory since “even after fifteen to twenty years, individuals could remember social-context details of their school field trip, including with whom they sat on the bus, where their parents accompanied them on the trip, and what their docent was like” (p.158). Hein (1998) describes a type of ‘cooperative learning’ (p.173), which could describe my learning experiences with Lindsay Brown based on “the idea that by sharing information and working together students will learn more and will learn better” (p.173).

A great deal of research in museum education literature focuses on the positive impact of social interactions on learning experiences (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007; 2011, Falk & Dierking, 2012; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Logie 2012; Talboys, 2011). Janet expresses the importance of “meaning making that emphasizes social interaction” (Logie, 2012, p.4) which is relevant to research that found “museum activities that allowed children to interact socially with one another, talk to one another about what they were seeing, and engage in related learning experiences back at school were, for the most part, the most remembered” (Falk & Dierking, 2012, p. 159).

Burnham (2013) discusses ways that art gallery educators must express their value and relevance through promoting social or dialogical learning. She discusses socially interactive groups as “interpretive communities” and advocates for the importance of “the search for shared interpretation,” since “it is in that domain that [art gallery educators] remain perpetually relevant” (Burnham, 2013). Falk and Dierking (2012) made note that it is also important to notice who students are interacting with. They reported that “children suggested that they preferred to share what they were

learning with others, particularly peers, rather than listen to adult docents” (2012, p.159), and that “one group of studies demonstrated that the conversations between children were often more focused than were conversations with adults (p.160).

In research conducted at the Glenbow Museum, Trofanenko (2006) quotes one of the students whom she interviewed after observing their multi visit extended museum experience. The student claimed “I learned a lot from Pablo...Talking. Then you don’t have people telling you information which is different, and you can make up your own mind about what you are learning” (Trofanenko, 2006, p. 59). Falk and Dierking (2012) claim “consistently, opportunities to interact with peers in activities of their own choice emerge as important to children’s learning in school groups” (p.159).

### **Working With Friends**

To prove that social interaction is tied to memory and embodied emotional engagement is not my intention in this study. My intention is to highlight the shift in my learning because of new and interesting findings. I was aware of research that discussed the value of social interaction, but was unaware of how to further optimize it as a learning tool. I decided to ask Janet her thoughts:

*Me: Is there a way that I could have put more emphasis on social interaction? I know you wrote about that in your work, and I think that that’s something that is really important...it’s something that I have never learned in my art historical training ...I don’t have those teacher skills or tools. Are there specific strategies you use?*

*Janet: Having a group of friends that are going to like the same thing...or laugh at the same thing. If you are laughing at something in the art gallery-like Toulouse Lautrec peeing - You’re not going to with someone you don’t talk to or*

*who doesn't speak your language-but if there is a couple of guys laughing about this or that, to me that's a great day at the gallery.*

These comments made me think about social interactions in a new way. It is not just important to have students share ideas or interpretations, but to have them share with their friends in order to enhance enjoyment, laughter and pleasure as art gallery learning tools. While describing her 'un-tour', Janet tells the students to "...please interrupt...tell your buddies what you think" (Logie, 2012, p.5). In our conversation on May 20th I asked her how she creates groups for art gallery exploration or other assignments:

*Janet: I choose them but I make sure that they are with their friends...not if it's going to be a dangerous combination...they always learn better when they are with their guys that they want to talk to rather than if it's a bunch of people that don't normally talk...when [friends] get a chance to talk they are going to talk and enjoy...it's not about having a boy and a girl group, it's that the group consists of enough pairs of friends...They are going to have fun if they are with their friends, they are not going to have fun if they are partnered with someone they don't talk to. They are with their buddies in the group, and that's the thing for me is that they should be with their friends in their group.*

### **Emotional Response as Fun, Enjoyment and Laughter**

How does this fit with emotional response? Isn't learning supposed to be work?

How does a positive emotional response concrete learning/idea production?

(Author's personal journal, June 24, 2015).

Through conversation with Janet, I have a new understanding of the role of fun and laughter as emotions that enhance learning experiences. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) expresses this role when she states that "Learning is a serious activity that needs to be fun..In performative, participatory learning, students are described as enjoying the activity through taking part, rather than consuming content through learning facts" (p.188). Through audience research and evaluation she found that the "most valued

outcome of museum-based learning, in the views of both the teachers and the pupils, was enjoyment, inspiration, creativity...feeling motivated to learn and enjoying learning” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p.200).

Hooper-Greenhill reviews her work with the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) in 2006. This research included 3,113 teachers and 56,810 students. Her findings showed that “the level of enthusiasm for museums was very high in these responses, and for both teachers and pupils, it was the pleasure and inspiration that they experienced during their visits that was most highly valued“ (2007, p.106). This is a great example showing the value of emotions (pleasure, enjoyment, inspiration) in art gallery education, but it is up to the art gallery educator to decide how to go about evoking or creating space for these emotions.

Dewey (1934) situates enjoyment as the artist’s responsibility since “To be truly artistic, a work must also be esthetic-that is, framed for enjoyed receptive perception” (Dewey, 1934, p. 207). This statement by Dewey reminded me that assuming all art to be enjoyable is problematic. I was surprised that he took this position, as prior to 1934 many artworks were created to evoke emotional responses that were not enjoyable, for example Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son*, 1819-1823. I began to wonder; If an artist has not considered the enjoyment of the viewer in their making then how can art educators ensure enjoyable experiences? We cannot. We cannot catalyze students’ enjoyment of Goya’s Black Painting series (1819-1823), and if enjoyment is defined as taking pleasure, then we would probably find it quite strange if they did. Thus, the art educator’s role of creating enjoyable conditions was dominant in this study, however not generalizable to all art forms.



Art educators can evoke pleasure and enjoyment through encouraging humour. Creating environments in which students' work with their friends can also do this. Whether it be (relevant) humour between friends or introduced by the art educator, Rice (1991) reminds us that "As museum educators...we are sometimes rightly accused of too much passion and not enough humor. We take ourselves so seriously that we sometimes risk alienating the very people we need to work with to accomplish our goals" (p.23).

In our conversation, Janet described how humour enhances memory and diffuses the role of educator as authoritarian question asker or leader. She tells me about a moment that she made their inquiry into Salmon berries fun for her and her students.

