MEDIATING AND NEGOTIATING CULTURE IN AN ART MUSEUM: A CASE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

Cross cultural education in art museums is an interesting and complex issue. While cultural exhibitions have received attention in research, studies have usually focused on the nature of the exhibitions and have not explored the audience's understanding about culture in relationship to the exhibition.

This qualitative study explores how and what First Nations cultures have been mediated by a civic art museum and negotiated by the museum audience, and the relationship between the two. Observations of the exhibition and audience and interviews with 99 adults in the museum were collected and analyzed to identify patterns and relationships. Analysis of the exhibition found the mediation of culture was distinguished by a partnership of the museum and First Nations cultures which reflected both their languages and voices. Audience responses illustrated a range of affective, factual and conceptual responses. Positive affective responses reflected the stimulation and satisfaction with learning which occurred. Visitors indicated enlightenment, exposure and revision of previously held ideas and assumptions, similarities and differences among cultures, and insight into perspectives of others.

Partnership between the museum and the exhibition of masks from Northwest First Nations cultures is seen as a complex undertaking requiring reflection and examination of these two cultures. Visitor responses to the exhibition indicates learning, thinking and innumerable ways individuals construct meanings and understanding from art museum experiences.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural education in art museums is an interesting and complex issue. In the past decade museums have responded to encouragement to embrace cultural diversity and foster their tremendous educational potential (American Association of Museums, 1992) and have exhibited art from culturally diverse societies. While these cultural exhibits have begun to receive attention in research, studies have usually focused on the nature of the collections and have not explored the audience's understandings about culture in relationship to the exhibition.

Identification of the Research Study

Using observations of an exhibition and interviews with the museum audience, this study will explore the presentation of cultures and the perceptions of the viewing public. Specifically, this study focuses on the representation and interpretation of First Nations cultures by the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition "Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast" and the accompanying programmes, and the interpretations of this cultural presentation by the adult viewing audience. It will explore how and what interpretations have been mediated by the museum and negotiated by viewers and the nexus between these two perspectives.

Background

Historically, art museum mandates have been to collect, conserve, and educate. Zellar (1989) suggests museums be thought of as educational institutions which, for the past century, have been dominated by aesthetics, history, social education and
interdisciplinary or humanitarian themes. Educational practices have varied from the simple display of art objects to be looked at to situations which enhance the visitor's ability to understand and appreciate original art and to transfer these experiences into aspects of their lives (Mayer, 1998). Central to museums are their agendas to select art or artifacts, design formal or informal teaching, and direct thinking (Zellar, 1989). In this respect, museums have, and continue to mediate and negotiate links between art production and an art audience.

In the past 30 years, during the period of postmodernism, questions have arisen concerning definitions and functions of art (Dissanayake, 1988, Elliott, 1997), Euro-Western assumptions and biases of those in authority (Blandy & Congdon, 1991) and the exclusion of visual cultures within our own and other international societies (Elliott, 1997).

As a consequence, formalist and modernist educational approaches to non-Western art have been criticized in favour of an approach concerned with cultural context and meaning from the perspective of the artist (Chalmers, 1996, Hart, 1993). Art for its representation of lived experience (Dewey, 1963), for its potential to communicate between people through signs constructed and understood (Gardner, 1982), and to support and identify individual and societal cultures (Dissanayake, 1992) has become of interest to educators. In art museums, exhibitions and programming have increasingly included cultural context with the intention to attract and involve broader audiences for learning and enjoyment. Innovative designs for teaching and learning have been developed for a variety of learning styles to break down the distance between art and the viewer and to present multiple ways of approaching looking at and understanding art.
Interpretations and representations of culture by museums has not gone unquestioned (Lynch, 1993, McMaster, 1992, Watson, 1993). At the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta Eurocentric authority was challenged in 1988 at the opening of an exhibition, "The Spirit Sings," concerning Canada's Aboriginal people. The Lubicon Lake Cree of Northern Alberta questioned (among other things), the interpretation and representation of First Nations objects and criticized the museum for its "colonialist" position and denial of Aboriginal perspective (Watson, 1993). Their boycott of the exhibition generated a review of relationships between museums and Canadian Native communities, resulting in a task force report (Assembly of First Nations & Canadian Museums Association, 1992) and guidelines for partnership between Aboriginal people and museums. One of the principles on which the negotiations were built was the appreciation of both conceptual knowledge and approaches of First Nation's people and the empirical knowledge and approaches of academic trained museum personnel. Included in recommendations was interpretation to ensure a collaborative process with First Nation's peoples. Consequently, museum workers have been required to rethink values and the way information is presented.

Multicultural education approaches outlined by Sleeter and Grant (1987) and Banks and Banks (1997) have provided a foundation for theories of social action and reconstruction concerning culture. Chalmers (1996) revision of the popular Discipline Based Art Education (Greer, 1984) to include cultural relativism, encouraging social change through the acknowledgment of multiple perspectives of world cultures added to theory and practice in education concerning cultural diversity. The resulting socio-cultural approaches to education have required educators to be reflexive of their system of
beliefs, values and attitudes, in order to identify the diverse cultures of their community audience, to address multiple perspectives, and to develop a pedagogy which broadens understanding of artistic and aesthetic traditions and practices with diverse contexts and symbol systems.

Bridging the spaces between cultures has been proposed by the metaphor of people meeting at a border (Garber, 1995; McLoughlin, 1993). Here people, languages and customs coexist. They recognize the presence and identity of one another, acknowledge differences, and define relationships of themselves to one another. McLoughlin suggests that we "consider museums as borderlands: spaces of coexistence, negotiation, and transformation" (McLoughlin, 1993, p. 1).

Museums reflect these cultural education perspectives. In the past, culture has been represented through collections and exhibits in stately, established, civic anthropological museums. These formal, "structured sample[s] of reality" (Karp & Lavine, 1991, p. 3) have kept the viewer at a distance from the origin, purpose and function and provided minimal textual references for silent scrutiny of cultural artifacts in institutional displays. In contrast, culture has informally been vividly displayed and demonstrated as a very real part of the lives of community members in public places and street festivals for all public to experience. These community events have displayed traditional rituals and ceremonies including music, costumes, dance, visual arts, storytelling, food and crafts. Between these two extremes of cultural display are contemporary art museums. These museums have increasingly displayed cultural collections and encourage greater interaction between the art and the viewer by adding cultural context to their aesthetic and historical presentations. Such displays of cultural art
objects are now often collaborations with individuals from the authentic culture, positioning museums as mediators as they represent and interpret cultural products between the culture and the public.

Three recent exhibitions illustrate changes in representing and interpreting culture and in methods of teaching about culture. "Warm and Rich and Fearless - an Exhibition of Sikh Art" (Poovaya Smith, 1997, Cox & Singh, 1997) began a national tour in Britain which celebrated "Sikh history, culture and religion through stunning displays of miniature paintings, prints, costume, textiles, rare manuscripts, precious metalwork, jewellery, arms and weaponry" (Cox & Singh, 1997, p. 161) that had been drawn from museum collections. The "Peopling of London" (Merriman, 1997) drew together local community members' collections of objects and images and, with programmed events, represented the historical and cultural presence of Londoners, "challenged assumptions of taste and value, questioned the canons of curatorial control, and blurred distinctions between fine art and popular culture" (Cox & Singh, 1997, p. 160). "Fluffs and Feathers" (Reigel, 1996), originally designed for a community with six native cultural groups to show how Native images were constructed, was mounted with collaboration at the Royal Ontario Museum with formal labels and lighting in spaces that were disjointed, displayed without chronological order, and oddly juxtaposed in masses of objects beside blank walls. It combined recognizable 'native' artifacts as ethnographic objects with reproductions, photocopies, items frequently found in popular culture, and an area for reflection after trying on native costumes by standing in a cardboard set of an Indian family and seeing one's image in a mirror. The exhibit, ultimately, was not an ethnographic exhibit, but demonstrated how stereotyping is created to the extent that the viewer was positioned to
look at his or her own actions and be perceived as a negative stereotype in a Native setting.

These exhibitions which illuminated very present cultures in the 1990s have provided opportunities to educate the public audience about cultures and ways of seeing others. There has been, however, limited research on recent cultural exhibitions. In particular, the outcome of the audience's cultural understanding to particular presentations and the relationship between the exhibition and audience responses has been relatively unexplored. Assessment of exhibitions have most frequently been made by attendance numbers and time visitors spend in exhibition, not by visitors' understanding of the curator's intended exhibition concepts. Moreover, considering the diversity of learners in the museum audience, it is unknown if they can appreciate and understand the significance and the meaning of a culture's art, gain insight about the culture from a cultural presentation, or transfer these understandings and experiences into aspects of their lives.

Significance of the Study

This research will provide museum curators, educators, and researchers with a perspective of elements addressed by a cultural exhibit at the end of the twentieth century. It will document how the First Nations people have been represented and interpreted and how a diverse audience has been accommodated. How the museum mediated cultural information, the methods used to attract, stimulate, and motivate adults, and how diverse museum visitors reacted, responded and gained knowledge, meaning and understanding from their experiences may provide context for future exhibitions and research.

This study confirms museums as a valuable resources to enhance knowledge and understanding and calls for further research to encourage cross-cultural understanding and
social harmony among increasingly diverse cultures living together. It will hopefully serve as an example of contemporary cross-cultural education which attempts to balance cultural perspectives; highlight the museums' position in public education; and encourage researchers, educators, and funding agencies to explore the strategies, implications, and potential of cross-cultural education through art museums. It is important to know how culture can be represented through art, how museums can provide contextual information that accurately represents and appeals to diverse audiences, and how to encourage understanding across cultural barriers. Equally important is an assessment of cultural understandings and meanings that are made from such art exhibits and the attitudes and values reflected by a particular museum-going cultural group toward another culture.

Definition of Terms

'Culture' in this study refers to the shared beliefs, customs, traditions, values and practices of a group of people. While this definition of culture could refer to groups specified by their age, sex, physical ability, language, or nation, in this study it refers to Northwest Coast First Nations people, a group of peoples who have been defined by their inhabitation on the northwest coast prior to European explorers and who traditional produced masks. 'Cross-culture' refers to communication from one ethnic group to another.

The term 'museum' has been used to define an art museum or art gallery unless it is otherwise referenced. The three terms have been used synonymously. This acknowledges the broader definition of museum which includes museums of anthropology, art, and science, as well as museum centres such as those housing arboretums, zoos, costumes and holocaust centres, to name a few.
The terms 'exhibit', 'display', 'programmes', 'exhibition' and 'presentation' should be clarified here. Exhibit and display refer to particular objects presented. Programmes refers to a variety of events and educational media not included as art objects but relating to them. These programmes include material which can be handled by visitors, video presentation, dance performances, talks, demonstration, reading areas, comment areas, and activity centres. Exhibition and presentation refer to the entire showing of exhibits and programmes and includes the environment and tacit understandings which are included within the museum's presentation.

'Mediation' refers to the actions of the museum to be an intermediary between the authentic culture and the audience. The mediations are described through the choices of representation and interpretation, the specific content, contexts and intended concepts the museum proposes. 'Negotiation' refers to individual viewers' manipulation of information and knowledge from the museum's presentation and in combination with their prior knowledge. This process of negotiation is seen as one which creates understanding and meaning from new and previously held information, concepts, and meanings.

'Knowledge' and 'meaning' used to convey different outcomes, are used as terms based on Roberts' (1997) definitions. Knowledge is associated with encounters with real art objects and, in this study, real life situations and implies something personally objective and categorizable. On the other hand, meaning, which is shaped by an individuals' interests and values, is an individual interpretation that makes an experience personally significant and understandable.
Overview of the Thesis

The subsequent chapters have been organized in the following manner. Chapter 2 will review literature concerning art and culture, meanings for art as objects, art and the representation and interpretation of culture, adult audiences as learners, and research subjects. Chapter 3 provides a description of the design of this qualitative study, introducing the research field and how the study was conducted. Chapter 4 describes and analyses the museum presentation to find how and what information concerning First Nations culture has been introduced to the museum audience. Chapter 5 describes and analyses the museum audience responses to find the content of and methods used to create understandings and meanings. Chapter 6 provides further analysis and discussion, drawing relationships between the exhibition, First Nations' culture and visitor responses. Chapter 7 offers some conclusions to the study and implications for further research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

As noted, this study explores the museums' mediation of First Nations cultures, the audience' negotiation of First Nations' culture and the relationship between these two. To provide a framework for this investigation, the following literature reviews relationships of art and culture, museum representation and interpretation of First Nations' culture, the nature of learning in museums, and research that has been done on learning and experiences in museums. This overview suggests ways in which the shifting understandings of art and culture have influenced concepts of education practices and how individuals create meanings in museums.

Art and Culture

Evolution of Meanings

In the eighteenth century, notions of art and culture were construed as separate and unrelated. James Clifford (1988), in his writing about exhibiting cultures, discusses the relationships between art and culture. A description of 'art' implied skill and 'culture' referred to the "natural growth of either plants or human individuals that could be cultured" (p. 233). By the early nineteenth century in the western world, "art" came to be associated with creativity, spontaneity, purity, refinement and expressiveness of specific artistic individuals while the meaning of "culture" suggested a valued quality that was "sensitive, elevated, essential, and precious... in society" (p. 234). This can be contrasted with how anthropologists, in the twentieth century, defined culture as a means of
classifying human diversity, providing a way of understanding differences in "the way of life" (p. 234). Their reports included information about artifacts, rituals and the functions the artifacts served. "Primitive" and "exotic" classified both art and culture outside the dominant, presumed-to-be more advanced and enlightened European culture.

Within the past 40 years, the concept of multiculturalism expanded the perspective of a single Eurowestern culture, enhanced public awareness of the diversity of art and proposed positive attitudes toward all cultures (Chalmers, 1992). The canons of Eurowestern cultural ideology were criticized as undemocratic, having a value system guided by one dominant culture which determined what was and was not art. This criticism was well founded in the beliefs of the Aboriginal people of Canada. They did not wish to be aligned with multiculturalism as it failed to recognize the unique focus of responsibility they have to their land and, consequently, their different view of life and values represented in their art (Irwin, Rogers & Farrell, 1996). Also, rather than being seen as 'art,' a concept which doesn't exist in Aboriginal language, the intended holistic purpose and significance of what has come to be known as Aboriginal's art forms is integral to the spirituality of their culture. Art critics, collectors and museums who represent and interpret Aboriginal art are among those who have made and maintained multicultural policies and have controlled public understanding of their art.