*Do you know what Salmon berries look like? Its like is the three leaves and the berries, so I held it up like a moustache ...and I think they will remember that. So that's what it is ...you are not asking a question and they don't have to look and some didn't look [they say] 'It says here in the book' ...ok well then look at the book! (laughs) so that's fun!*

In my journal, after transcribing this portion of our dialogue, I noted that "the "role of laughter as emotional response gets [students] to remember their experience over facts/names/content" (Author's personal Journal June 24, 2015). This was a new finding for me and allowed me to take the focus off of content and facts for the upcoming *Beyond the Trees* tour. I also reflected upon the impact of laughter in the emerging relationship between Janet and I in the same journal entry;

I notice the moments of laughter have increased greatly. We are relaxed having a conversation. That laughter not only changes the tone it makes us remember things and creates a bond, a relationship/ collaboration. (Author's personal Journal entry June 24' 2015).

Understanding laughter, fun and social engagement as important tools to engage the emotions and thus enhance learning experiences in the art gallery (Burnham & Kai-kee, 2011) is an important revelation for me. However, I asked myself, ‘is this a “low goal” (Burnham, 2013) for art gallery educators? I concluded this entry with questions about laughter, enjoyment and pleasure that emerged asking “How do the silly jokes I make affect the student’s learning experience? Is giving them a fun time enough? Is enjoyment the priority as Hudson [1992] believes?” (Author’s personal journal, June 4)

Talboys (2011) recommends that we can create a sense of achievement if we “Make all programmes of work enjoyable...interactive and engaging...However, this must be combined with activities that aim to ensure that those who engage in them learn or acquire something new” (p.108). He describes enjoyment as a desirable outcome for learning, while keeping in mind that new understandings or ways of looking and learning are our higher goals. Hein expresses his concerns with art gallery education experiences that rely on entertainment: “To make them educative represents the fundamental challenge of museum exhibitions and programs: how to transform the obvious enthusiasm of visitors into connected, engaging, integrated activities that lead to growth” (1998, p.3). For Hooper-Greenhill, creating an enjoyable environment for students reflects a shift in museum education strategies towards the postmodern since “the bringing together of education and entertainment and the recognition that learning and enjoyment work very well in conjunction with each other is one aspect of postmodern social arrangements that reject modernist separations of either/or...” (2007, p. 34).

Art educators can never demand enjoyment from students, nor can they be sure that their humour or pleasure in working with students will be reciprocated. There have been many times that I have made a joke that fell flat, having misread the interests of the group, or times that I was the only one in the group feeling an emotion of pleasure or enjoyment. However, thinking of these emotional components (comfort, enjoyment, appreciation, anticipation, excitement, laughter, working with friends) as learning and teaching tools is a new understanding for me.

### **What Do I Have to Offer? (Close Looking)**

Knowing Janet to be an expert on Cézanne, I felt that I really needed to impress her with my knowledge...and ability to ask and answer questions. What actually happened with that tour was that I did impress her...not with my knowledge but with my connections that I made with the students and free choice learning strategies. She talked to me about free choice and agency, using names to connect to students and tactics of looking closely. (Author's personal journal June 4<sup>th</sup>)

*Me: When I was with your group I had this unique situation where I didn't necessarily know more about the artist [Cézanne] than you do... it [became about] the interesting questioning; what is my role, what can I offer you? That is what will benefit my actual practice, thinking about what I have to offer and how do I optimize that.*

The section of our conversation above is quite revealing for me. Not only does it point to the anxiety I feel about not being the 'expert' in this situation, it also highlights the importance of the small strategies that are used in art gallery education to enhance close looking. I did have a lot of anxiety about not being the 'knower', and my journal

entries reflect questions that show my discomfort and “anxiety caused by teacher expectations; is my responsibility to the teacher (learning outcomes) or to the students’ experience? How can I balance this?” (Author’s personal journal, April 14, 2015) I asked myself. This reflection shows my intentions to impress Janet with knowledge, rather than focusing on the learning and interests of the students. The unique situation with Janet described above was a great catalyst to make me think about what my role was critically, and as expressed in my journals, emotionally. This also influenced the shift in my research question from ‘what roles do I play’ to ‘what is my value as art educator in this particular circumstance?’ to finally, ‘what *valuable* roles do I play as art gallery educator?’ which is more self conscious and emotional.

As I outlined in the methodology section to explain the shift in my research question, I thought about the value of my position as art gallery educator and realized that what I had was access to the original art works, their surfaces and brush strokes and overwhelming presence. You cannot read Soutine’s impasto without looking at the thick goopy oil paint from up close. Xanthoudaki (2003) studied primary schools in England and Greece to find out about “the ways teachers use stimuli and ideas offered during a museum visit into their classroom art practice” (p.105). It was discovered that “direct encounters with original art works and artefacts encourage the development of aesthetic experience as a motive for learning and creative/educative interactions between the children’s own knowledge and experience and the new knowledge and information conveyed in the works” (Xanthoudaki, 2003, p.108).

My understanding of my practice swayed as I saw the value of my role through strategies of close looking to create a space for the “encounters” that Xanthoudaki experienced. I wanted to rearrange and refocus what I placed value on in my practice, now coming to understand that “a close look at a work of art takes viewers to the edge of eye and mind, asking us to push the boundaries of what we see and what we understand” (Burnham, 2013). Rice (2003) claims that using strategies of close looking can diffuse the authority of the museum or art gallery educator. She explains that the “Socratic approach to gallery instruction led visitors to see what they wanted them to see, this new method is open-ended, allowing viewers to identify visual evidence and create their own interpretations without introducing them to scholarly debates or expert opinions” (p.18).

Art educators like myself question how to balance instruction, art historical information, close looking and the students’ freedom to explore and respond. Hudson (1992) describes exploration and close looking as a process, and “once that process has taken place, the museum visitor is in a mood to receive supporting factual information” (Hudson, 1992, p. 55). Rice (2003) explores close looking as an approach with “emphasis on assisting individuals in looking more closely at art, and formulating their own opinions based on what they see, has offered educators a new way of balancing the traditionally opposed elements of intuitive, aesthetic response and didactic instruction” (p.18). Janet’s comments in our conversation reinforced the value of close looking, but it is one thing to understand the value of something and another to be able to optimize it. After our tour of *Cézanne* I asked her how I could do this:

*Janet: you taught them things they didn’t know like you used that word ‘impasto’ and got them to say it ...you can’t show that on the slide...we were there to look*

*at paint and we saw it...you highlighted it and got them close enough...you got them standing back from the Sisley and the Soutine...I think encouraging them to move around and to look closely...it doesn't seem earth shattering or different but it is!...not every kid is getting to look at impasto...so that's it the offering....*

### **Sketching as a Tool for Close Looking**

*Me: What does sketching do for students?*

*Janet: It gets them to look close. The thing about art is that there is a huge range of ability, and I'm not trained as an art instructor. I teach art but I do not have a scope and sequence of drawing skills, we just do things...expose them to things, expose them to materials and let them experiment with it...*

The question 'what does sketching do' was a theme throughout my journal.

Before this inquiry I understood sketching as a tool to extend the time spent looking, since "the element of time, important in all aesthetic encounters, is clearly highlighted in the museum context. Seeing is more than mere looking; looking is more than a casual glance" (Burnham & Kai Kee, 2005, p.67). I did not, however, have a true appreciation of the value of close looking, and thus did not recognize the rich possibilities that an experience of sketching has to offer. I had no idea that observing students' processes while sketching Emily Carr works would make me see sketching as an embodied emotional engagement. I also find it stunning that the simple activity of sketching re shaped my understanding of my role as art gallery educator.

As I looked around the room their eyes darted between the Emily Carr [paintings] and their own work. Is this just reproducing or can sketching also be interpreting? One boy asked if he was allowed to draw something he didn't see. I asked him to explain and show me. He had already created a tree using shading and lines, shapes and movement that he had noticed in the Carr. I told him it's great that he looked closely at the Carr and his sketch showed what he noticed, so it was a

great idea to add his imagination to his inspiration. I told him this is what all artists do.

While selecting their art work to sketch we had a conversation about a question: ‘what does untitled mean?’ We talked about how titles of art works can tell us a little more about what the artist was thinking about and sometimes they don’t title them at all. I asked ‘what would you call this work?’ ‘Deep Dark Woods and Shade’ he said. Having students offer titles is a way for them to express their interpretation of the work-it at least describes what they notice, maybe even their emotional connection.

This connection was made with the sketches the students created when one student asked ‘can we create a title for our sketches?’ ‘What a great idea!’ I exclaimed. I then introduced this student’s idea to the rest of the class. Some other students followed suite and named their sketches also. This was a great moment that showed connection making and by exclaiming ‘what a great idea’ gave some agency to the student. The desire to name the work showed that sketching is much more than copying or observing a work, and the title had nothing to do with Carr’s title...a new work existed.

When we were sketching the students were completely silent. Completely. We were in the Emily Carr room and the other group was in the WALLPAPERS digital art room. Our silence was sliced by a dagger of laughter from the other room. “Can we go in that room?” one of the students yelled out.... (Author’s personal Journal Entry, June 4, 2015)

The power of the silence and deep concentration displayed by the students moved me to notice that there was much more going on here than students copying an artwork to understand its visual elements and principles. Through my discussions with Janet, reflection and review of museum education literature, I saw this moment as so much more. Along with employing their prior knowledge gained through discussion of Emily Carr prior to sketching, I saw the students display agency, emotion, embodiment, close looking, enjoyment/pleasure, and experimentation with new materials.

These ways of learning and knowing were brought together and combined to create “An experience’ of intense, focused seeing that doesn’t just end, but builds up toward a satisfying conclusion. What Dewey calls culmination leaves us in a state of ardent appreciation” (Burnham & Kai Kee, 2005, p.67). The ‘culmination’ of the experience that I shared with Janet’s class in the moments of sketching Emily Carr paintings was reached as I felt the ‘bubble’ pop. The experience had happened and ended but with a desire to explore more artworks in a different way. Burnham and Kai-Kee describe Dewey’s notion of the ‘culmination’ of ‘*an*’ experience as “experiences with art [that] may be marked off from ordinary experience by a sense of wholeness and unity, and characterized at their close by feelings of enjoyment and fulfillment... distinct from the flow of ordinary experience (2011, p. 9). They reference Dewey (1934) to implicate the importance of emotions in ‘*an*’ experience, explaining “interpretation and understanding alternate with moments of emotion. In the end, everything should come together, with the experience of the artwork unified in an expanded whole emotion is the moving and cementing force” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p.74).



## Sketching as Embodied Emotional Engagement

*Janet: Their writing isn't that clear or detailed afterwards, it's just a response that gets done, the real response is their art.*

Can the materials that we [experiment] with evoke emotional response? If it takes them to another world, like Janet says, then yes! (Author's personal Journal entry June 24).

In this study I was struck by the possibilities that sketching offers in creating and communicating a learning experience. Janet asks questions about these possibilities in our May 20th conversation asking *Is that what sketching is? If you are sketching an apple 100 times would you sketch it the same way every time? Or would you finally figure out you should change what you've seen or would you change the apple? ...can they see that in their own art?"*

In my journals I questioned if I could consider the “process of what they created as a gauge for engagement and emotional response” (June 24). Can sketching be conceived of as an emotional response? O'Donoghue (2015) asks us to “consider making (in its many forms) as a site rich with possibilities...” (p.110). I asked myself if sketching or making is an emotional response. Sketching connects the mind and the hand, the eye and the imagination, but does that mean it is emotional?

If making “art transforms emotion and knowledge into interpretation...(Rasanen, 2003, p.187) then it is an emotional response, since “artistic representations have a special ability to express the quality of experience” (Rasanen, 2003, p.187). In her research Janet found that “the [students] artwork expressed their feelings and created

images that meant something to them (Logie, 2012, p.35). Linko (2003) describes that by visiting museums and creating artworks visitors “seek powerful experiences” and “such experiences usually have a strong emotional component, which includes intensive and nostalgic processing of one’s memories and experiences. Emotional and cognitive elements are thus intertwined” (p.65).

### **Sketching as Embodiment**

*Janet: They didn’t get to sketch in the gallery, did they?”*

*Me: Just in front of the water colours”*

*Janet: Right they just had the little ones and there was just a few...there is not much to sketch there they are just lines covered with some paint there. I think moving in the gallery is the key. They get to move, they get to look they get to go there and come back to the one they like...*

“Could they feel the movement of the lines through their own minds and hands and minds [again]?” I asked in my journal June 24<sup>th</sup>. Janet describes that exploring the room before choosing which artwork each student wanted to sketch is the ‘key’ to art gallery experience for her: movement and exploration. They moved of their bodies through the space until it came time to focus on the movement of only their hands. In this sense, our sketching experience could be conceived of as embodiment.

In her thesis Janet describes the importance of the “process of observing, wandering and wondering in the museum” (Logie, 2012, p.37). While working with a grade three class, the impact of movement and exploration is important, since in my experience their attention spans are short. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) criticizes teaching methods that are “cognitive rather than experiential; they privilege the students mind, and ignore the (frequently regarded as too active) body” (p.4).