Postmodernism expanded awareness of multiple cultures beyond appreciating cultural art forms and assimilating and integrating them with Western art, to one which considered the many reasons for art's creation and function within cultures (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Chalmers, 1987). Notions of art were now argued as being intimately connected to and a product of culture.
Pluralist ideas broadened the definition of multicultural diversity in art forms by considering differences among the many groups in modern society (including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, age and occupation) and proposing an equal distribution of power among groups (Zimmerman, 1990). Consequently, postmodernism which has debated issues of power, authority, and influence, has directed thinking about how exhibitions represent cultures and how displays are presented. Hart (1991) acknowledges that, in the early 1990s, museums and art galleries had largely maintained an "art for art's sake" attitude relying on the beauty of the art and the viewers' sensitivity to it for making sense of art experiences despite acknowledgment of the artistic contributions of many cultures and support for new approaches to understanding from many perspectives. Museums had most often not adopted the means to expand viewers' thinking to consider viewing art from a cultural perspective other than their own. Despite the paradigm shifts, museums have, to a certain degree, maintained the nineteenth century definition of art and culture in which art provides refinement for an elevated or elite society.

Art, Culture and Anthropology

The shift in thinking about art from a dominant Eurocentric perspective to one including a diversity of other cultures has been closely linked with anthropologists' attention to economic, political, social, spiritual and practical functions of groups of people. Studying the contexts from which art comes has provided understanding of the functions of the art and purposes of its creation. Geertz (1983), Spradley (1980), and Clifford (1988, 1991) have all provided insights for greater understanding and discussion of art from diverse cultures.
Geertz (1983) speaks of art as a semiotic. The meanings, he states, can be traced exhaustively through the structure of the society and are not found solely within the society's art forms. He asserts that formal, Western aesthetics have neglected the socio-cultural context as a perspective for understanding art. A knowledge of the culture from which art comes proposes a different avenue for making meaning about art work and addresses multiple cultural perspectives present within the Western world.

Spradley (1980) expresses his view of culture from an ethnographer's perspective, studying "what people do (cultural behaviour), what people know (cultural knowledge), and the things people make and use (cultural artifacts)" (p.5). He describes a culture's behaviour and artifacts as visible while the majority of the cultural information, or knowledge, is like a vast body of water below the easily visualized surface of a deep lake. Furthermore, Spradley stresses the fundamental importance of cultural knowledge not only to maintain and generate behaviour, but also to "interpret our experience" (p. 6) in a meaningful way. Cultural knowledge has, in the past, been absent from art exhibitions, minimizing interpretations of art viewing experiences.

Clifford (1988) speaks of the predicament when reporting about a culture other than our own. The predicament is apparent when considering the interface of one's own cultural perspective while viewing and interpreting what others say and do. In addition to the limits, constraints, and biases of one's own perspective, the complexity of the participants', or art viewers' meanings are derived from multiple sources, each individual differing. This concept can be applied to limitations of museums' representations of a culture's art, of audiences' responses to the art of another culture, and of researchers' interpretations of other's perspectives.
Garber (1995) summarizes the confusions of understanding art from diverse cultures, pointing out that art has been associated with what the white European male culture has deemed "art;" that art from other cultures are viewed in the context of that Eurowestern culture's values; that the art of diverse cultures are "homogenized" in a way that disregards differences over time, differences between distinct groups or individuals within a broad cultural context; and that art objects are exoticized as "other" or "traditional" rather than understood through an appreciation of customs, values, beliefs, differences among regional cultures, and influences of one culture on another. To develop the necessary understanding Garber concurs with Stuhr, Petrovich, and Wasson (1992) that ethnographic methods in which we have contact with material and the cultural community are avenues to learn about the "art, history, literature and narrative stories, popular and folk images, political ideas, everyday lives, spirituality and even the language of the culture we study" (p. 223).

The Meaning of Art

Scholars have attempted to define what art is in order to help us identify, understand, and place it in context to what we know. Neperud (1995) writes of the modern and postmodern debate with two contrasting value orientations, the modernist aesthetic which looks at art objects as experiences and forms, and the postmodern socio-cultural perspective that considers context of art. The aesthetic value systems of these paradigms reflect the decisions made by museums to entertain and educate the public audience and in viewers' responses to art displays. I have chosen to discuss these value systems through two approaches: Western aesthetics and Indigenous perspectives.
Western Aesthetics

Hamblen and Galanese (1997) outline contemporary Western aesthetic approaches and indicate a range between the experiential, the formalist, and the contextual points of view. Aesthetics which focuses on one's experience with art has been addressed by Dewey (1963). Value and meaning of experience is based on personal response and reflects principles of self-expression by artists and non-factual, non-objective, affective response of viewers. The emphasis of experiential aesthetics is on the qualities, enjoyed emotionally, at the time of interaction. The authors criticize this approach which presumes that the art object is only meaningful individually, not for a larger social understanding, and does not consider a great variety of art objects and possible ways of thinking about them.

The formalist aesthetic approach looks for particular properties, skills and techniques to evaluate art. The artist's originality and evolutionary development are applauded. Art is considered intrinsically important and not concerned with anything outside itself. It is considered permanent, having solid, material shape and form (Hart, 1991) and is regarded for it's own sake, not for any function (Anderson & McRorie, 1997). Formalists think of themselves as democratic, but in this ideal they presume that the viewer shares the same understanding of valued elements and principles of art. These widely-held modernist assumptions categorize objects created for visual pleasure as "fine art," recognized as masterpieces among connoisseurs, museums and the art market, in contrast to those objects of "culture" suggesting objects of folklore and craft (Clifford, 1988). The formalist aesthetic has been criticized for its set of standards which excludes orientations outside its own particular elite Eurocentric culture. Museums have
traditionally lead in dictating what is aesthetically tasteful by these formalist standards and thus defined boundaries for society to value art (Hamblen, 1988). While modernists have promoted the idea that formal aesthetic qualities have cross-cultural, universal appeal, postmodernists propose that a more diverse, pluralist perspective is appropriate when considering the multiple interpretations that art forms have for artists and audiences.

In contrast to the modern aesthetic position, Anderson (1995) discusses the contextual view of aesthetics taken by philosophers Goodman, Danto and Dickie who propose that there is no one set of meanings for visual symbols, that art is defined by the people who make, view, and use artistic expressions they have created and not by a universal set of formal or technical qualities (p. 200). Neperud (1995) points out that without understanding the context of an art object we rely on western aesthetics to guide our interpretation of meaning in art and have no basis for understanding art of cultures other than by Eurowestern values. Anderson (1995) explains Danto's position that art is intended to affect and transform viewers' perceptions of the world by presenting not only what an artist sees but the artist's way of seeing it from a particular historical and cultural framework. Art studied contextually tells us about life, about art's function within life. It dismisses the view of 'art for art's sake' and takes the view of 'art for life.' Danto suggests that as viewers we can confirm or challenge our own thinking by interpreting in the contexts of other's perspectives. By examining our own socio-cultural context that conditions our values, beliefs and attitudes we can appreciate similarities and differences of diverse cultures. By first emancipating oneself from acculturation, alternative cultural conceptions of art can be understood (Bersson, 1987).
The postmodern conceptual approach to making meaning of art from cultural contexts other than one's own can encompass all visual culture created by a group of people. These forms of culture are found in dance, costumes, ceremonies and rituals, decorations, tools and other material objects. They create major communication systems which can be read by a cultural group and understood for the values, social organization, social structures, and beliefs represented by them (Anderson & McRorie, 1997; Hart, 1991; McFee, 1995). In this way, the functions of art viewed across cultures can move beyond aesthetic enjoyment toward thinking about art as ways of seeing the world, promoting strategies to face and deal with very real situations outside of art. A pluralist aesthetic then acknowledges the distinctiveness of cultures with their own principles, standards and objectives but also acknowledges the need to expand Western ways in thinking about art to include a cultural concept approach (Hart, 1991).

**Indigenous Perspectives**

Robert Joseph (Macnair, Joseph & Grenville, 1997), a Kwakwaka'wakw chief and one of the exhibition curators describes the "primal world view of our people"...defined in four realms of the universe and acknowledges traditional masks as offering "a continuum for Native people to acknowledge our connection to the universe" (p. 18). Doreen Jensen's comments (Campbell et al., 1992) add to this perspective, describing her culture's way of thinking about art. She states:

For First Nations' people the act of creativity comes from the cosmos...When I'm making Art I am one with the universe. You can see it in the work ...as well as your mind. If you pay attention you can 'get the message'- and make it your own
without diminishing it or appropriating it... Our Art is our cultural identity; it's our politics... Our culture is this land... the land and the culture are one (p. 19-20).

Aesthetics of indigenous art discussed by Irwin and Farrell (1996) acknowledges that the traditional Aboriginal view of the world and what is called 'art' are basically different. There is no word for art among most Northwest coast aboriginal tribes. Rather, First Nations' forms of expression are integrated in the daily activities and spirituality of the community and traditionally have not been separated as art objects to be perceived for individual enjoyment or individual meaning. Rather than art forms being thought of as products, Irwin, Rogers and Wan (1999) propose art forms be conceptualized as "cultural performance... [which demonstrates] the integrated nature of culture" (p. 198) and are inseparable from cultural identity. Those who create "visual symbols" in most tribal cultures are linking visual expression and spiritual beliefs and are artistically presenting "a reflection of life, activity, thought, beliefs and feelings" (Irwin & Farrell, 1996, p. 62). Meaning appears to be embedded in the symbols and metaphors of the object's materials and functions, powerfully displayed in ceremony and rituals in the community.

Leuthold (1996) suggests that it is difficult to separate art from craft, ritual, material culture and entertainment and rather than apply the term "art" he suggests "expression" be used to define artistic forms of indigenous cultures. He agrees that indigenous aesthetics refer to qualitatively different aesthetic experience than those of Western cultures, and argues that thinking of expressive work as "art" puts it in a western framework. While Western cultures attempt to understand the function and purpose of indigenous art, the First Nations people have a way of thinking of their art which involves
"embodiment and... experience...[conveying] a state of immediacy and immersion, an expression of oneness between the audience and the artwork" (p. 321). Characteristics of indigenous expression propose an over-riding responsibility for land and community illustrated by social rules, community orientation, expression of the sacred, usefulness, function, beauty in how they work or function, a strong sense of place, and a balance with nature.

Western theorists have often remained detached, been blocked from understanding indigenous and other cultures' ideas by their own assumptions, and historically, not reflected the perceptions of the indigenous people who make the art.

Museum Representation and Interpretation of First Nations' Culture

Historical Foundations

Traditionally, museums have been institutions for the acquisition preservation and exhibition of art for the elite intellectual (Zellar, 1989). Collections of First Nations artifacts were acquired as early as the fifteenth century. These cultural artifacts, stored in museums throughout the world, supplied societies with rare, "primitive" and "exotic" anthropological items that have been viewed in glass cases, usually with minimal information concerning their country of origin, approximate date and material. Removed and displaced from their natural contexts, the intended meaning of the art, for both the represented culture and for the non-Aboriginal viewers' understanding of the artists' intended meanings, are negated and absent.

Through the past decades, multicultural and postmodern thinking, demographic changes resulting in significant cultural diversity (Statistics Canada, 1996) and an
economic downturn have resulted in museums revising their ways of presenting art of various cultures and of appealing to their public audience.

Changes In Canadian Museum Policies

In the same year that the American Museum Association published "Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums" (1992) the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museum Association jointly published "Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples" (1992). Both reflected the needed revision of policies in exhibiting and interpreting art for the culturally diverse public.

Speaking for Canadian museums, McLoughlin (1993) notes that museums' reliance on Eurowestern standards has been slow to change. In Western Canada the representation of Aboriginal art became a significant event when the Lubicon Lake Cree boycotted the Glenbow Museum's exhibit "The Spirit Sings" in 1988. The exhibit intending to show the richness and diversity of Canadian culture to the international Olympic Games audience. It presented powerful works from First Nations' culture which had flourished hundreds of years earlier, and yet the exhibit made no mention of the disruption, losses and changes to the culture that were felt by the Cree on the return of their displaced cultural artifacts. The exhibition denied a relationship between the historical exhibit and realities of the contemporary First Nations people. It represented a particular and situated interpretation of First Nations' culture, and in this choice, took on the power to define and limit the meaning of the objects and the culture.

The vocal boycott in Alberta and the opening of the same exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa prompted a national review of relationships between
Aboriginal people and Canadian museums. As a result a task force on museums and First Nations People was formed and addressed issues concerning the involvement of Aboriginal people in the interpretation of their culture and history, improving access for Aboriginal people to museum artifacts, and repatriating these artifacts.

The document "Turning the Page: Forging New Relationships Between Museums and First Peoples" outlined the issues and recommendations which aimed to promote accurate and contextual interpretations to explain the past and present and illuminate the future, avoiding the assumption that Aboriginal cultures exist in the past, are inferior, or incapable of change. The document presented an assessment of relationships and outlined principles and recommendations for museums "to accurately reflect... the fundamental and unique contribution of First Peoples to Canada, as well as the spiritual and social values of their diverse contemporary cultures" (p. 7). Among these were recommendations for equal partnerships, co-management, recognition of mutual interests, and involvement in the interpretation or representation of their people, from planning to presentation. Other recommendations suggested increased federal funds to support and develop Aboriginal run museums and cultural centres that would strive to create authentic contexts for the artifacts.

**Responses to Changing Policies and Postmodern Ideology**

In response to the need for a revision of representation of First Nations material culture and as documentation of change in Canada, James Clifford (1991) has described four museums on British Columbia's west coast which have displayed Northwest Coast First Nations' art. He has compared two Aboriginal cultural centres holding repatriated artifacts with two large museum institutions, and found four distinct contexts of display
which illustrate the shift of power between colonialist government and tribal people. The representations and interpretations of First Nations culture provided by these four settings and displays suggest diverse meanings can be made by the different representations ranging from local to global, historical to contemporary, and dominated to revived.

Kelm (1993) writing of displays of culture, has suggested major, ongoing revision by museums to re-evaluate their traditional classification and value systems. Not only does he recommend museums consider who has the right to select, represent, interpret and socially construct exhibitions, but he also questions if an art gallery can present cultural objects just for their aesthetic qualities and if not, how aesthetics and cultural context can be presented, and how biased interpretations and limited perspective can be overcome to develop exhibits for multiple perspectives and layers of understanding. Kelm indicates an interest not only in the representation of culture, but in the multiple interpretations of the viewing audience. Not only the choice of what to represent but the display or how these objects are presented becomes important.