Hein (1998) insists however that movement must also include cognitive abilities rather than replacing them, and is concerned that “Some museums interpreted the value of activity as including any form of physical action, such as buttons to push, flaps to raise to find answers, or any activity that involved the hands, without necessarily involving the mind” (p. 144). As Janet notes, embodiment is not just about the students moving their bodies, “*without looking, without talking they are not exploring... they need some explanation to hang it on to, so my exploring is looking at it and [then] you tell me what it is, and then I will tell you*” (Conversation May 20). Movement without tasks assigned can easily lead to aimlessness, as Hein is warning art educators to understand. Hooper-Greenhill explains that the mind is used in the action of “drawing to discover the characteristics of an object is useful...especially when a focus on a specific aspect, say texture or form is suggested. Objects can be drawn to show how they work, or to demonstrate size or scale, using measurements” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, p.126).

The use of a new material (graphite) and invitation to experiment with it seemed to enhance the movement of their hands while the students were sketching. This is revealed in the long gestural strokes and the variation of lines shown in the sketches. The students were directed to sketch quickly, as a sketch is capturing what they notice rather than outlining every detail. This urgency enhanced the pace of movement of their hands. Kruger Weisberg (2011) found that “creativity is enhanced with the addition of a movement. My experience has been that the spontaneous improvisational nature of movement engagement sparks imagination and nurtures creative verbal exploration“ (p.207). The nurturing of verbal exploration is very important to art gallery education, as Burnham and Kai-Kee express in their dialogical model of art gallery teaching, but I have

found that it is also possible that choosing an artwork, silent close looking and sketching can be of equal import in evoking emotional responses.

### **Sketching as Non-Verbal Engagement**

The power of the silence while the students in Janet's class were sketching was overwhelming. It filled the room and caused me to question the possibilities of non-verbal engagement in art gallery education. Hudson connects emotions with a form of non-verbal response, stating that: "a successful choice of images will in any case allow the museum visitor to absorb certain information without any use of words. It will, in addition, provide the emotional connect that is a necessary part of learning" (1992, p.54). Hooper-Greenhill (2007) agrees with the need to connect the emotions rather than relying on 'verbal experience,' explaining that:

The conscious processes of verbal experience, which involve speaking, reading, listening, are not enough to engender true learning; the feeling processes, which are largely unconscious, must also be engaged and the way to do this is through bodily action. The research data shows the power of active bodily engagement to generate enjoyment, knowledge, understanding and enhanced self-confidence. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p.171)

deBolla (2001) considers the possibilities of silence instead of verbalization stating that students often feel a "sense that any attempt at verbalizing a response to an artwork diminishes the experience or even destroys it. Indeed, I have encountered students who refuse to talk about their responses for fear of losing something very

valuable to them (p. 4). He describes the inability to articulate a response to an artwork ‘mutism.’ Although his ‘mutism’ happens through an engagement with emotions, it is not necessarily what was happening in my sketching experience with the grade threes. ‘Mutism’ is considered a lack of words to describe a response that is deeply emotional. The students in my group were silent likely because they were concentrating on close looking and creating their sketch rather than simply the inability to communicate their emotions. deBolla’s ‘mutism’ does, however imply that there is much, much more contained in silent responses to art works than simply a lack of interest.

Janet told me that almost 7/8 of her grade three class were English Second Language learners (ESL). As I have a very short time to gauge the students’ language abilities, I must be very careful to not mistake a students’ silence for non-engagement or not having interest. This sketching experience gave me a way to perceive the emotive engagement of ESL students who may have not been confident enough with English to engage in dialogue. A way to share their understanding of the themes discussed, or their interest in an aspect of an artwork is to sketch. Sketches are a useful tool for non-verbal communication since “the arts transform experiences into a form that can be handled and shared with others” (Rasanen, 2003, p.188).

### **Sketching as Ownership / Agency**

*Janet: There are some kids who have had hundreds of hours of [drawing] lessons ...which is when [other kids] are kind of uncomfortable... it hasn't started in grade 3, so at that point whatever they create they love...They know that the teacher's work is good...but they are very happy with theirs. I think by the time, maybe grade 5 or 6, that changes.*

My discussion with Janet made me understand the agency that creating artworks in response to other art allows. In our tour, as I described earlier, students took ownership of their learning experience first by talking to other students. One brought another to the didactic that read ‘untitled.’ Their co-inquiry led to asking me their question, and sharing it with the class. When students were seated and sketching a few minutes later one asked if they could create a title for their work, showing her pride in what she created. Others liked the idea and did the same. This observation supports Falk and Dierking’s (2012) findings that “interactions between children enhanced the interactions children had with individual exhibits. A great deal of peer teaching was observed; in some cases the interactions seemed to stimulate label reading” (p. 160). Observing the students walk to the didactic panels and form questions together was an interesting catalyst to further develop the experience for the whole class. This is evidence that “the visitor’s interaction with labels is part of a larger whole to which a visitor both responds and contributes,” (Hein, 1998, p. 140). Students heard other student’s ideas and used them in their own way, revealing appreciation and interest. The students were invited to truly drive their experience in responding to an Emily Carr by creating their own art works, complete with title.

### **Sketches as Evidence**

If we think of sketches as expressions, then they can also be considered evidence of the results of an embodied engagement. “Science states meanings; art expresses them” (Dewey, 1934, p.209); thus sketches can convey meanings made. Dewey explains how “Expression, like construction, signifies both an action and its result” (1934, p.208), and thus sketches are evidence of results of active close looking, creative expression or

emotional response. The students engaged their knowledge, their prior experience of Emily Carr paintings as well as information from a discussion. Earlier that day we looked for examples of repetition, line, pattern and movement in other Emily Carr works. We discussed the possibilities of the material, a graphite stick, and how it can be used in different ways and modeled how to do so.

I found this to be an exemplary learning opportunity because it employed the qualities of an embodied emotive experience. The sketches are evidence of embodiment, since the graphite strokes show the movement of their hands as they embody the movement that they see in the Emily Carr brushstrokes, shapes and patterns. The sketches show an exploration with a new material, the graphite lines are varied and used in many different ways. The sketches also prove that learning can be gauged and perceived in ways that don't rely on verbal response. The pride they had in showing me their works connect agency and ownership of learning experience to this particular sketching experience and thus emotional response. Not all student sketches include a communication of a learning experience, however these sketches are evidence of the themes that emerged in this study.

What was my valuable role in this experience? I used knowledge that I was acquiring through collaboration with Janet to perceive an embodied emotive engagement that was not verbally focused. I was able to gain an understanding the importance of emotional response through art making. My role was to perceive the depth of engagement and act accordingly, in this case by stepping back to allow the student's experience to unfold. There are many ways to gauge engagement with artworks. The heavy silence that

I *felt* in the moments of sketching revealed a certain quality of engagement. Dewey (1934) calls this quality ‘unity’ and claims: “The existence of this unity is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts” (Dewey, 1934, p.206).

It has become clear to me that sketching offers many possibilities for engaging young students in artworks experientially. However, the artworks I am discussing in this study are mostly 2 Dimensional paintings. This study focuses on exhibitions that present artworks that are hung on a wall. Close looking at paintings reveals the artist’s process through movement of brushstrokes, impasto, colour choices, composition, framing of features etc. It is interesting to think about if close looking plays a role in experiential forms of art.

One of the artworks that I explored with Janet’s class was an animated projection by the collective *WALLPAPERS*. To understand the work more deeply sketching would likely not be useful, as images moved and changed by the second. Close looking and discussion were still tools of engagement here. We looked at where the projectors were situated, how the light transferred the image, what the subject matter was, how and why images moved as well as their pixelated qualities.

To capture what could be described as an experience, having the animations projected onto the viewer, we used another form of documentation, photography. Students were given tablets and asked to take a picture of how they interact with the projections. They enjoyed snapping away as their classmate’s faces were transformed by coloured projections. However, the documentation of what they noticed, the images that they took, did not have the same sustained, still and thoughtful engagement that I noticed



while sketching. Students looked at only themselves in the pictures not the composition. Not one of the students asked to name their image, as they did with their sketches which were evidence of their agency. The photos revealed a frenzied excitement, an emotional reaction that encourages engagement, however they were not evidence of connecting our discussions about the work to their experience of it as the Emily Carr sketches were. The WALLPAPERS projections were somewhat experiential, mainly by interacting through shadows. These works still relied on a 2 Dimensional surface support, the walls of the gallery, to allow us to look closely at them all together, seeing the same thing at the same time.

Close looking through sketching or capturing experience through images becomes of less importance when thinking of large-scale experiential artworks. Although sketching may allow a viewer to better understand the materials used, the design or the presentation of the work, it is difficult to sketch an experience. Photographs may capture fractions of moments of that experience. However they do not capture how the body reacted to the work, or how the viewers' thoughts and emotions shift from moment to moment.

The art educator's role of facilitating close looking, whether through sketching, photography or conversation, shifts when thinking of experiential art. For example, although it can be useful to better understand the artist's choice of materials and construction, leading students to look closely at Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's 2013 *Experiment in F# Minor*, would not give them a full understanding of it. They have to move their body, to listen, to experiment with the way the body's relation to the speaker changes the sounds created. As O' Donoghue (2015) reminds us in his article *The*

*turn to experience in contemporary art: A potentiality for thinking art education differently*, art educators are facing new challenges while engaging students in experiential art. Perhaps this turn will call for a shift in thinking from ‘close looking’ as engagement to ‘attending closely’ to emotional responses or other things that emerge as the viewer experiences artworks with different combinations of the senses. Thus, the work I have done to better understand close looking is useful while we consider more traditional forms of art, however is not generalizable to all art forms.

### **Other Findings: Art Historical Knowledge and Expert Information**

*Janet: They're not impressed by experts, they are not intimidated. They don't think that they don't know things. Grade three is really the perfect grade, as it's not knowledge that they think that they need, they are very happy to see things. I told them if they don't like things to make sure that they say what they don't like and why they don't like it ...I think I probably had some shy kids in the group but they are thinking, they are thinking those things.*

*Janet: Talking about the subject matter, the skull or the Greek story of Dionysus...that wouldn't help them...or going into the room with timelines...they knew expressionism and impressionism...but time lines don't mean anything to them...these kids are just there to look and move and experience...*

As a primary school teacher for over 30 years, Janet values movement, exploration and looking over receiving information. Burnham (2013) references Friere discussing his criticism of a banking system in which students have information deposited into their minds. Museum education literature reminds us that art historical knowledge is critical for art gallery education (Burnham & Kai-Kee 2005; Eisner & Dobbs, 1986; Hein 1998). However, this knowledge should be used considerately, as Burnham and Kai-Kee highlight by asking “how does the instructor use the knowledge she has gained from art-historical research? She uses it to enable her to suggest possibilities, not to establish conclusive interpretations that she will impose upon her

students” (2005, p.71). Janet describes in her thesis that giving her students permission to move through the space and ask their own questions led to them “looking more closely at objects and deepening their thinking about how to learn in the museum. They were able to reflect, to ask questions and to think about the artifacts as opposed to being the recipients of ‘expert’ information” (Logie, 2012, p.37).

I asked Janet if I gave too much didactic information in the *Cézanne* tour. Her response was a recognition of balancing information and exploration by having the students ask for information rather than it being immediately given: “*I don’t think so because they needed an explanation of the Lautrec for instance, you needed to explain who that is...[but]the kids should be asking ‘who is that?’*” Burnham (2013) again references Dewey describing his concerns that “the information shutdown experience.” deBolla questions the balance of information and subjective interpretation, asking “how much does one need to know? And just as important, how much does knowing such things also block or prevent one from seeing, hearing or reading? (2001, p. 22). While discussing the pedagogical possibilities of experiential artworks, O’Donoghue (2015) calls us to consider pedagogical possibilities that are emergent and not wholly contingent on the expertise of others (p.108).

Theoretically I believe content expertise to have a role in art gallery education, but find pedagogical skills and knowledge to be of utmost value in my work with grade three students. Reviewing museum education research that reveals the importance of art gallery educators learning pedagogical skills from teachers (Liu, 2000) affirmed my belief. However, journal entries made me aware of my reverence for Janet’s expertise, while my thinking and writing intended to diffuse the role of content knowledge. The

reflective journaling revealed this gap between my own theory and practice, as I had hoped that it would. It revealed great anxiety and fear when I realized that it was Janet, not I that was the expert on Cézanne, on her students and on museum education practices. Becoming aware of this gap led me to change my practice, but not always for the better. As outlined by patterns in my journals, my focus became impressing Janet with my knowledge of close looking skills. Upon further reflection I see that I was losing my way because of my fear of losing my role as expert.