MacDonald (1998) addresses the politics of representations involving "culturally, socially, and politically saturated business of negotiation and value-judgment... (with) cultural, social and political implications" (p. 1). In addition to politics underlying museum policy and exhibition, MacDonald also points out the hidden domination apparent in museum architecture, in display organization and in the interaction suggested by the programmes. Who comes to an art gallery, influenced in part by advertising, and what meaning visitors make from the presentation, is tied to the beliefs and values presented by the broad spectrum of museum personnel.
As an approach to understanding the intersection of cultures and how interpretation can be perceived, theorists have proposed the metaphor of maps with borders and borderlands (Garber, 1995; Gurian, 1995; McLoughlin, 1993). McLoughlin suggests the metaphor of 'borderland' to describe the changing rigid boundaries, barriers, and references to insiders and outsiders that maintain colonial structures of power and create distances between the dominant culture and the 'other.' A broad borderland space, she suggests, defuses the centre of power and explores the intersections of peoples; the "interfaces between peoples and the places from which they speak and act" (p. 4). This supports the goals outlined by the task force report by the Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association (1992) to forge "new partnerships" and work from within a "commonality of interest" (p. 7). Rather than a generalized view of a specific culture or an anthropologists' classification system of differences among cultures, McLoughlin suggests a focus on the contact between cultures and the processes that have been shared through history and that have differentiated peoples. By addressing the coexistence of peoples through history, distance between cultures is diminished by common or shared ideas or issues. This is exemplified in Eurowesterner observation of First Nations people and First Nations perceptions of Eurowestern peoples. McLoughlin contrasts viewing First Nations artifacts from a Eurowestern perspective as historical exhibits that are linear, fixed, and without progressive stages. Alternately, for a multidimensional or layered perspective, the voices of the First Nations people, their stories, their perceptions of the intersections with 'others,' their meetings, interactions, negotiations and transformations that have occurred through history to contemporary time need to be realized and included
in historic exhibits. By museums presenting the interface of these two peoples' perspectives, a more complete representation of the cultural borderland might be realized.

These proposals concerning how museums might represent and interpret culture suggest possibilities for cultural presentations which break long held barriers and ways of thinking, diffuse power and encourage understanding between contemporary cultures. The authors imply that museums can be avenues for educating and encouraging cultural understanding, creating greater harmony and unity among cultures living together.

Adult Audiences In Museums

If the postmodern paradigm has created change in the relationship of powers between museums and cultures it presents, a similar change has occurred in communication between museums and their audiences. Silverman (1995) states that the paradigm shift in museums has "transformed the definition of communication from a one-way linear path, where 'meaning' represents the significance intended by a sender to a receiver, to a process of negotiation between two parties in which information (and meaning) is created rather than transmitted and meaning is in the eyes, head and heart of the particular beholder" (p. 161). To inform negotiations by the audience, the following literature review presents theories and concepts concerning adults as learners. This literature explores and describes the diversity among museum audiences.

Adults as Individual Learners

Adult visitors are seen as individuals with differing agendas, capabilities and motivations affecting how, what, and how much an individual learns from a museum exhibition. Knowles, a "pioneer in the study of andragogy" (Hein, 1998, p. 144) describes
and defines adult learners as individuals who take responsibility for their learning, have broad and deep bases of accumulated experiences, and are typically motivated to learn. Matthew (1996) adds that adults come to museums with firmly set perceptions of the world and may reject museums' messages that are at discord with their beliefs or values. Adult's learning in museums, unlike children's is not part of an agenda or curriculum, but a personal, private and voluntary activity which may or may not be linked to any one theme. Rather, what is consciously or unconsciously learned in a museum may be part of many interrelated elements which connect and form a variety of meanings. Similarly, motivation for attendance at a museum exhibition, being a voluntary activity, is linked to a variety of interests.

Individual learning styles are suggested by Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1996) which propose that individuals, regardless of their social history, have inherent learning styles. Each style (linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) is not necessarily useful to another style in promoting understanding but can be referenced for the purpose of designing museum exhibitions.

Exploring learning in heritage parks, Cassels (1996) looked at Bernice McCarthy's 4MAT system who describes different types of learners and their characteristics, distinguishing preferences among learners as those thinking and those feeling or sensually experiencing; those who prefer to do as compared to those who prefer to watch. From these preferences, McCarthy draws four types of learners (the imaginative, the analytical, the common sense/problem solver and the dynamic learner) which also may overlap within individuals. Cassels uses these learning styles as criteria for designing multisensory
museum exhibits and programmes, for facilitating engagement, accommodating differences and most likely affecting the outcome of individuals’ museum experiences.

Schauble, Leinhardt, and Martin (1997) emphasize the importance of socio-cultural theory for visitors who bring to the museum their personally learned culture which they use to interact socially with language and contexts to make meanings and understandings of museum exhibitions. The authors point out that socio-cultural theory provides a framework for understanding "the variability of learning, the processes of learning, and the role of learning in personal history and the pursuit of meaning" (p. 4).

Dimensions of Learning and Experiences in Museums

The definition of the term 'learning in museums' has been broadened in the past decades from connoting the transfer of information and cognitive engagement to a broad range of experiences including those which are emotional, social, recreational, and contemplative (Roberts, 1997). Literature concerning both acquiring and utilizing knowledge and learning through experiences are reviewed here.

Koroscik (1996), a researcher in art learning, outlines four facets of art cognition: knowledge base or prior body of knowledge; knowledge-searching strategies to acquire and utilize knowledge; a disposition toward learning; and transfer or the "ability to recycle knowledge acquired in one context for constructing new understandings in another context" (p. 1). In a museum setting, understanding art may be significantly linked to visitors dispositions as their particular reasons for visiting, viewing, or thinking in the informal education environment may be prompted by interest in education, entertainment and social interaction. Various incentives for the visit and reasons for being attentive to
the exhibition may affect motivation, enthusiasm, curiosity, interest, and sustained cognitive effort.

Gurian (1991) states that audiences may immediately understand exhibition content or gain an impression or sense it, and may bank the information for later to reassess and integrate it with other knowledge and concepts. She describes information presented by exhibitions for concrete and abstract concepts, encouraging imagination and fantasizing, and eliciting emotional responses. Limitations on learning, she suggests, are imposed by the museums' cultural or intellectual preference of styles of learning with choices they make of certain modes of learning over others. As examples, Gurian notes limited sensory stimulation other than visual, and limited opportunities for informality and fun are uncommon in art museums.

Carr (1991) writes of museum learning outcomes. Museums, he suggests, provide sensory, empirical and conceptual information that expands perception to organize, contemplate, explore, differentiate, and critique, and therefore, construct one's intellectual life. Museums are intended as "forums for communication, independent learning, self preservation...for the living of one's life on one's horizons, yet informed by the horizons of others" (p. 11). Carr posits that independent adult learning using critical thinking for its positive, productive and constructive process is a method of inquiry which can lead to transformative experiences and insights. This particular definition of learning supports a relationship of meaning beyond the museum content to broad understandings which utilize museums for connections to diverse constructions of knowledge.

posits that there is no such thing as knowledge independent of the individual, but only that which is personally and socially constructed. The focus on the learner, "each of whom creates his or her own model to explain nature" (Hein, p. 30), accounts for multiple learning styles or intelligences, experiential learning, and the structuring and restructuring of acquired information with prior knowledge. Within museums, visitors individually construct meaning according to their own motivations and interests, following the pathway that interests them, often leading to unanticipated outcomes.

Jeffery-Clay (1998) describes the learning that occurs, as a web-like construction of knowledge and understanding which may begin by rote learning and can later be incorporated into a knowledge structure. He states that from prior knowledge structures "learners hang new information, creating new links to their pre-existing knowledge. The more links created, the more stable this new knowledge will be. Individuals learn when they modify existing conceptual structures, creating new links and integrating new concepts" (p. 3). Without exploring and building relationships, information fails to become meaningful and is most likely lost rather than being rearranged and restructured with previously structured concepts.

This implies that the museum's intended curricula, predetermined hierarchical design or sequential pattern of display may not be utilized as is expected or result in the outcome intended by the museum. Alternately, Hein (1998) suggests that individual's learning may be connected to and a reflection of the intended learning proposed by the museum curriculum. Forms of learning appear in conversations that include terms from gallery texts and discussions of topics presented. Associations are made among the things
they see; in conversations about the exhibition; in participation in activities; and in details and affective responses remembered (p. 152).

Falk and Dierking, (1992) write that "traditionally, understanding the long-term effects of museum experience has meant understanding museum 'learning'" and that recently, following "decades of museum learning research, …[findings suggest] that there is little or no direct evidence of learning in museums" (p. 97) as no significant recall of facts and concepts can be determined. In later literature, Falk and Dierking (1995) outline what people learn as a result of museum experiences. Their list of attributes includes: making and connecting content and ideas, including disparate facts, ideas and feelings; affecting values and attitudes; promoting cultural, community and family identity; fostering interest and curiosity; and affecting how visitors think and approach their worlds.

Roberts (1997) looks at both the museum presentation and the visitor as individuals in determining outcomes from museum encounters. She discusses the continuing debate of whether the museum is a public service or a scientific enterprise and concludes that both entertainment and educational experiences are meaningful. She speaks of the shift in museum education in which "traditional scholarly definitions of objects are beginning to be accompanied by or replaced with alternative interpretations based on different criteria and meaning," a shift that is concerned "less with knowledge than with narrative" (p.2). Roberts suggests that education may not be the appropriate term for the outcome of interaction between museums and their visitors, and instead proposes learning (focusing on the learner), experience (emphasizing open-ended outcomes) and meaning-making (or interpretation). She identifies meaningful knowledge with experiences or contacts with what is real in our lives, such as those experienced by encounters with
authentic art objects and reproductions of real-life situations. While knowledge implies that something personally objective and categorizable has been taught by the museum, meaning-making, linked with the diversity of thinkers, suggests something personally significant had been understood in the experience. She states:

The once prevalent view that knowledge is objective and verifiable has been widely challenged by the notion that knowledge is socially constructed and shaped by individuals' particular interests and values. Language about facts and certainties has been replaced by language about context, meaning and discourse (p. 2).

Roberts discusses the character of museum-audience negotiation and the relevance of considering the diversity of museum visitors. She states:

Education is not just about museums teaching visitors: it is about visitors using museums in ways that are personally significant to them. It is about the mismatch that arises between a museum's culture and a visitor's culture; and it is about negotiating that mismatch in a way that is respectful of both. The essence of the enterprise of education is thus the meaning making. Whether it involves visitors interpreting their experiences or museum personnel interpreting collections, meaning making is at the heart of the endeavour of both (p. 132-133).

The exhibition environment that has an impact on viewers are discussed in detail by Belcher (1991). He describes visual communication in museums and their relationship to visitor understanding. Four orientations (geographical, intellectual, conceptual and psychological) are outlined which affect visitors' experiences and are essential to successful comprehension and appreciation of the museum's presentation. Additionally, the author explains exhibition elements including the showcases, lighting, colours, graphics
and audio-visuals which provide interpretative aids for audience understanding of the displayed objects. In this way interpretation of the display is not restricted to identification of objects but can also suggest meanings communicating ideas and conceptions that provoke thought and action.

Research On Museum Visitors

Learning in Museums

Hein (1998) reviews research on learning in museums, providing a synopsis of experimental and naturalistic studies. He tells us that research on museum visitors had a short-lived start in the 1930s and remained relatively unexplored until the 1960s. At this time visitors' behaviours and cognitive schema, structures and processes in learning were studied for the purpose of creating, enhancing, and evaluating effective exhibits. Studies provided multiple examples of tracking and timing visitors' behaviour, audiences' social behaviour and audiences' movements around artwork. More recently, in the past decade, research has shifted to investigate the outcome of the experiences and to consider differences in visitors' perceptions and processing of information. Hein suggests that our knowledge about how visitors understand museum exhibits is meager and needs to be added to with both experimental and naturalistic studies. He compares hierarchical or ladder-like structures of experimentally designed research to naturalistic studies which aligns with constructivist views built on networks. Hein describes studies by McManus (1991) and Bicknell (1995) as models that describe learning in museums which support the notion of negotiation and suggest "that museums should not be depicted as a linear
process but as an interactive one where both the exhibition and the visitor contribute to the communication. (p. 151)

Falk and Dierking (1992) provide another model: the "Interactive Experience Model" as a framework for understanding museum experiences. Having studied the complex differences among visitor experiences, they emphasize the importance of the interrelationships of personal, social and physical contexts in audience learning.

Perry (1993a) identifies six psychological needs which contribute to enjoyment and ability to learn by making museum visitors feel good and encouraging their interaction. These include curiosity, confidence, challenge, control, play, and communication. She suggests successful museum visits change visitors in some way and that "visitor learning is a very broad concept... (that) encompasses a whole range of outcomes, including cognition, affect, and motor skills" (p.46). Her examples include learning such as "developing a new interest...learning a new skill...seeing something that a person has never seen before,...(or learning that is) incidental and personal, and not necessarily an objective for a visit" (p. 46). In another study, Perry (1993b) responds to the difficulty of measuring learning and the proposition that what occurs between museums and visitors is not about learning but about affect. She defines a hierarchy of learning that ranges from no awareness through six stages to in-depth understanding. The studies showed how few visitors made connections the museum had intended and those who had a thorough understanding of the exhibition concepts.

Visitors' Experiences

Worts (1993) has explored the variations of visitors' experiences including a focus on the personal meanings made in viewing artwork. He found personal meanings don't
necessarily fit into a critical framework for understanding objects. Rather, the visitors' responses displayed a range of personal insights about the art experience including unexpected affect, new insights, and critical evaluations of the personal experiences. Worts concluded that a new partnership between museums and the public should support, encourage and respect the many ways that meaning is made.

Dierking and Holland (1994) conducted a study with a geology and minerals exhibition at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History "to try and get into the heads of visitors, to determine how much they know and what they are interested in...[and] ultimately, what meaning and knowledge they derived" (p. 19). The researchers based their study on the fact that visitors make choices expressed by what they look at, talk about, and interact with. Their sources of data included visitor questions, conversations between visitors and conversations between visitors and a staff "educator." The conversations were documented and linked with the concepts of the exhibit. Each conversation was classified by interest level (high, moderate or low) based on the number of questions asked, associated affect (body language, animation) and apparent interest in hearing an answer. Knowledge level was classified (high, moderate or minimal) based on vocabulary and content used in conversations, categories of questions (informational, identification and elaboration), and statements (factual answers, shared comments, individual comments, specific personal connection, and exhibit criticism). The conclusion provided information about how visitors make sense of the exhibit: what they saw and thought (at a very basic and concrete level). This was seen as valuable to redesign future exhibits, provide information about the appropriate level and nature of information to communicate with the appropriate vocabulary and presentations.
The Museum Objectives and the Audiences' Responses

MacDonald (1996) points out that the motives of exhibitors and the messages picked up by visitors are often presented as consonant and a "neat fit" and suggests the "interpretive agency of visitors" (p. 5) have been ignored excluding these voices from the dynamics of museum exhibition formation. Serrell (1996) illustrates this in her study of visitors. She explored criteria for a good exhibition, using interviews and questionnaires to focus on the achievement of a "learned" outcome to measure against the exhibition objectives. Data focused on visitors' recall of specific facts, ideas, attitudes or concepts relate to the message presented yet avoided meanings made outside of that which had been intended by the exhibition staff. Her reasoning for an objective recall format lay in the subjectivity of opinions without concrete, applicable criteria and the various idiosyncrasies of visitors. She concluded, however, that more criteria, particularly reflecting experiences that are voluntary, informal, and social are needed to show connections to visitors own needs and goals. This study suggests that outcomes based on visitors' own needs and goals and those based on the museum objectives may be significant to learning.