In a journal entry on June 4<sup>th</sup> I expressed that I had done too much talking in front of the 1929 Emily Carr drawing *Nootka*. I remember telling them about her use of charcoal to create form with a great deal of shading and highlights. I noticed something interesting happened as I was talking; I saw myself leading the students' experience rather than following their interests. The language that I used was not too directive, but the length of time I spent there made it evident that it was a work that I was fond of, and my focus on keeping them talking drew their attention from the work;

I feel like I forced the charcoal drawing 'Nootka' on them. It is my favorite work in the show. We talked about how we saw shapes and patterns (repeated shapes)...I asked them to look at it more closely....As I asked 'what else do you notice' they started looking at me-for my expectation. This happened again, they turned their backs to the works as we had discussions-or tried to. As soon as I realized that their focus was on me, and not the artwork I stopped and moved to the sketching...I saw some were getting antsy... (Author's personal Journal entry, June 4)

This entry reveals my perception of them ‘getting antsy’ and that I responded by moving on, but it took too long and focus and engagement slipped away. deBolla (2001) describes “attempts to define particular qualities of those objects designated artworks as “aesthetic” qualities-harmony, unity, intensity” to be unhelpful, “because they suggest that one’s attention should be directed at the artwork rather than at an experience of it. This slippage of sliding away from what I take to be the proper object of attention confuses the location of the “art” (deBolla, 2001, p.18). Eisner and Dobbs claim that “Art history can enhance the perception of works of art...[however] when used as a substitute for attention to the aesthetic features of a work, art history can detract from a meaningful aesthetic encounter with the work of art” (1986, p.ii).

Thinking of art historical knowledge of key import, as I did in our April 14<sup>th</sup> *Cézanne* tour, led to a missed opportunity for an embodied emotional engagement with the students. I learned that primary school children are not interested in expert information (Logie, 2012) and also that “*timelines don’t mean anything to them*” (conversation May 20). I am not supporting what Meszaros (2007) deems the ‘whatever’ tour experience that solely focuses on experience to determine meaning, I am advocating for the balance of what Janet calls ‘explanation and exploration’ (Logie, 2012). I have learned through this study that at times there may need to be an imbalance that places much more weight on exploration and close looking than on art historical information or expert knowledge. Janet describes the shifting balance between ‘*knowledge acquisition*’/prior knowledge from lived experiences, ‘*knowledge application*’ (Conversation May 20).

While art historical information, narrative and discussion of formal qualities are topics that can create entry points to lead into interpretations and dialogues about art works, close looking and personal reflection to elicit emotional response is where the experiences begins, or as deBolla espouses, where the ‘art’ is. If students are looking at me while I am telling them art historical information or asking them questions, they could miss an engagement or ‘affective’ experience of the artwork. Embodied emotive engagements require close looking as a provocative force. Noticing that their focus was on me rather than on the art is a reflection of my developing capability to perceive the quality of engagement and close looking.

### **Activating Prior Knowledge**

*Janet: I’m over preparing them for every visit because they are going to get so much more out of it than just going into the space...*

The background knowledge and anticipation about the trips gave the students agency to indeed become explorers (Logie, 2012 p.38).

Engaging the prior knowledge of students in an art gallery, be it culturally acquired or learned in schools, is what connects art works to the students’ lives and thus makes it meaningful. Hein (1998) supports Mezsaros’ (2007) claims regarding the necessity of balancing prior knowledge and experience with the object since “learning can only occur when visitors can connect to what they already know, can make an association between what they bring to the exhibition and what is presented” (p.152). He explains that this “connection between what visitors bring with them and new experiences is crucial and must be negotiated by each individual whenever new

experiences are encountered. This is key to developing situations where learning can take place” (p.153). For Hooper-Greenhill (2007) prior knowledge enables subjectivity in learning to create meaning. She explains that she employs “the use of prior knowledge to make events meaningful and significant in an individual way (p.185). This inquiry opened my eyes to the value of prior knowledge, and at the grade three level I found it much more emotionally evocative than giving them art historical information.

### **Can Prior Knowledge Engage Emotions?**

Teachers and gallery educators prepare students for what they will see at the gallery because knowing the works creates excitement and a feeling of connection, an emotional response that can be tied to prior knowledge. This does not mean that exposing students to art works prior to seeing the original ensures an emotional response, but it opens possibilities for connection making, as Hein described. I have felt the depth of emotion that recognition creates. I was in tears looking at the *Sistine Chapel* as I scrolled my eyes along each cherub and fleshy muscle rendered that I had seen in art books since I was a child. I have felt emotion in an act of recognition. Gauging and engaging prior knowledge can open possibilities for art gallery educators to create meaningful experiences.

In the *Cézanne* tour I did not take enough time to gauge and perceive the group, I was too concerned with impressing the teacher with my knowledge, as I discussed on page 79 of this thesis. Becoming aware of a gap between theory and practice led me to change, but not always for the better. As outlined by patterns in my journals, my focus

became impressing Janet with my knowledge of close looking skills. Upon further reflection I see that I was loosing my way because of my fear of losing my role as expert. An excerpt from our May 20th conversation below is an example of a missed opportunity to connect agency, prior knowledge, embodiment (through making), free choice exploration and emotional response.

*Me: Do you go deep into just a few artworks, if the interest is there, or do you try and cover a lot? My reflection after the tour was that we were just rushed through the whole thing and I was so conscious of time...I'm constantly looking at my clock....because I spent so much time looking at a few different works...I knew of your interest in Cézanne, so I wanted to spend time with that, but then they missed something that they were prepped for..*

*Janet: The Modigliani.*

*Me: Did they have any response about that?*

*Janet: No they were fine, but another group got to see it...They knew who he was and what he did and they did their own and they were quite happy with their own Modigliani.*

*Me: I felt that I had lost an opportunity to be responsive to them. That was a great learning moment for me, I could have questioned them a little bit more about what they had done to prepare maybe, or what they were excited to see...*

*Janet: Once they do their own, they are quite excited about their own.*

*Me: They did point to it and say 'oh Modigliani!' just as we were finishing our tour. This was again a factor of time management and like I said, a learning opportunity for me.*

*Janet: Because I was very close to that particular tour and I had seen it a lot and prepared them as much as I could...I mean, I prepare them for all of them, but because I liked that particular tour maybe I was doing too much in the class.... Have you ever had a class that's over prepared?*

*Me: I think that's an interesting question because I want to say no...but with that exceptional preparation also comes expectation too so they may be expecting to see certain things, like the instance of the Modigliani, I wouldn't say that they were over prepared and that it was a problem, but I didn't fulfill that expectation...*



My lack of perception of the students' interests and prior knowledge resulted in a lost rich learning moment for the students. If I had taken more time to ask them what they know, what are their interests rather than focusing mainly on building anticipation in the tour's introduction, we may have had a different experience in the *Cézanne* tour.