Matthews (1996) points out that adults as learners have relatively stable perceptions and museums' presentations must fit into their past experiences or be rejected or evaded; that learning is personal and private, and that adults are capable of learning all the time. She states that:

Museums practice a form of one-way communication with little reference to the existing knowledge, abilities and experiences of the adult visitors. We need to incorporate in our exhibits and programming, methods to encourage a two-way street of learning which allows visitors to give the museum information that they
know about the topic, so that museums can use that information. Our adult
visitors are a rich resource and many know things that we, the professionals, do
not (p. 70).

Summary

In summary, this literature review has examined art and culture, representation and
interpretation by museums, and the audience as individual learners. This provides a
framework for a description and analysis of the museum presentation of First Nations
culture and the audience's understandings of the culture presented in subsequent chapters.
The following chapter will describe the design of the case study using ethnographic
techniques to explore the mediations and negotiations of these two parties.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This chapter provides a discussion of qualitative methods that are used to focus on the mediating and negotiating processes of, and the audience responses to, a First Nations art exhibition. It begins with an overview of approaches to qualitative research, discusses the techniques and characteristics in this study and then describes entrance to the field, setting, subjects, data collection and analysis.

Theoretical Framework of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research in education has developed and become established through the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and philosophy (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982). Phenomenology, symbolic interaction and ethnography have evolved from these fields and have supported the qualitative search for meaning in social studies. Phenomenology has emphasized the subjectivity of people's behaviour in understanding how and what meanings people construct. The meaning of events and interactions interpreted in multiple ways produce each individual's point of view. The phenomenological researcher attempts to understand the way others conceptualize their world. Symbolic interaction is based on the notion that symbols, whether objects, people or events, require interpreting and defining by individuals through interaction. While groups of people interacting together often share experiences and construct common understandings, meaning is also subject to individual negotiation and will change with new interactions. Ethnography which attempts to describe culture, suggests a means of understanding the context in
which meaning is made. Anthropologists' ethnographic techniques, characterized by "thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1983), describe people's knowledge, behaviour and meanings attributed to events by examining their shared interpretations and common understandings.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Features of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982) include a naturalistic research "field" where data can be collected in its natural setting without manipulation or experimentation common in laboratory or controlled research settings. In less controlled settings the researcher is the tool or instrument who obtains rich descriptions of people, settings, and dialogue through observations made in field notes, through documents, photographs, video recordings, and interviews to discover the processes and the outcomes which occur in a naturally occurring context. Rich observations include details that would normally be taken for granted and which can provide cues to understanding the situation being studied. Written results often include direct quotations. Analysis is inductive, building and connecting information collected through purposeful sampling, data collection methods and, in part, through data analysis. Rather than beginning with a hypothesis, the researcher gathers information to direct and construct the significance of the information, finding the ways people make sense of their lives.

Overview of the Field Research

This qualitative study has focused on the mediating and negotiating processes of interpreting and creating meaning of a culture's exhibited art. It begins with the assumption that people, whether museum personnel or visitors, have multiple ways of
interpreting (Gardner, 1985, McCarthy, 1996, Schauble, Leinhart, & Martin, 1997) and abilities for interpreting (Koroscik, 1996) what they encounter. This case study involves the examination of the museum presentation of Northwest Coast First Nations' masks and the adult audience's encounter with the exhibition on the second and fourth floors of the Vancouver Art Gallery. My focus was to obtain data concerning what and how the cultural exhibition was presented, what the adult public audience perceived and how they made sense it. As the researcher, I became an observer in a natural setting, recorded detailed observations in field notes, collected documents, and conducted informal interviews to gather rich descriptions of this particular exhibition and audience reactions and responses. The observations, documents and interviews directed, identified, and focused choices of sampling, times, places and specific interview probes for data collection, choices of categories of the data, and ongoing analysis of information.

The Researcher

My position in this research was a significant and constant interactive factor. The observations, decisions, understandings and interpretations I have made have been interpreted through my own perspective, based on my biases and assumptions, values and background knowledge. Werner (1987) suggests that through one's "epistemological window" (p. 58) the researcher cannot aim to be neutral or objective without looking critically at oneself and one's objectives and considering his or her own culture as flavouring positions taken and methods followed. I acknowledge that this study was bound by my values which I have attempted to make explicit and to evaluate for the effect they have had on the research.
During interaction with participants, I attempted to be as non-intrusive as possible, dressing very casually and allowing people to easily avoid or refuse conversation with me. As an introduction to interviews I relayed my position as an research student interested in their ideas and not a museum staff member, to convey a non-judgmental manner and respect for the participants' ideas. As an occasional covert observer in tours, sitting among video-watchers, and as a wandering gallery viewer, I was able to overhear intimate conversations between visitors and engage in spontaneous conversations but was, however, less able to accurately record or draw lengthy impressions or responses from the participants. The majority of my observations were as participant-observer, in an overt position which allowed me to record data as it occurred and probe for responses during interviews. This position was carried out in all areas of the exhibit and programmes at various times. In this less natural, somewhat intrusive, observer position, I was aware that responses could be made according to what the participant thought I wanted to hear or what they thought would make them look knowledgeable in the eyes of a stranger. I was also aware that I could slide into the role of the museum viewer in casual responses with the interviewees, become subjectively involved, thereby loosing track of my role and focus as researcher.

With a background working as a programmer and educator in community art gallery settings, I am interested in understanding how art can be made more meaningful for different art audiences, how art can teach audiences to understand cultures, and how art museums and community galleries can work to diminish racism and prejudice among cultures.
I bring to this study a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, docent training and volunteer work with school children, their schools and the Vancouver Art Gallery, and knowledge and experience from seven years of developing and teaching public arts education programmes at a small community art gallery.

Entrance to the Field

My familiarity with the Vancouver Art Gallery through involvement in the docent programme ten years ago and long-time membership provided a familiarity with this large, well-established civic gallery. In the early summer of 1998, I made telephone and personal contact with the Head of Public Programmes and indicated my interest in the Gallery's exhibitions and programmes as a research area. This research involvement was encouraged and I was notified of two research projects that would be conducted with this exhibition by the Gallery. Triangulation of collective data and analyses was mentioned as a possibility. After submitting a research proposal, I was formally given permission to conduct research with observation and interviews involving the adult, public audience and documentation of the exhibit for the final two months of its showing.

The Research Site

The Vancouver Art Gallery is centrally situated in the business and commercial area of downtown Vancouver, a city of approximately one million people located on the southwest coast of British Columbia. A review of immigration to the Greater Vancouver area (Statistics Canada, 1996) and the policies of the Gallery (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978, 1988, 1998a) over the past decades presents a perspective of the culturally diverse population and how this large civic gallery has been progressive in adjusting its mandate and policies to reflect the changing demographics.
The Vancouver Art Gallery hosts approximately thirty exhibits annually including its own collections, traveling exhibitions and local contemporary work. The exhibit "Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast" had been planned with guest curators by the Vancouver Art Gallery and traveled to three American cities following the Vancouver exhibition period.

The physical character of the Vancouver Art Gallery and its site suggests a particular formality. The three storey, turn-of-the-century building and the grounds occupy one full city block and provide a break in the towers of glass, concrete, and metal which dominate this area of the city. The building is significant for its 1907 neo-classical architecture with columns and a broad granite staircase guarded by two large lion statues. Its formality is broken somewhat, by a large area of foaming fountains in the foreground of the Gallery, by an irregular border of deciduous trees and evergreen shrubs, stretches of lawn on which the public sit or lounge, and a broad central pathway. Equally noticeable during the exhibition were the pairs of enormous banners announcing and illustrating the exhibition, placed on two sides of the building's exterior. Entering the expansive foyer through either of two, more contemporary entrance structures, light classical music could be heard, and several upholstered benches found. Directly opposite the larger and naturally lit entrance were two counters with gallery personnel and the entrance into the gallery spaces. A gallery shop with a broad opening occupies an adjacent space in the foyer.

The exhibition and programmes for "Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast" occupied the entire second floor, approximately 12,000 square feet, and a portion, approximately 2000 square feet, of the fourth floor. The rectangular plan
of the second floor had been divided into fifteen different spaces where the masks and complementary programmes were displayed. The exhibit was entered from the central rotunda's symmetrical, curved staircases, a white space lit from a huge glass, ceiling dome high above. The well-lit, second-floor entrance archway contrasted abruptly with the deep green coloured walls and subdued lighting of the first exhibition gallery. Movement was directed to the left through open passageways to consecutive galleries. These second floor galleries with different floor spaces, ceiling heights, and wall colours, distinguished the themes and complementary programmes. Masks of ancestors or spirits that assume human form were grouped in the "Human Face Divine" (deep red walls) and were followed by four spiritual worlds: "The Sky World," (deep purple-blue) "The Spirit World," (deep green) "The Mortal World," (lighter green) and "The Undersea World" (deep turquoise). Smaller (yellow) spaces adjoining these were used for complementary programme displays and activities.

The exhibits had been mounted within and without glass cases, in free standing floor cases, and in two, very large, dramatically grouped, open settings. Information labels were found beneath or very near the displayed masks. Large text panels (approximately 36" x 52") in each theme area and smaller text panels were placed in media displays. Smaller text, as quotes, had been adhered directly to the walls at several intervals through the exhibition.

Spaces in two of the large gallery areas had been divided by temporary walls, by the wall colouring, and bench seating, distinguishing particular information areas. In total the exhibiting area and a small retail shop on the second floor formed a rectangle through which the viewing audience pass.
The fourth floor programme space, known as the "Open Studio," was reached by an escalator or elevator and a short walk through a fourth floor gallery. This studio space provided opportunity for interaction with a First Nations' carver and gallery personnel, for a hands on creative activity, casual reading of relevant reference literature for children or adults, viewing the video "Box of Treasures", and a group-game.

In contrast to the second floor, the single Open Studio space, approximately 34 feet by 62 feet, was lit largely by sun light throughout the summer and early fall months. It was decorated with the viewing public's artwork projects, provided plenty of seating areas and opportunity for different activities within a relatively small space. A text panel and several contemporary First Nations' prints and paintings hung at the entrance and exit to this area.

In addition to these two floors with exhibits and programmes, several additional, less frequent, public programmes occurred. Those which I was able to observe included: three, thirty minute dance performances, two by First Nations troupes and one by a non-First Nations troupe; the late addition of a wall panel of comments with quotes from newspapers and individuals and an adjacent 7 minute video from a recent television broadcast; and adult involvement in Supersunday activities for families.

Those programmes I was aware of, but did not observe included tours in Cantonese, tours for ESL teachers, school teacher orientations, and community group programmes. As I was not including children in this study, the school tours were also not documented, although adults clearly enjoyed listening to school tours, verified by one visitor's attention and comment which I recorded in field notes (FN) that the children's art educator "is just excellent with the kids" (FN p. 128).
Data Collection

My observations, collection of documents and interviews of these exhibition and programme sites occurred over a six-week period from the beginning of September to mid October 1998. Twenty-three days were used to observe the viewing audience and the exhibition. Of these twenty-three days, twelve included recorded interviews with individuals and groups. All but three of the field study days were between Thursday and Sunday and occurred over an average of four consecutive hours between late morning and late evening. A list of sites and programmes observed was kept to insure that time was spent in all intended areas. Significantly more time was spent on the second floor due to the relative size and number of sites. The fewer number of visitors to the fourth floor Open Studio decreased the ratio of observations and interviews in this area as compared to the second floor areas.

References to data collected has been made to field note pages and lines (FN p.-,-) which recorded my observations and informal conversations, from comments visitors left on the gallery wall in the Comment Corner on the second floor which were also recorded on field note pages (FNcc p.-), and from interviews transcribed onto pages with numbered lines (I p.-, -).

Sampling

The participants in this study were chosen from adults who visited the exhibit in September and early October. Fifty-one individuals who passed through one area in a 30 minute time frame (FN p. 95) were an indication of hundreds of viewers who were observed. Ninety-nine visitors were interviewed, 24 as individuals and 75 in 32 groups. Of the total interviewed, 36 acknowledged through their conversations that they were
British Columbia residents, 10 of which were of First Nations’ ancestry, and 23 indicated they were tourists from outside of British Columbia. The remaining 40 did not clarify their place of residence.

In the first two weeks on site I became aware of different visitors attending depending on the day of the week and the time of the day. More senior viewers and tourists came during the day (FN p. 96, 137). The younger working professionals attended in larger numbers on Thursday and Friday evenings (FN p. 189) and family groups frequently attended on weekends (FN p. 138, 141). Observation and interview times were adjusted to include a broad sample of individuals over different days and at different times of day. By reviewing the interviews and considering the sample of interviewees, I became aware of my selective choices (FN p. 122) and adjusted my interviews to include those people, particularly individual men and groups in their 20s who I had hesitated to approach. With limited use of two sites, the second floor reading area and the fourth floor group game table, comments concerning these were lacking. Of those interviewed, 48 were men and 51 were women. I estimated the number and ages of these people to be 15 individuals in their 20s, 30 in their 30s, 15 in their 40s, 13 in their 50s, and 19 in their 60s or 70s. Despite the questionable accuracy of my estimations, these suggest a range of ages among interviewees.

Observation

Qualitative research observation requires focused looking and recording for the purpose of gathering data. While observations can be from either a complete participant or a physically and psychologically removed observer, my research role was characteristic of ethnographic observation and took the position of participant-observer and observer-
participant (McMillan & Schumacker, 1993). As a participant-observer, I interacted with
the audience, engaged in looking at the exhibition display and programmes, interviewed,
gathered documents, and recorded details with "explicit awareness" (Spradley, 1980, p.
55) to the situation. My role alternated between being an insider, and part of the
audience, and an outsider, when I observed the particular situation in a more detached
manner. In this capacity I was able to reflect on my own reactions and responses and use
these as clues to possible audience response. This was particularly evident in my reaction
to the 1914 Edward Curtis film on which I wrote lengthy personal responses in a research
journal and field notes. In a more specific observer-participant role with restricted
involvement, I became a bystander or spectator of the social situation (Spradley, 1980)
with a focus on the behaviour of individuals in the setting. Data were recorded at the time
of observation, whereas with participant-observation, observations were recorded shortly
after informal conversations or interactions with individuals.

Data recorded in a field notebook, and referenced in this study with the code FN,
included accounts of the display and content of presentations, quotes and condensed
accounts from viewing audience and interactive staff, non-verbal responses including
gestures, facial expressions, and postures of the individuals, personal reflections of
situations, rough notes which filled in descriptions made during the observation day, and
summaries of what had occurred. Dates and times were recorded with each day, and
times were noted when changing sites. In addition to these field notes, a personal research
journal was kept to express ideas, work through confusions, and clarify the experiences
and connections I was making through observations and theories I was encountering.
Observations were made of both the Gallery representation of Northwest Coast First Nations' culture through exhibitions and programmes and of the viewing audience's responses to the culture represented. These began with a schedule outlining the selected areas to be observed and recorded. Through numerous intervals over the duration of the field study descriptions of the previously outlined sites of the exhibit and programmes were made. Observer-participation and participant-observation occurred at alternating intervals within specific sites several days per week throughout the six week research observation period.

During instances of being an observer among the public, I was discrete, not hovering closely and not making my gaze direct or threatening to the individuals' personal interactions. As a guest in the Gallery, I answered questions and provided information when I knew the appropriate answer or directed interviewees to appropriate personnel.

The recording of field notes began with a "grand tour" (Spradley, p. 77) and "mini tour" (p. 78) observations. In the grand tour the main features of a situation were noted concerning the space, objects, activities, people, and the mood or general feeling of the environment. Initial observations recorded in the Open Studio gives an overview that describes the room, the occupants and activities, and the casual, relaxing atmosphere. Further observations, in the same observation period and on many other observation periods, recorded more focused mini tour observations linking relationships between the elements, such as the interaction of the museum visitors with the display of the artist's tools, or the particular behaviour of the visitors at the video presentation. As the cultural content and patterns of meanings made by the visitors and the museum presentation became more apparent, observations and the interviews became more focused.
Observations of the museum presentation and the audience responses filled gaps in data created by questions which arose. Interviews provided specific information concerning what the audience responded to and how their view of the presentation was made meaningful.

Interviews

Interviews conducted in this study were informal, at times casually arising as spontaneous conversations among participants. All were unscheduled, and most informal interviews were semi-structured by predetermined questions presented in a flexible order. An open-ended format allowed individuals to direct the conversation from the interview question, making it relevant to their individual thoughts and perceptions.

Prior to approaching individuals to interview I considered my interruption to visitor's viewing and waited for a change in their physical site or attention. I began the interviews with an explanation of my position as a student researcher, the general purpose of the research to discover what was meaningful to them, and the need for recording in order to study the responses. Interviewees were informed that no identification would be linked with their recorded comments. I gave ample opportunity for audience members to decline being interviewed and was aware of individuals who wished to end the conversation. I responded to clipped response, turned posture, diverted gaze, backing away movements, and hesitancy to speak as indications that they did not wish to be interviewed or to continue an interview.

The interviews began with six casual encounters which allowed for adjustment in how, where, and whom among the gallery visitors I approached. Over the following weeks additional casual interviews recorded in field notes determined the use of the
second floor Reading Room while others captured casual conversations with patrons at the elevator and the coat check area and with Open Studio staff and tour guides in their working areas. These conversations were recorded in field notes shortly after they occurred and provided unsolicited information about visitors and interactions they had with the exhibition.

Fifty-three semi-structured, open-ended interviews were recorded on a small portable tape recorder held with a small book close to my body to prevent undue attention or discomfort during the interviewing process. The average interview lasted between ten and fifteen minutes, although two were less than two minutes and four were approximately forty-five minutes. The earliest interviews were conducted at the exit on the exhibition floor, while subsequent interviews were conducted at the exit of the retail space, the seventh, sixth and fifth galleries, and the Open Studio. This allowed for the inclusion of conversation after a complete or lengthy view of the exhibition and also prevented interrupting participants with an agenda to leave the Gallery.

Interview questions and probes focused on the individual's interests in the exhibit, their interaction with the exhibit and programme presentations, and connections they made to their lives. In an ethnographic fashion, interviews were intended to elicit "cognitive structures" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 81) indicating links the museum experience made to prior knowledge that structured and guided participants' views. Questions asked were loosely based on Spradley's (1979) typology of question content. Descriptive questions invited conversation as a means of developing rapport and focus on their experience and participation with the exhibition. Structural questions encouraged descriptions and discussion of how the participants structured or organized those things
that interested them and contrast questions explored the relationships made with the particular ideas, information or concepts that interested them.

The interviews were standardized only in that several similar questions were asked. A flexible approach was used, allowing the discussions to flow in a natural, unprescribed format. "What interested you in this exhibit?" was the first open-ended questions which allowed for a wide range of responses individuals felt were significant. This format also provided reflective moments when interviewees linked their present situation to other aspects of their lives and suggested how meaning was constructed with previous knowledge. A second question "What did you gain from the exhibition" or "Did you learn anything new?" encouraged interviewees to reveal new knowledge or understandings. Probes such as "So you think..." and "How would you explain this..." encouraged and directed discussion of their perceptions. In contrast, direct questions, such as "Did you see..." asked late in the interviews, ascertained the specific sites the participants had visited, often confirming what they had done and where they had acquired terminology or information mentioned and suggesting the significant value of different methods of delivering information for these individuals. This cross-reference established routes individuals used to make meaning. The open-ended, unstructured format provided validity for this study in the relatively uninhibited opportunity for viewers to speak on topics that interested them.

Documents

Six documents were available to the public at the exhibition. These included a three-fold pamphlet “Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast” (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998e) with an introduction and discussion of the five theme
areas; two printed sheets with subtitles "The Potlatch" (Vancouver Art galley, 1998d) and "The Hamsamala" (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998b); the exhibition catalogue (Mcnair, Joseph, & Grenville, 1998); an "Inside the Gallery" sheet which displayed the floor plans of the four floors of the gallery; and a four page booklet titled "Self-Guided Family Tour" (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998f) which was available specifically on Supersundays. The information sheets and pamphlet were available free at the foyer admission desk, the Open Studio, and in one gallery on the second floor. They provided information which linked the masks as an "integral part of a complex practice... [to] all aspects of culture - language, education, economics, land tenure, social relations, politics, belief, ritual, and art..." (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998e). The exhibition catalogue distinguished by a glossy cover with the image of Mask Representing the Sun was available for browsing at the entrance, in the two reading sites, in the gallery seating area, the Methods and Materials area and in the Gallery Shop set up at the exit of the second floor galleries. The catalogue provided the perspectives of the three curators, a large volume of text linking the masks to historical, social and cultural contexts, and colour reproductions of the masks. The content of these documents provided information choices that visitors could use to understand what they encountered. The map of the gallery floors was available at the admission desk and the Supersunday booklet was handed to those who entered the first floor galleries.

Data Analysis

"Discovery analysis" which developed "tentative and preliminary ideas during data collection" (McMillan & Shumacher, 1993, p. 484) and guided inductive analysis was often recorded in my personal journal and field notes. Noted comments and summaries
about observations, intuitive hunches, and connections to literature facilitated the choices and directions of the research. The iterative character of the analysis, with question-and-answer cycles (Miles & Huberman, 1994) refined and modified data. Sampling, for example, was reviewed and questioned to ensure a representation of individuals, interview questions were assessed and revised to focus on what and how understanding was made and researcher bias was monitored for subjectivity.

Qualitative data analysis was "primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories" (McMillan & Shumacker, p. 479). Data analysis began with multiple readings of the field notes, interview transcriptions, and documents. Repeated words, concepts and ideas emerged and created multiple categories for organizing data. Relationships which were "negative instances or phenomena that (didn't seem to) fit " (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993, p. 254) such as the "goofy" response to the Curtis film, were consciously sought, expanded on and found to fit a pattern, in this situation, of dissonance. Responses were grouped to find relationships within two broad themes of what was understood or found meaningful and how individuals processed information they found significant. Displays of codes were made to indicate frequency, distribution and typicality making obvious the significance of terms and suggesting similarities, comparisons and differences.

First Nations' responses were separated from non-First Nations responses as far as could be determined and coded separately. Initially, terms used by Non-First Nations' interviewees were reviewed for what interested them and were listed by similarities, contrasts and differences, knowledge gained, and by a variety of perceptions concerning the masks. Further review of responses coded phrases and statements into themes of
aesthetic, artistic, historical and cultural. These were later categorized as affective, factual, conceptual and attitudinal with multiple sub-categories. A second series of codes grouped responses by terms which describe methods viewers used to make sense of the masks including comparison and contrasts, connections to contextual presentations, connection to personal experiences and to social, cultural and historical knowledge, attention focused by affective response, questions, and dissonance or frustrations to understanding. Additional findings suggested categories that indicated depths of understanding and elaborations on cultural meaning beyond the museum context.

Documentation of the exhibition areas and dialogue with First Nations speakers and artists were reviewed for common themes and relationships. Documents, including the labels and text in the galleries, the catalogue, information sheets and three-fold brochure were reviewed and coded for repeated topics and terms that described aspects of culture. The contexts were recorded in orientations of the exhibiton and descriptions of particular exhibition areas and programmes.

Final analysis looked at the relationship of findings between the museums' mediation of First Nations culture through the exhibition of masks and the audiences' responses to First Nations' culture and the intersection of the two.

Triangulation which cross-validates data from various sources, from various interview days, sites, and individuals compares and corroborates information. Data triangulation occurred through repeated, similar responses of individuals, between the documentation of the museum's presented in text, a video presentation, and observations of the exhibition design, between personal comments and visitor responses, and between
the responses found in the Gallery's collection of visitor responses and those observed and recorded in this study.

The validity of this study was strengthened by the natural setting, the lengthy time frame, number of interviews, number of sites observed, the thick descriptions of the context of the exhibit, and the quoted audience responses which provide detailed accounts. The descriptions presented and the analysis based on stated theoretical frameworks suggest comparability to previous and subsequent studies. Reflexive journal writing and admission of my position as researcher in this document monitored my subjectivity.

Summary

In summary, this qualitative case study with ethnographic techniques explores and describes the presentation of Northwest Coast First Nations' masks and the adult audience's response to this exhibited culture. Methodology has been characterized by the use of the natural site and subjects, researcher subjectivity, data collection through observations, interviews, and documents, and inductive analysis which looked for topics, regularities, patterns, and relationships.

The following chapters present data concerning the museum's particular mediated presentation (Chapter 4) and audience members' perceptions and negotiations which combined information perceived with prior knowledge, abilities and skills (Chapter 5).
CHAPTER 4
THE MUSEUM PRESENTATION

This chapter details the museum's interpretation of First Nation's culture through particular choices of selection, framing and presentation of "Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast." The curators' statements, the exhibition design including the environment, the display of masks and texts, and the programmes developed to complement the exhibit are explored and described to clarify the content and contexts with which the audience interacted.

The Exhibited Masks

"Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast" was exhibited in the Vancouver Art Gallery from June 4 to October 12 of 1998 and acknowledged the Gallery mandate to "document the diverse arts of British Columbia" (MacNair, Joseph, Grenville, 1998, p. 7). The Northwest Coast masks, representing ten of the fourteen First Nations' Peoples who historically have inhabited the coast of British Columbia, were "some of the earliest collected by foreign explorers, traders, and government officials" (p. 7). The masks were drawn from "public collections in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the United States, Canada" (p. 7) and from historic and contemporary public and private collections on the northwest coast. Contemporary artists' masks were chosen for their "substantial contribution to their own culture by [being produced for] ceremonial art for ... their chiefs as well as for the commercial market" (p. 12).
The one hundred and seventy-five pieces shown in this exhibit were made in the past two centuries. Of these, approximately 65 were made within the past 30 years. The earliest mask displayed was a 19th century Tsimshian stone mask depicting a face with closed eyes and the most recent were painted, red cedar masks completed in 1998. Ten of the fourteen Northwest Coast tribes agreed to have certain masks exhibited for the public. These tribes include the Gitxsan, Haida, Heiltsuk, Kwakwaka'wakw, Makah, Nisga'a, Nuu-chah-nulth, Nuxalk, Tlingit, and Tsimshian. Masks from the Coast Salish, Oweekeno, Haisla, and Haihais were not displayed. The curators’ statement notes:

Many historic masks were not available due to their fragile nature and their commitment to existing or proposed displays, as well as the legitimate sentiments of First Nations people who increasingly are advising museums that certain artifacts must not be exhibited (Mcnair, Joseph, Grenville, 1998, p. 12).

The Museums' Objectives: Three Curators' Contexts

In statements made in the exhibition catalogue, it is evident that this exhibition was intended to be more than an exhibition to be appreciated for formal artistic qualities. The curators, Bruce Grenville, the Senior curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Robert Joseph, a Kwakwaka'wakw Chief and Bruce Macnair, a former Curator of Anthropology for the Royal British Columbia Museum concur with the Northwest Coast scholar, Wilson Duff, that beyond understanding the aesthetic form in artistic elements, viewers can "satisfy the intellect" (p. 10) and discover meaning.
Each curator wrote his perspectives of the Gallery representation in the exhibition catalogue which was available for the public to refer to at six sites through the exhibition and Open Studio area, or to purchase. Bruce Grenville, the Senior Curator, (Macnair, Joseph & Grenville, 1998) describes a strong focus of the masks as "a manifestation of powerful ancestral spirits ... used to make the supernatural world visible" (p. 14). He describes human face masks, animals and supernatural creatures representing spirits through five formal themes presented. The first theme represented the Human Face Divine and the four subsequent themes, "dimensions of the cosmos as perceived by the First Nations of the Northwest Coast: the Sky World, the Mortal World, the Undersea World and the Spirit World" (p. 14). Grenville notes that historical and contemporary masks are shown side by side to identify "points of continuity and change" and that "issues of aesthetics, masks produced for sale, the continuation of and gradual change in forms, personal styles and non-traditional masks are also sub-themes explored " (p. 14). He confirmed that the masks are not intended to be viewed solely for their aesthetic properties but instead, acknowledged the exhibit's "social and historical contexts for the production and use of the masks" (p. 14). Grenville's introduction to the exhibit outlines multiple areas of interest for visitors' perceptions.

Robert Joseph (MacNair et al, 1998) wrote a lengthier text and described the social, historical, and cultural meaning of the masks through recollections of his community's traditions with masks in "song and ritual, dance and ceremony " (p. 22). His authority as a First Nations' elder and his personal commentary provided insight into the meaning and purpose of his peoples' existence. His text, replete with stories, was told in a friendly, first person style such as "when I was a boy of five or six" (p. 20) and informed
readers of the spiritual characters and meanings masks have for him. His style of communication, a personal, informative dialogue, was expressed again in the video (Gilchrist, 1998), a CBC National Television News Special, installed in the museum foyer during the last month of the exhibition. In this video, the camera framed Robert Joseph's face and recorded his sincerity and desire to stimulate the museum audience's curiosity to know First Nations' people (FN p. 132). This approach of familiarity and genuine interest in cross-cultural understanding reoccurs in other interactions with First Nations' staff and may be perceived as an experiential context that stimulates and motivates inquiry and learning.

Peter Macnair, a former Curator of Anthropology with a broad knowledge of art and history of First Nations of the Pacific Northwest (Macnair et al, 1998) suggests in the catalogue that viewers look beyond the connoisseur's concepts of art and the aesthetic which creates "an icon bereft of meaning" (p. 36). He stresses the importance of the perspective of the maker and the user of the masks and provides text for the majority of the catalogue with historical, social, and cultural information concerning the masks.