In moments of embodied emotional engagement, in a room full of very familiar paintings I saw my practice anew. I saw right in front of me that dialogue is not always the gauge for interpretation or engagement, as I previously understood it to be. I realized dissemination of art historical information needs to be responsive to inquiry and not based on the educator's agenda. This is especially true for a class of grade threes that includes a population of 7/8 English Second Language students. By shifting my focus away from dialogue I was able to see the value of sketching as an embodied and emotional response. I saw myself in a process of learning to be responsive and flexible. I allowed the environment to move me, to sway my thinking and actions, yet I was rooted in growing understandings of museum education literature. I had developed my ability to perceive embodied emotive engagements and thus articulate them.

## Chapter Five. Conclusions and Implications

Who is the educator and what do they do? For me, my role as an educator involves a knowledge of content, but also the job of creating fun, engaging learning experiences that always include the visitor's voice. Whether we are standing in front of a classroom, or involved in the construction of an exhibit, our role and relevancy as educators is to create engaging experiences that directly speak to the learner's interests and experiences. This is a refreshing and invigorating distinction from my perceived role in formal academics because, most importantly, it is the visitor's voice that informs us of what we, as museum educators, do. (Uzelmeier, 2006, p. 214)

My intentions in this study were to look closely at my practice as art educator to better understand the roles that I play. My research question shifted to 'what *valuable* roles do I play...?' as I was in a unique learning situation while touring Janet's class; not being the expert on content or method. Through journaling my emotions I became aware of the gap between my theory (prioritizing close looking over content knowledge) and practice (revealed in documented anxiety and fear of not being the 'expert'). It was the awareness of this gap that was productive, as it forced me to ask myself not only what roles do I play as art gallery educator, but what is the value of those roles? I found this insecurity of identity throughout museum education literature, which calls art educators to articulate their value. In this study I learned that through the roles of collaborator and audience evaluator we prove our value. I learned that we can change our actions and responses to students by honing awareness of emotive embodied engagements and knowing how to extend, expand or allow them to happen.

### What I Learned Through Collaboration with a Classroom Teacher

She pointed to things I had not placed awareness on, not anything revolutionary but things that shifted my learning process and what I noticed. I think I also did this for her, I asked her questions so she could reflect on her practice and writing.

The relationship here may even be reciprocal... a true co-exploration of art gallery education practice. (Author's personal Journal, June 24)

I experienced the importance of collaboration with classroom teachers, as my relationship with Janet helped me come to understand the value of the roles I play. The way that I describe my experience working with Janet and her class is reflective of this inquiry experience itself.. I told her, ‘ *I feel like I’ve really stumbled into some interesting stuff with the experience with your group.*’ The key here is that I call this process ‘stumbling.’ I did stumble upon new ways of thinking about and engaging in my practice, not in a clumsy way, but in a way that was enabled by my openness and flexibility throughout this process. I am attempting to do what Janet describes by “approaching the museum with an open mind and an open agenda” (Logie, 2012, p.3). The shift in my thinking that occurred may not seem revolutionary, however learning is about “...a new fact. A new skill. A new understanding, It does not matter how small these might be, as long as they have meaning and relevance to the individual” (Talboys, 2011, p.108). My research is not about comparing two art gallery tours or methodologies since “each group will be different, even the same group visiting on different occasions will be possessed of a different dynamic” (Talboys, 2011, p.69). My interest became seeing what changed within my abilities of perceiving; coming to know emotive engagement, not just catalyzing it through dialogue.

## **The Importance of Audience Perception and Evaluation**

How can we perceive the qualities of a learning experience? Honing our skills of perception becomes critical for Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005). They believe that “a real conversation emerges as a result of the sensitivity and perceptivity of the museum instructor. This requires practice, skill, and preparatory work that allows the teacher to understand the ideas that emerge, and to move the conversation forward” (p.70). deBolla (2001) describes emotional affective responses, warning that they “do not, necessarily come easily, they may not be available on demand...we may not even recognize them when they occur or, more commonly, not know what to do with them (p.12). On June 24,<sup>th</sup> after transcribing my recorded conversation with Janet I asked more questions in my journal; “Maybe it’s our role to be attentive and responsive to find the best mode/vehicle for capturing a student’s emotional response...sketching? Open exploration?”

For Hein (1998), educators “need to understand... experiences sufficiently so that we can shape them” (p.2). I found that experience can also take shape as a result of art educators stepping back and allowing an embodied emotive experience. Falk and Dierking (2012) remind us that: “It is critical that staff understand their roles and how to best support the visitor experience, This may mean not facilitating the experience at all” (p. 172). For Rice (2003) the educator helps shape experiences, by “stepping in not as an authority rendering judgment or spoon-feeding information, but as an expert whose job is to help audiences articulate their own observations on and responses to art more clearly and powerfully (2003, p.18). We need to understand and write about ways of

perceiving qualities of experiences, in order to know when to step in, and when stepping in may squash viewer's emotional engagement.

Talking in the gallery does not mean engagement, nor does listening only. Our role is to perceive engagement first, the quality and depth of that engagement and then, as responsive teachers, choose the appropriate action. As Janet said, "*it's not about not telling them, it's about feeling.*" She describes exploration as a learning tool, that "*if you want to learn about art go to art...But first you watch them go, then you pay attention to the going.*" By perceiving an embodied emotional engagement as it was happening, I was able to apply what I have learned through this inquiry, to stop myself from talking and allow a silence full of concentration, close looking, movement, and emotion to extend and fill the room.

I encountered a shift in my practice that was informed by museum education literature and an open dialogue with a responsive and critical teacher. I underwent what Hein (1998) would call 'discovery' education in my own learning processes, which "includes more than piling facts and concepts into the warehouse of the mind. As people learn, their capacity to learn expands; the shape and volume of the mind's warehouse is transformed by the process of grappling with the new information" (p. 30). I indeed feel transformed by this grappling, as Janet said, "it's not remarkable...but it's there!" This research is not about new information, it is about *new understandings*. I began to wonder how a study about shifts in my own thinking would add to the discourse of museum education literature. Hein (1998) offered me some reassurance by describing self-focused research as "subjective," in the sense that it comes from a single subject, but not in the

pejorative sense of being particularly unreliable or invalid” ( p.71). He claimed that “Our ability to talk and think about what we have done is one of the great advantages of any research or evaluation activity involving human beings”(Hein, 1998, p.71).

Museum education literature has encouraged educators to step back to allow for explorative free choice learning (Falk & Dierking, 2012; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Logie, 2012) but what I am suggesting is that we first need to hone our abilities to perceive engagement, (verbal or otherwise) in which “we have moved from the life of the object to our own inner lives, and back, fitting pieces of one into the other” (Burnham & Kai Kee, 2005, p.75). It is about being ‘wide awake’ as Maxine Greene (2001) asks of us, but also about being wide awake and *able* to recognize, to look or *Feel* that an emotionally charged learning experience as it is happening.

My roles within dialogue and the strength of my questions for students are important, as I initially believed, but my thinking has swayed towards the importance of connecting emotionally to students. My rich collaboration with a third grade teacher offered insight into the importance of emotional response, and also simple ways to enable agency over their learning experiences. I am not talking about asking students how they feel. As I have learned in this study, I can ignite emotional responses or embodied emotive engagement by creating the conditions for agency and by making emotional connections to them through anticipation, excitement, comfort and enjoyment (humour). Evans-Palmer (2013) had similar findings:

Students need enthusiasm and simplicity to keep them engaged. On past museum tours with my students, I have observed how readily they blossom in the company

of docents who are authentically, passionately themselves. Enthusiasm about the artworks heightens contagion in a group when the docent leads with appropriate excitability and possibly humor (not facetious or sarcastic). (Evans-Palmer, 2013, p. 371)

I found a new value in my role as art educator. The unique experience working with Janet in the *Cézanne and the Modern* tour, (having her as the expert), forced me to ask myself what I have to offer, and the answer that came was the artworks. I have access to original works that have the potential for learning experiences that reproductions do not. I wanted to optimize these possibilities so I placed my focus on brushstrokes, surfaces (impasto!) and scale. For a moment I saw enabling close looking as my most valuable role.

I read Janet's research and my thinking shifted again. She described how the student's "expressions of appreciation for the masks from many cultures exceeded any ideas I had about getting them to look closely and describe what they saw. They sensed the power, embraced the stories, recited things they knew and created magnificent worlds from their imaginations" (Logie, 2012, p.9). I wanted to discover what she did that created this rich environment that went beyond close looking since "what we teach is not just 'how' to look, or what to look for, but in the end, the possibilities of what art may be" (Burnham and Kai Kee, 2005, p.76). Janet suggested that "*maybe that is the most important thing, if you just let them look at what they are interested in.*" This simple statement shifted my focus on the importance of close looking to the value in letting students follow their interests, giving them agency over their learning experience.

In this study I developed a new awareness of what engagement looks like, what it *feels* like and sounds like. An embodied emotive engagement is so much more than dialogue, although dialogue is of great value. I am now aware of the importance of non-verbal emotional response, agency and embodiment, through this collaboration with Janet and through observation of a silent emotive embodied engagement. Mazzei (2007) discusses analyzing silences in research. If our role as art educators is to perceive and understand the audience then ‘reading silences’ becomes of interest. Mazzei discusses how viewers can “enter that silent presence that, if listened for, listened to, heard, will lead to a more inclusive understanding of a multiplicity of meanings” (2007, p. 640). Having students talk in the gallery should not be our highest goal since “intense looking and deep concentration enable every viewer to construct his or her own meaning, within boundaries charged by the artwork itself” (Burnham & Kai-Kee 2005, p.73).

I have often used the word ‘shifted,’ as my research and focus has evolved and become something else. Maybe the word ‘sway’ is a better term. Sway happens when we allow the environment to move us, placing our value in our flexibility. Sway also connotes grounding, a rooting in something stabilizing. Although I agree that destabilization can be very generative in creating new possibilities for thinking (Lather, 2007) art gallery educators need to root themselves in pedagogical and art historical discourse, as to avoid the ‘whatever’ learning that Mezsaros criticizes. At times we will change our focus, the way we view our practice, or our understanding of educational theories. We are also planted on grounding that is uncertain and shifting, as the museum’s mandates and educational theory has and will continue to change over time. Our roots cannot be dug into one method of learning or teaching, but in the understanding of the



value of art education, and the necessity of evaluating and perceiving embodied emotional engagements that we share with our students. How these conditions are created will shift and sway over time as well. The important thing is that we become more flexible as we grow.

The process of reflecting upon and writing about a moment in which I saw my actions change and adapt to new ways of thinking about the students' learning experience has been an embodied emotive engagement for me. O'Donoghue (2015) describes how "the act of representing an experience experienced at another time is, of course, the living of an entirely new experience" (2015, p.104). For Hobson, "Reflection is a process of making sense of one's experience and telling the story of one's journey" (1996, p.2). The process of making my journals and conversations into a story helped me understand what I place attention upon and thus deem valuable. Often my emotions of anxiety were revealing, and later helpful when I saw how they played their part in the story, moving the plot along through begging questions. As Leggo (2008) says, "this is what I seek to do, to imitate experience in narratives, so I can make sense of them" (p.7).

I found that silence rather than dialogue can reveal the depth of a learning experience, and can be reflective of an emotional response. It is the shifts in my perception of engagement that I find most interesting about this study, a honing of awareness and sensitivity to not only respond to students rather than lead, but to know exactly when and how to respond...or to understand when to not respond and allow experiences to happen.

## Implications

The evolution of my thinking regarding audience engagement and perception/evaluation is evidence of the value of collaboration and self-reflection. This study found a lack of museum education literature discussing specific learning *from* classroom teachers. Further research could be done questioning ways that museum educators with no formal education background can learn from focused conversations with teachers. How can art gallery and museum educators set up programs that facilitate exchange of pedagogical knowledge and experience with museology, art historical and content knowledge?

O'Donoghue (2015) highlights contemporary art's movement towards visitor experience with examples of artworks that are experiential rather than only looked at. He claims the art educator's role is to help articulate these experiences. This theme of questioning roles and goals of art educators can and will continue as the way art is consumed by the public shifts and sways. How will art gallery educators help articulate an experience that is the visitors' not their own? It would be interesting to pursue further research working with experiential art installations, finding questions or probing comments that can be used to aid articulation.

This study found value in a non-verbal engagement. Museum education literature discusses the use of silent sketching for close looking (Burnham and Kai-Kee, 2005; Hooper Greenhill, 1991), however there are few examples of other non-verbal engagements outlined. Since many of the students in Janet's group were English second language learners, this became interesting to me. Students who are not comfortable with a

new language are disconnected from the experience of an art gallery tour if they are not given agency or ways to express their responses non-verbally. Further research can be done inquiring into if and how museum educators are creating spaces for non-verbal learning experiences. Can we become comfortable with a lack of dialogue? What are other ways that we can assess and prove the value of learning experiences if not through dialogue?

I invite museum and art gallery educators to offer classroom teachers an exchange through observation and conversation. Asking a teacher for a few hours of their time over lunch, after developing articulated questions can provide much more than insight, it can provide transformation. Articulating these collaborations and sharing personal learning experiences will build museum education discourse, diffusing insecurities for other art gallery and museum educators who are looking to articulate the value of their roles..

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