These three perspectives define the curator's intentions for the public audience. They also represent a compliance with the conditions outlined in the 1992 document "Turning the Page: Forging New Relationships Between Museums and First Peoples" in which Canadian Museums have been advised to have equal partnerships with First Peoples in the management, interests of, and interpretations and representations of their culture. The curators' statements in the catalogue identify this partnership and provide social and cultural context. The illustrations and information provided by the curators and catalogue
designers also serve as a resource for the museum viewer for contemplating their understanding of Northwest Coast First Nations culture long after their visit.

The Exhibition Design

"Museum curators and researchers are responsible for designing exhibits ... to engage [visitors] in a variety of mental elaborations and provide ways to assist the visitor to approach learning effectively" (Koran, Koran, & Foster, 1989, p. 77).

I have chosen to describe the exhibition based on Belcher's (1991) theory of exhibitions having geographical, intellectual, conceptual and psychological "orientation systems necessary for visitors to comprehend and appreciate museum intentions" (p. 99). Geographical orientation provides a sense of the physical plan and relationships of one space to another as well as of the visitor within any particular space. At the entrance reception desk an "inside the gallery" simplified floor map of all the museum exhibitions was available for visitors. In the first exhibition space, an overview with key titles and introductory text provided links to the series of galleries viewers would encounter. Colour coding indicating the themes of the exhibition in red, greens and blue coloured spaces, information sites in yellow coloured spaces, and the familiar deep green on walls two floors above the mask exhibition to indicate the entrance to the Open Studio which focused on the mask exhibit. Belcher proposes such geographic orientation increases confidence and relaxation and prepares visitors to be receptive (p. 99).

Intellectual orientation prepares the mind to progress from basic information or unknown to known (Belcher, p. 100). Visitors with prior knowledge relating to the exhibit gain greater understanding building connections, challenging preconceived ideas,
reinforcing, explaining and developing knowledge. At the opposite extreme, those with little knowledge rely on information from their experience in the museum to provide basic information for an intellectual orientation. Information from observations of the art objects, the labels, texts, videos, tours, artists' programmes, and studio activities provided viewers with familiar and new information to maximize knowledge and the possibility for a great number of "mental elaborations" (Koran et al., 1989, p. 77).

From a conceptual orientation, suggested by the ideas and organization of ideas, the exhibition conveys "comprehension of the whole" (Belcher, p. 100). Contextual information, the aesthetic, historical, social, and cultural, were mediated by the display and the supportive programmes to connect information, construct relationships, and support concepts of the continuity of mask and the representation of the human face and the four Spirit Worlds. For visitors to comprehend these concepts or themes, the museum oriented visitors in the first gallery space they encountered. Here a display provided five masks as examples of the four Spiritual World themes with resemblance to the human face which dated from 1870 to 1973, and a map of British Columbia indicating the "Traditional Territories" of the 14 Nations of the Pacific Northwest Coast. The following galleries expanded these themes: with numerous comparative examples for each themed gallery; with lighting and display for viewers to scrutinize the masks viewed from a very close perspective to show the surface textures, paint colours, various materials, the symmetrical and asymmetrical designs, and characteristics among masks; with historical, economic, social, and cultural references in labels, texts, documents, photographs, and videos; and through social interactions with First Nations' staff. Information communicated through these multiple avenues could be synthesized for a comprehension of the masks as a
continuing tradition, as representations of the human face and the four Spirit Worlds, and more broadly, as illustrating First Nations cultures.

Lastly, a psychological orientation creates motivation and positive attitudes, encouraging reception of information, excitement, and curiosity. Entering the impressive classically designed, turn-of-the-century Gallery building visitors could prepare themselves for a particular experience suggested by the grand scale and social stature of such architecture. Once on the exhibition floor, visitors could be stimulated by an unexpected series of familiar and entertaining elements. These included richly coloured gallery walls, the large dramatic dioramas depicting action scenes, the displays allowing close scrutiny of carved masks, the use of familiar video communication and tactile exhibits, the intermittent, small, more intimate and personal spaces among large formal galleries, the videos with First Nations elders as figures of knowledge and authority, and text including quotes of scholars. Less dramatic, yet equally effective psychological orientation which reassured and suggested familiarity, were found in the maps, signage, and recreation of familiar contexts in the gallery spaces and in physical comforts provided by seating, lighting, and public conveniences.

These four orientations within the exhibition design suggest environments which surround visitors, make them feel more or less comfortable, and encourage engagement, interaction and opportunities for them to negotiate their understanding of the exhibit. The choice and arrangement of objects with light, colour, texture, scale, space, shape, intensity, arrangement, implied or realized movement, and the inclusion of various exhibition programmes support and facilitate a mediation of museum and First Nations cultures and stimulate learning among visitors.
Legend

R = Rotunda & Staircase
ESC = Escalator
ELV = Elevator
GS = Gallery Shop
D = Diorama
• = Video Screen
• = Seating

Galleries
1 = Entrance
2 = Human Face Divine
3 = Human Face Divine
4 = The Sky World
5A = The Mortal World
5B = Video:
 'In the Land of the War Canoes Extrapolation Wall
  Methods & Materials
5C = The Spirit World
6 = The Undersea World
7 = The Wrapped Mask

Alcoves
A1 = Reading Room
A2 = Video:
 'In the Hands of the Raven'
A3 = Traditional Variations
A4 = Comments Corner
The Exhibition

The rectangular plan of the exhibit floor is described through seven main galleries with small yellow-walled alcoves at the four corners. An additional yellow exhibition area provides a diversion of colour and display in the mid-section of the long fifth gallery space.

The Entrance to the Exhibition

The second floor exhibit of "Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast First Nations" was accessed through formal spaces beginning at the foyer. Visitors passed the admissions desk and could pick up printed pamphlets (in various languages) concerning the exhibit and its layout. They then passed by a uniformed staff member and crossed the width of an expansive gallery to the circular rotunda and staircases. Here visitors found themselves in a predominantly white, bright, sky-lit space under the rotunda's glass dome and surrounded by Ionic columns and marble flooring. Mounting the stairs to the second floor one came to the exhibit entrance.

The entranceway narrowed to enclose visitors in a relatively smaller and dimly lit, deep green-coloured gallery. My immediate response was a sense of being in a British Columbia forest. Illuminated in the centre of the facing wall and inset behind glass a large, wide-eyed, circular sun mask, stared directly toward those entering. To either side were glass enclosures each holding two richly-coloured masks with distinct facial features. These could be viewed closely from their chest-height display in glass enclosures under focused lights. The five masks represented the themes shown through the galleries. Two information panels, approximately 3 feet by 4 feet, are displayed in this entrance on the
wall opposite the masks. One text introduced the exhibit and the other showed a map of British Columbia and indicated the geographical territory of the 14 Northwest Coast First Nations.

The Human Face Divine Galleries

Moving in a clockwise direction, the viewer encountered the second and third galleries with deep red walls, the most distant room having one deep blue-purple coloured wall. Framed by the 10 foot wide entrance one saw the bold title announcing "The Human Face Divine." A large text panel, the first of a series in the themed galleries, introduced the early representation of "a human face or an animal in guise" and the 'Jenna Cass' prototype associated with early commerce which continues to be made today. In the two red galleries outset, glass-faced cases held groups of three to five masks. Labels under each mask presented information about the artist (or "unknown" artist), the Nation, what the mask represented, approximate date created, materials used, and the institution where the mask has been held. Spot lights mounted on the 13 foot high ceiling focus on the artifacts and the large text panel leaving a subdued light in the centre of this gallery.

Printed high on the exit wall was the first of several short quotes which read:

All the masks were representations of the 'human face divine' except one...it was called tech te cheinny [bald eagle] and seemed to be held in great reverence...

(William Fraser Tolmie, trader and physician describing a Heiltsuk Potlatch, 1834,)

In the far corner of the second red gallery was a small yellow alcove titled "Reading Room." It offered comfortable chairs, a small table and a variety of books relating to the traditions, history and art of Northwest Coast Aboriginal people. Two
enlarged photographs on the entrance wall, dated 1946, depicted masks being danced at the Gilford village site.

The Sky World Gallery

Returning to the second red gallery, visitors encounter the purple-blue wall with display cases holding one or two comparatively larger masks than those in the Human Face Divine galleries. Following the colour change, visitors were lead into a space approximately six times the size and almost twice the height (24 feet). This fourth gallery, titled "The Sky World" suggested a natural environment with its focused lighting, deep purple-blue walls, and very high ceiling reminiscent of an evening sky. The ceiling spot lights illuminating a large central display and peripherally placed objects directed visitors attention around the room. A large text panel, told of the domination of the Sky World in legends and life and the principal characters (the sun, moon and birds) represented by different Nations. Introducing the central exhibit it began:

The huxwhukw's voice is heard all over the world. Assemble at your places dancers! At the edge of the world.

The raven's voice is heard all over the world. Assemble at your places, men! At the edge of the world. The Hamatas' voice is heard all over the world. Assemble at your places, men! At the edge of the world.

(translation of Hatmatsa song, La'Lasiqoala, 1895)

The central exhibit, raised on a ten-inch platform, was an action-like grouping of approximately twenty Kwakwaka'wakw masks. These were mounted at various angles and heights to one another, with several displayed as full-costumed figures. This open display of masks included a variety of materials, comparative styles and suggestions of interacting
characters was guarded by a low hung cord, an electronic light and an audible monitor which frequently indicated the close proximity of viewers to the masks. On two sides of this diorama, pedestal mounted labels provide a map-like directory to identify the particular masks with a coded number. Numbers corresponded with information as noted on previous labels.

In a nearby Plexiglas wall bracket single-sheet documents titled 'The Hamsamala' (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998b) and 'Potlatch' (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998d) provided cultural information. The Hamsamala document described the diorama as a depiction of the most sacred Kwakwaka'wakw dance. It informed readers of the representations of the mask characters, the dramatic events told through dance, and a hint of the cultural mores and beliefs the dance inspires. The Potlatch document described the tradition, history and purpose of this fundamental "institution" of Northwest Coast tribal groups which inextricably binds "all aspects of their culture - language, polity, economics, land tenure, belief, ritual and art". The document described the importance of the "images of primal ancestors" as icons such as those depicted by masks, and the use of masks at the potlatch in "the recreation of the magical past... in elaborately staged theatrical events" (p.1). An upholstered bench was positioned at the corner of the exhibit space beneath these reading materials.

The walls peripheral to the diorama hold both glass cases and open displays of historic and contemporary masks. Among these are partially opened transformational masks whose mechanisms which used leather, gut and string for hinges and wooden joints, could be clearly seen. Masks were displayed in separate historic and contemporary
groupings, by similar character, style, tribe, nation or artist. One wall displayed a large
dance screen illustrated with a design of animal symbols.

The variety of displays, the sub-themes of the groupings, the inclusion of multiple
materials, and comparisons between the objects in this colourfully recreated "Sky World"
were particularly noteworthy.

The Mortal World Gallery Area

The fifth and very long gallery (approximately 25 by 160 feet) was interrupted by
multiple physical, visual and audible changes: physically by several freestanding plinths
holding enclosed masks to be viewed from all sides, by wall-mounted cases, by partial
walls, and by bench seating; visually by changing wall colours, by a large area of text, by
realistic and supernatural themes of masks, by video presentations and by a contrasting
open, brightly-lit, non-exhibition space; and audibly by intermittent chanting, drumming
and speech from two audio-visual sources and the muffled hum of visitors' voices in
various areas.

I have described the displays in this large gallery space in three sections: "The
Mortal World" encountered first; the historic Curtis video, extrapolation text, and
materials section in the mid-section; and "The Spirit World" displayed at the farther end.
The areas were again colour coded with yellow walls in the central section and in two
corner alcoves as opposed to green at either end. While the total space was large and
comparatively long, the variation among the displays gave visitors multiple choices for
diverse learning opportunities, foci of interest, and concentration or relaxation.
In the "Mortal World," a light-green exhibition space, the text panel informs visitors of the powerful animal, human and mythic creatures common in this realm. The text tells of the real and supernatural creatures:

How shall we hide from the bear that is moving all around the world?
Let us crawl under ground! Let us cover our backs with dirt that the great terrible bear from the north end of our world may not find us.
(from a Kwakwaka'wakw song owned by the grizzly bear dancer named "Great Bear")

Bear, wolf, raven, frog, and human masks were contrasted with the mythic land-based creatures and spirits, Dzunuk'wa, Nulamal, Xwixwi, and Naxnox. As in the previous gallery, the exhibition cases held single or multiple masks, grouped by particular characters, traditional designs and carving styles. A large black upholstered bench with an exhibition catalogue attached had been placed in the midst of this section. Viewers could sit, relax, observe, or peruse the catalogue.

Sounds of voices and drumming was heard from the video "In The Hands of The Raven" (Madder, 1998) which ran in an adjacent, small, yellow alcove. This area with subdued lighting provided 18 seats and a single video screen. A small text panel at the entrance introduced the edited version of the 1998 film which ran continuously. The film included narration by several First Nations exhibiting artists who told the origins of the Northwest Coast People, their land and it's resources. They spoke with respect for "the visual statements" that describe their traditions, heritage and ancestry, their ownership and rights. Learning the designs of the masks was noted as synonymous with "learning the alphabet" of the culture. The narrators described the importance of the rain forest
environment which has supported Northwest Coast Native peoples, the teaching from their elders, their belief in their role in the universe and of the spirits, their social customs, their economy, the "darker side of the meeting of cultures" and the survival and revival of the arts made visible in the masks exhibited. This film presented the First Nations' perspective and concluded that bridges are being built between Native and Non-Native peoples.

The Mid-Section: Video, Extrapolation Wall, and Materials and Methods

Moving to the mid-section of this long gallery, two benches are conveniently positioned to watch the four video screens mounted vertically in pairs approximately ten feet apart. Unlike the closed space for viewing the previous video, this is an open area through which all visitors pass toward the exit and from where the museum visitors could see through a 15 foot railed, opening into the well-lit rotunda below.

Four large video screens simultaneously showed "In the Land of the War Canoes: Kwakiutl Indian Life on the Northwest Coast" (Curtis, 1972). This black and white, originally silent film made by Edward Curtis in 1914, presented full screens of bold text intermittently with action scenes. The film which had been called "In the Land of the Head Hunters" was renamed and released with sounds of Kwakwaka'wakw singing and drumming in 1972. A small text panel informed viewers about the early anthropologist and film maker, Edward Curtis, aimed to recreate a representation of Native life before European contact with a story of a young woman who refuses to marry the husband her father chose for her. The 44 minute, continuously running film documented material culture and the activities of the people in 1914 with costumes (including cedar capes, skirts, entire animal skins and heads, feathers), dancing, drumming (on a hollowed log
with wooden implements), the canoe size, shape and its manipulation by paddlers, the
natural environment, a house front, and an interior sleeping area. While clearly a film
made decades ago, the early anthropologist’s representation was criticized by a First
Nations elder and artist who added that the theatrical effects were created by Curtis'
collection of costumes and a longhouse prop at an otherwise uninhabited site (A.
Thompson, personal communication, September 1998).

On the yellow wall bordering the seating and opposite the video screens was a
single mask surrounded by a display of quotes from contemporary artists, anthropologists,
art historians, educators and curators. Twelve of these nineteen quotes were made by
First Nations scholars or artists. Themes of the quotes were placed with the titles
cosmology, inheritance, social relationships, education, aesthetics, history, ownership,
rights, law and ceremony. Viewers could stand or they could sit on the benches, facing
either this extrapolation wall or the video screens.

The museum audience had the option to walk past the extrapolation wall
continuing on in the exhibit of the Mortal World and the next themed world, or
alternatively, to pass behind the extrapolation wall into a wide yellow corridor-like space
titled "Methods and Materials." Here, a variety of natural materials and tools were hung
on one wall. The tools, placed in a well-lit, chest-height glass cases invited close scrutiny
as did the touchable materials hung on the wall. In addition, four wood blocks which
illustrated stages of carved masks were displayed openly on a counter. Text panels above
each described the carving process. An exhibition catalogue was also located in this area.

Following the pathway out of this corridor, visitors would return to the long
gallery and the display of the supernatural Mortal World creatures. Groupings of similar
characters showed differences among traditional interpretations through time and among Nations. In addition, a quote mounted above a case of Dzunuk'wa masks suggested her character and provided reference for viewers (FN p. 192).

The Spirit World Gallery Area

The third section of the large gallery was divided by a partial wall placed at a right angle to the flow of traffic. The wall, used to display cases of masks, created a partially enclosed area. Within this area, titled "The Spirit World," free-standing and wall-mounted cases displayed eerie and fearsome-looking characters. The accompanying text panel introduced this World with:

I went down to the under world with the chief of the ghosts. Therefore

I have supernatural power.

The chief of the ghosts made me dance. Therefore I have supernatural power.

(from a Kwakwaka'waka ghost dance song)

The text stated different opinions among individuals concerning how this world can be reached "beyond the western horizon... by following an underground route" or "through a graveyard or ...coffin" or a place "coexisting with the Mortal World." One spirit, "the keeper of drowned souls," was noted for the different names and variations of characteristics given by artists from different Nations.

Adjoining the end of this long gallery was another small yellow alcove exhibiting "Traditional Variations" which exemplified the continuation of traditional mask making with non-traditional variations. A case of four contemporary masks were described in the accompanying text panel as portrait and a new pictorial/narrative style mask.
The Undersea World Gallery

Exiting the large, pale-green gallery and the Spirit World, the light appeared dimmer and the wall colour changed to deep blue-green reminiscent of a body of water. This colourful sixth gallery, titled the "Undersea World," surrounded viewers once again in a large, high-ceiling space with a central, open-to-the air, action scene depicted. A group of eight white-masked figures were positioned sitting in a shallow carved canoe surrounded by masks resembling sea life. The figures had particularly unusual masks created by smooth white faces, bright red lips and nostrils, black eyebrows, black circles around their eyes, hooked noses and feathers standing upright from their foreheads (FN p. 181). No information was available to explain the meaning of the curious boatload. The text panel in this area begins with the quote:

The great Sea Monster will rise from below.
He makes the sea boil, the great Sea Monster.
He will upheave the seas, the great Sea Monster.

(from a Kwakwaka'waka song)

Viewers read of the "mystery and power" of this realm exemplified by the Killer Whale and his position as an undersea creature. As in the Sky World diorama, pedestal mounted labels on two sides of the central diorama noted the names, dates and origin of the masks in the order of their layout. Two of the walls in this gallery held unenclosed masks with focused lighting high on the walls. On one wall were contemporary masks and on the other, older transformational masks whose mechanisms for movement could be visualized. Greater space was given to these individual masks as compared to the groupings in cases
on the adjacent walls. Other than the occasional buzz from the diorama's perimeter electronic monitor, sounds from the previous gallery were obscured and diminished.

The Wrapped Mask Gallery

The final and seventh display space beyond the Undersea World was small with red coloured walls and displayed a single, centrally placed case holding a wrapped mask. Quotes on all four walls explaining the reverence and respect for covered and safely stored masks, their appearance for ceremony, the ownership of masks by inherited family, and a mask's dance ritual specific to one family.

Adjoining this small gallery space was a fourth yellow alcove labeled "Comments Corner" with brighter lighting, upholstered wooden chairs, the exhibition catalogue, pencils and two inch square adhesive note paper. One wall in this space was covered with approximately 70 written or drawn notes.

The Gallery Shop

Retracing a short pathway through the small, red gallery the public could exit the exhibition in a course which zigzagged through a bright, yellow gallery shop. On shelving, walls and countertops, the shop displayed a variety of articles: prints of the masks, the exhibition catalogue, various posters, and a number of articles illustrating First Nations masks or motifs (postcards, books and journals, calendars, videos, lunch bags, scarves, vests, fabric hangings, stuffed toys, pouches, t-shirts, and hats). At the narrowed exit of this retail space, a small sign informs the public of the "Open Studio" on the fourth floor where a First Nations' carver is in attendance during certain hours. Moving past a partitioning wall visitors completed a pathway around the second floor exhibition and re-entered the darker and deep-green entrance of the exhibit. Here viewers again encounter
the map of the British Columbia coast defining the geographic areas of the 14 First Nations communities. Beyond the map, visitors encountered the well-lit rotunda staircase to return to the lower, ground floor or an escalator or elevator to carry them to other floors.

The Museum Programmes

Museum programmes added to and complemented the content and concepts of the exhibits which motivated and influenced visitors' learning. Programmes included gallery tours, dance performances, an Open Studio with multiple sites, Supersunday activities, a foyer film, and various activities for smaller target audiences.

The Gallery Tours

The tours began in the first gallery space before a wooden sign which indicated the days and times tours began. I experienced tours from four different tour guides. Two were by non-Aboriginal staff, (a male and female) and two were by women of Aboriginal ancestry. The two Aboriginal women gave the majority of the tours during my observations and it was one young woman of Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish descent who I frequently observed, recorded and have focused the following description.

The tour guide, who could have been mistaken for an audience member except for her Gallery badge, easily engaged visitors in conversation. She began with the organization of the exhibit, explaining five masks in the introductory gallery as a "context for understanding " (FN p. 74) the historical and contemporary masks.

Throughout the tour, she made many references to her own community and her personal knowledge as an insider of the broad culture represented. She pointed out that
the audience would have a "limited view (with) no movement, no sound" normally associated with the masks (FN p. 86). Her conversation, however, provided many examples for imagining. She spoke of the relationships of masks within the family or the community, recounted stories and the drama experienced when the masks were danced with singing and drumming in big house ceremonies, and told of the reactions and intended meanings and social values illustrated for ceremony audiences.

Viewers were told information which was provided in the catalogue or texts, such as that the historic and contemporary masks of human face often represented heavenly spirits assuming human form and were made for ceremony and commerce. The guide pointed out the historical styles among carvers exhibited, such as the work of Simon Stilde and his great, great niece, Frieda Diesing (FN p. 86); characteristics in masks' meanings such as the distinguishing hair lines of male and female and the use of the labret as "an ornament which implied status" (FN p. 75); and those which "catered to the [commercial] market" (FN p. 86). Information was shared concerning the different spiritual beings represented through birds and animals such in the Hamsamala diorama and on the dance screen, which made "references to family ancestors" (FN p. 75) and illustrated the family's historic lineage and territory.

The preponderance of particular themes among Nations (FN p. 86) such as "the sun, moon, and stars among Northern communities " (FN p. 89) and birds and the transformational masks among others was spoken about. The Sky World diorama with costumed and masked figures was explained by pointing out the different visual features, and describing the movements and sounds made by the different masks when danced. The audience was informed of the relationship of these masks to the potlatch ceremony and the
significance of this particular ceremony to record and honour events such as births and
deaths, to display wealth and ownership of songs, stories, names and crests and to take on
responsibility for maintaining integral cultural tradition (FN p. 75). Relevance was drawn
between the very old and contemporary bird spirit masks represented, informing tour
participants of the resurgence of the ceremony which is "vital to traditions today" (FN p.
90). Cultural values of "privilege and responsibility" (FN p. 90) were associated with the
selected and trained mask dancers who perform and culturally reinforce values for their
community.

The tour was given in an animated and expressive manner, moderated by the
guide's voice to fit the group size without appearing to disturb the remaining gallery
audience. Personal anecdotes between facts, adding humour to the legends and images
described. The pace was fast with intervals which invited and received comments and
questions (FN p. 88). "Why were potlatches held?" "Why were potlatches outlawed? "
(FN p. 87) "How were masks used in dances?" (FN p. 89).

The attending participants grew in number as the tour proceeded through the
galleries with the end-of-the-tour count ranging from 20 to 130. This guide's tours
typically ended with a number of the audience gathered around her to listen to additional
casual conversations with participants who ask questions or recounted personal stories.
Tours lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Tours provided by other guides highlighted visual qualities such as variations of
face painting, mask designs, carving styles, similar characters among Nations (FN p. 102),
the use of diverse materials (FN p. 152), and the aged wooden glow of the older masks'
patina (FN p. 152). They also mentioned details of the historically-unjust, political actions
by the government involving threats, confiscations, sales of artifacts to American and Canadian museums (FN p. 152) and the purposeful spread of smallpox among First Peoples (FN p. 154). Some tours were comparatively more historically and aesthetically focused, didactic and script-like as compared to the more personal communication and cultural meanings provided by the tours lead by the First Nations guide described.

The Dance Performances

As part of the Art Gallery's presentation, dance performances, planned with two West Coast Native troupes, a single First Nations' dancer, and a Vancouver-based, non-Native dance group were held in the open space of the rotunda. Seven First Nations performances and one non-Native performance were scheduled during the exhibition.

First Nations' Dance Performances

The two all-male First Nations dance troupes I observed performed for 30 minutes on several consecutive weeks. Museum visitors were alerted and drawn to these dances by the preceding drumming that resounded through the first and second floor galleries. Audiences of 150 to 200 filled the rotunda seating, rotunda entrance, stairway, and landing above to watch the costumed drummers and dancers.

The performances were preceded by introductions, first in the speakers' language and then in English. Yekawid Chief Frank Nelson took this opportunity to speak of the sacred character of masks and the connection of the masks to dancing and to the First Nations' heritage and beliefs. At another dance performance, Simon Dick, welcomed the audience to the sharing event and spoke of the importance of acknowledging the existence of the First Nations culture. He introduced his dance group from Vancouver Island and informed the audience that they would see the family's original dances.
Speaking to the audience in a personal manner, he explained each song or dance and the protocol being followed. The first song for the "proper entrance" (FN p. 115) honored the mothers and sisters and remembered one sister who recently died. As a spokesman for a missing elder, he explained the tradition of this missing troupe member who would not be with the dance group for twelve moons, or one year, in respect for their close, deceased relative. For the second song and dance, "the Washing of Tears," the audience was asked to stand in respect while two members sang and drummed and two danced. The dancers were costumed, one in a button blanket cape, soft leather shoes and a crown-like headpiece made of cedar twigs and ermine that hung down the dancer's back to his knees and the other in a decorative chamois jacket with long fringe and soft leather beaded boots. This dance "less traditional and from the Cedar Bark ceremony, [was] the 'Dance of Peace' done by holders of treaty processes ... not in agreement. If there is rivalry, peace dancers are asked to come to generate agreement." (FN p. 115). The dance was performed by young men who were "peace-keepers meeting and dancing together for the first time" (FN p. 115). Accompanied by singing and drumming, they danced in small pivoting circles. One dancer, with bird-like movements made with sideways head jerking, held feathers in one hand, moved in one direction and then another with knees and hips bent. The other dancer held a rattle in one hand and moved in similar circular patterns. The third dance "Bakwas Dance" (FN p. 116) was described throughout by a narrator and accompanied by a singer. A figure, seemingly hiding, emerged in a calf length grass skirt, with a green mask over his face which he kept disguised behind his hands, arms and long dark hair. He lept and ducked and the audience was told he was breaking open and devouring food from the seashore. We were told he was afraid of humans and had entered
and exited to a supernatural forest. Grouse and Raven then appeared and performed in costumes and movements resembling their characters. The grouse wore a cedar bark cape with feathers trimming the neck, a tuft of feathers on his head and carried a rattle. His movements with twitching hands and arms raised were interrupted by his bird-like calls. Raven, known as a trickster, wore a transformational mask allowing him to change from a bird to a human. As a bird, he bent, crouched, and called. He changed character, opening and closing his mask, to peer at the audience as a human, and then reverted to a raven. The two dancers, who "can go on for hours " (FN p. 117) moved around the floor checking for spirits.

A final dance, "the essence of having fun" (FN p. 117) began with a repetitive and simple song and dance into which the audience were invited. With encouragement the audience joined the dance troupe following the leader's small stepping, with arm movement, rhythmic bending and swaying accompanied by drumming and singing. The pace picked up; the drumming and singing became louder; and the dancing crowd circled the rotunda floor. The activity culminated with the audience clapping, recognition of the five-member dance troupe, and thanks extended to the public for joining the activity.

An invitation to ask questions allowed a small group of individuals to move forward while the crowd dispersed. Questions concerned the number of different Nations, the Chinook language used in trade between the Cree and West Coast Nations, and the materials used in the costumes (FN p. 117-118).

Non-First Nations' Dance Performance
"Necessary Encounter" was the title of the dance performance choreographed by non-Native Karen Jamieson as "a fusion of two different performing traditions, that of the Northwest Coast First Nations mask making and contemporary modern dance. Performed by one masked and one unmasked dancer, the work is a cultural encounter" (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998c). The performance began with a figure dressed in black peering at the audience from the downward moving escalator on one side of the rotunda stairway to the second floor landing. Her black costume was a sleeveless bodice, leggings and mid-calf length skirt made of a crinoline with many hanging, thread-like strips similar to the weight and texture of cedar strips. The figure continued down the rotunda staircase flinging herself, bending and bouncing, grasping and straining from the wall to the banister to the rotunda floor, all the while singing in a First Nations' language but with a melody, tempo, and nuances of Western classical music and accompanied in the background by abstract, staccato sound from a piano.

The second figure emerged from the second floor's open archway of the mask exhibition wearing a small, carved Native mask, black sleeveless bodice, leggings and wide plaits of black fabric hanging from her waist in the shape of a bird's tailfeathers. Her hair hung in strings, a braid over her shoulder, with the mask covering her face. This masked figure showed great tension, confidence, and curiosity through her movements as she regarded the audience, thrusting her chin forward and back, darted, jerked, splayed her hands, closed her fists or held her arms tense and bent at a right angle at the elbow. At times her arm and hand movements arched dramatically and fluttered like a bird. The dancers with bent knees and often small footsteps resembled the movements of First Nations' dancers. Music changed, at times becoming drum-like. The dancers who began
without contact soon met and appeared to communicate through their physical gestures. In field notes I recorded my response to this 20 minute dance with the words "tension, spirits, action, fear and frenzy, mental anguish, physical strength, supernatural, and animal and human existence (FN p. 137). This Karen Jamieson dance performance was seen by the museum audiences during its rehearsal through one afternoon and at one scheduled performance.

The Open Studio

Passing through a fourth floor gallery space from the elevator or escalator, "the open studio was immediately recognizable by the same deep-green coloured walls" (FN p. 78). The two entrances displayed several contemporary prints and paintings by two First Nations' artists. Entering this space visitors were reminded of the exhibit. For one period of time visitors would see "a black and red button blanket and five masks of varying sizes and styles hanging on the far wall. Sound from a video with a First Nations narrator and intermittent drumming provide background ... and a First Nations carver sits beneath the button blanket, the floor space beneath him littered with wood chips" (FN p. 78). The carpeted space, approximately 80 feet square, lined on two sides by venetian blind-covered windows and potted cedar trees, was a relaxed setting. It was organized into five areas defined by seating arrangements. These included, beginning from a visitors' gaze scanning in a circle from the left, a hands-on area, the resident artist, a reading area, a game table and a video viewing area. The attending Gallery staff welcomed and oriented visitors to the spaces, and answered questions.
Fourth Floor Plan With Open Studio

Legend

G = Galleries
ELV = Elevator
ESC = Escalator
• = Video Screen
☐ = Table
• = Seating

Open Studio Areas
1 = Art Activity Table
2 = Carver & Storyteller
3 = Reading Area
   3A = with chairs
   3B = with floor cushions
4 = Game Table
5 = Video:
   Box of Treasures
The Hands-on Area

The hands-on area with two six foot tables and benches was, on 'Supersundays', expanded with additional tables and seating to use all available space in the centre of the room. On the tables art supplies (felt pens, pencil crayons, scissors and various coloured sticky paper) were available for visitors to use. The gallery staff offered paper clearly and colourfully printed with the image of the left half of Robert Davidson's "Mask Representing Shark." Individuals were encouraged to complete the mask and were told of "the tradition of apprenticeship of a master and a novice" (FN p. 92) in which the elder skilled artist acts as a mentor with the novice actively participating. Mounted on the wall were the completed mask images done by earlier visitors. I found spectators in animated conversations discussing this public artwork which showed a broad range of imaginations and creative designs (FN p. 197). In addition to the hands-on opportunity, this area displayed printed material about the exhibition in several Asian languages for visitors to take away.

The First Nations' Carvers

The second area in the Open Studio focused on interaction with First Nations carvers. Of the six carvers who were in this site I observed three who actively carved and engaged and communicated with visitors. During August, Tom Patterson and his apprentice, Sean Hinton, shared the space and work side-by-side on masks that were at different levels of completion. They sat surrounded by carved articles, at tables holding many tools, photographs, and personal books of drawings. A semi-circle of stools for visitors were arranged around the artists workspace.
The amiable interaction of the artists while carving provided factual information and anecdotes and revealed personal, social, economic and spiritual meaning of their work. Tom demonstrated his techniques and style, "drawing on the wooden sculpture, correcting lines and [recounting] how [Nuu-chah-nulth] carving was more rounded in earlier years when he was fifteen, and has become more angular. Sean was carving a bumble bee with a stinger and clackers and answered questions about techniques: how his tools were used and the kind of wood he carves" (FN p. 94). Asked "How heavy is that?" Tom responds smiling, passing the mask to the inquiring young man and tells how it will be less than half the weight when finished. When asked, "Did you learn from your father?" he answered, "No, from Tony Hunt a Kwagulthe. My father makes blades [for carving tools] and I make the handles." He shows his different adze blades and curved knives. After demonstrating how one is used by pulling forward and away, he passes his carving and the tool to the young man to try (FN p. 94).

Victor Reese, a Tsimpshian artist and resident artist in the Open Studio several weeks later presented himself as both a carver and storyteller. Like Tom and Sean, he appeared comfortable and "spoke with sincerity as a teacher with young children, teens, and young adults to seniors" (FN p. 186). He also exemplified the tradition of a mentoring elder as he engaged a child to look closely at his tools, watch them in use, and compare carved surfaces while speaking quietly and with a positive manner (FN p. 185). A visitor was interested in how the masks functioned and where ideas came from. Victor answered that "ideas need to be well thought out and have to fit the person a carving is designed for, "their status and their symbols (FN p. 184), what it means to the person who
wears it, the history of that person, it's use and purpose (FN 191). His interaction with visitors explains both himself as an individual and his culture.

In my field notes I recorded facts that he tells visitors that were laced with personal stories. He spoke of:

- the hooked knife made from Grandmother's [involuntarily donated] butter knife;
- the hooked carving edge shaped to get into corners; a small hook made from a hacksaw blade; other good steel used for blades adapted from car springs and files;
- hard Arkansas stone used for sharpening and polishing tools twice a day; large carving with mussel shells which grew offshore on the outer coast but are no longer available; working front and back when carving for uniform drying
- ...preventing cracks if one side dries too quickly (FN p. 185); [that] wood dries about one inch a year; his preference for red cedar and alder; the technique for peeling and using cedar bark; the use of copper sulfate for green, salmon eggs and pulverized ochre for red, the centre pit of a thorny Devil's Stone plant for a blue-black (FN p. 196); personalized handles for fingers and grasp (FN p. 197).

He concluded conversations with "thanks for coming" (FN p. 196).

Victor's engaging and personable manner was particularly apparent when I entered the Open Studio one Friday afternoon and found him sitting on the carving stool softly drumming on a broad, painted drum with a silent, attentive audience of 31 people listening to his account of a story about Raven. He sang, drummed and told of "how we came to have light" (FN p. 191). The listeners were captivated.
The Reading Area

On the right side of the Open Studio, in close proximity to the carvers and in front of another wall which displayed visitors' artwork, was a reading area. The space included 5 rattan armchairs, a corner area of large, floor cushions, a coffee table, and many books related to history, culture, traditions, legends and artists. A 'Talk Back' book welcoming visitors' comments and a compilation of newspaper and magazine clippings are among books on the coffee table. One visitor said she used this area "to look at images of artwork, [to] enjoy overhearing conversation about art by artists talking together, [to] look at the public artwork on the adjacent wall, and see people enjoy themselves doing the art project" (FN p. 197). This visitor aptly described the stimulating and relaxed environment of the Open Studio which created opportunities for interaction between people. Relaxation was also apparent when visitors sat slouched (FN p. 83), lay in the cushions reading to children, or dozed beside their seated partner (FN p. 197).

The Game Table

Further from the carver, but also on the right, was a game table, approximately three feet square, representing a geographical relief map. Stools for 8 were placed around the table. Question cards, laying at the periphery of the map, asked questions which suggested different negotiation possibilities between peoples of diverse orientations. An example was the negotiations from the perspective of First Nations people with their respect and livelihood in the land and its resources and the Western European businessman and his interest in the economic potential of the land. While the map presented interest in it's visual and tactile qualities, the questions facilitated thinking about the boundaries
between cultures and encouraged thinking about negotiations between people, property and different beliefs and needs.

**Video Alcove**

Coming full circle in the description of the Open Studio I encountered the alcove created by the entranceway walls where the video "Box of Treasures" (Olin, 1983) was shown. Chairs for 12 allowed visitors to sit separated but within view of the other activity areas. The video, lasting 28 minutes, described the purpose of the U Mista Cultural Centre built in 1983 in Alert Bay, Vancouver Island. Chief Robert Joseph and Gloria Cranmer Webster, daughter of the late Chief Dan Cranmer, narrated the documentary describing the history of the outlawed potlatch ceremony, the cultural objects which were given over to government officials, and the return and housing of a potlatch collection. The Cultural Centre was described as a "box of treasures" and a "store of knowledge" that linked history to the younger generation (FN p. 84). The video informed viewers of the revival of disrupted cultural traditions, the ceremonies held for the return and exposure of the potlatch collection, and educational activities for the younger generation to maintain traditional language, legends, dancing, and drumming. Cranmer stressed the significance of the Centre to recognize and revive traditions of the Aboriginal peoples for both Native and Non-Natives.

The relaxing areas of the Open Studio provided an environment that was more personal and intimate than the exhibition floor. Casual furnishings, the amiable and informative artists and staff who acted as hosts and information resources, the multiple activity areas to engage diverse and multiple interests, and the large display of amusing visitor's artwork added to this less formal, relaxed area. While 2 visitors of the 99
I interviewed did not feel positively stimulated and commented that the exhibition floor was "humourless" (FN p. 86)," or "formal...[with] no music or sound, not pleasant, fun or light" (FN p. 94), this was unlikely to be their response in the Open Studio. As another visitor commented the Open Studio "finishes, completes seeing the show [and was a] nice ending" (FN 191).

**Supersunday**

Supersunday, a regular monthly activity of the Gallery, offered "adults and children an opportunity to learn about looking at art together" (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998g). A Supersunday information sheet given to visitors listed ten interactive sites throughout the galleries four of which focused on the 'Shimmering Sky' exhibit. These included creating and painting a cardboard sun mask in an annex gallery, watching a First Nations Dance troupe in the rotunda, following a self-guided tour with interactive activities throughout the mask exhibition, and participating in the activities of the Open Studio previously described.

An eight page Self-Guided Family Tour brochure (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1998f) was also given to visitors on these Supersundays. The brochure introduced basic facts about the exhibit and relayed meanings of various symbols and of individual and groups of masks that were not provided by text panels or labels in the exhibit. Each page of the brochure encouraged readers to be inquisitive: to look for examples that the brochure explained in the mask exhibition, to draw features of the masks they found, to list comparative symbols created by people, to look for and name masks that incorporate different materials, and to describe mask expressions and imagine scenarios in stories involving the masks. The family-oriented guide provided a structure and orientation for
both adults and children. A mother with a six and a nine year old boy related how the brochure provided a "program to follow" (I p 37, 21) and made her "be a detective...it helped me also to focus on the difference of the masks...how they made the masks...the different textures" (I p 37, 26-34). Her son asked her "Why are all these masks here?" (I p 37, 37) to which she was "a little surprised" (I p 37, 39) and was confronted with expressing the meaning of the exhibit for herself. She explained the mask exhibit as:

- great art...beautiful things to look at...some old...some new. Sometimes you see no difference and sometimes you see great difference. So you can see that this is a developing art. And it's not only about dancing and how you use them, it's also the art of making them. I think that this is a great opportunity to learn about First Nations" (I p. 37, 45)

**Foyer Film and Publicity Wall**

In the last month of the exhibit a partial wall was erected in the foyer entrance and painted two tones of blue-green to display comments in bold type from the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Globe and Mail* newspapers, and "Jamie, 6 years." Also displayed on the wall was a television screen with a CBC National News Special (Gilchrist, 1998) continuously running. With singing and drumming in the background, the film had three main narrators: Daina Augaitis, Chief Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Chief Robert Joseph, Co-curator, and Robert Davidson, First Nations artist. The closely framed images included the speakers, the exhibited masks, and the unpacking and revelation of one particular mask and its transformations.

Augaitis, stated that the gallery presented the masks as evolving art forms and drew attention to their social and political context (FN p. 132). Davidson artist tells of his
great grandfather's strong beliefs practiced daily and how they taught him the strength, significance and purpose of spirits that give richness to his peoples' lives from the ancient traditional to modern time (FN 132). He speaks of the masks as no longer curios, but recognized by major international galleries as high art. The closely framed face of elder, Chief Robert Joseph, with his direct and personal conversation, hoped the audience would be provoked and challenged by what they saw, would be curious, and ask basic and fundamental questions about First Nations people. His comments were made particularly poignant by the closely captured uncovering and opening of the transformational mask which ended the video.

Other Programme Components

Teachers' orientations, group tours (for English as a Second Language and Japanese groups), and talks by professionals were examples of the public programmes which attracted specific audiences. As these were not open to the general public, I have not described these programmes or individual's responses to them.

Summary of the Museum Presentation

This chapter has explored the museum's presentation of Northwest Coast First Nations masks and identified how the museum represented, interpreted and stimulated knowing and thinking about Northwest Coast First Nations' culture. Descriptions of the curators intentions, the museum environment, displays and programmes have been presented as a reference for audience responses, a relationship to audience perceptions, and a documentation of cultural representation and interpretation at the end of the twentieth century.
The 175 masks were presented to illustrate First Nations' representation of the human face and powerful ancestral spirits of the supernatural world, to show the continuity and change over the past two centuries, the aesthetics, social and historical contexts of their production and use, and to stimulate curiosity to know First Nations' people.

The museum design oriented visitors to their physical place within the exhibit floor and the themed galleries, provided information and methods for learning which could inform and stimulate greater intellectual and conceptual understandings, and created a positive ambiance. Displays mounted in themes and patterns organized and directed attention to details, comparisons, and contexts. The suggestion of environments by wall colours and theatrical settings organized information and created contexts for imagination. Minimal labeling of masks and the inclusion of First Nations voices in quotations and texts provided both the museum's linear perspective of history and the First Nations' cyclical perspective.

Many partnered viewpoints occurred throughout the exhibit. These included video presentations of both the historic Eurowestern anthropologist and the contemporary First Nations' people; the masks displayed to illustrate those made for commerce and trade with other cultures and the mask made to depicted the status of First Nations' people within their own society and their perspective of others; the museum's large, open display of masks and the wrapped mask; the museum's visual presentation and reading materials and the First Nations' explanatory tours, storytelling, dances and songs; the display of the sequential carving method and materials and the First Nation's carvers' interactive dialogue
and practices; and the museum's use of technically produced illustrations and the First Nations practical displays of language, spirits, music, and dance.

These partnered elements within the exhibitions and programmes illustrated the postmodern shift in thinking about art from a dominant Eurocentric perspective toward that of another culture's way of seeing and knowing. The formalist artistic and aesthetic approach to appreciating the masks was demonstrated with the silent and static masks displayed in glass cases for close scrutiny of properties, skills, techniques and their evolution; with the linear history suggested by labels identifying time; and in the authoritative nature of the building's architecture. A cultural perspective of the First Nations was evidenced in the museums' attempt to create a sense of the natural settings of the masks with large coloured spaces; by dioramas and action-like positions of single masks in open spaces; by positioning the masks to gaze or, occasionally, appear to stare with a powerful presence directly at the viewer; by the inclusion of First Nations people speaking for their culture, explaining and demonstrating the purpose and function of the masks and revealing their society's character, their view of time, their attitudes, values, beliefs and customs. How these two perspectives were received by viewers is described in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

AUDIENCE RESPONSES

Introduction

This chapter describes audiences' responses and the negotiation processes individuals used to know, understand or make their perceptions meaningful. Perceptions have suggested categories of affective responses, factual knowledge, attitudes, ideas and concepts. Methods used in perception of cultures has reflected individual's interests, abilities and prior knowledge. Of significance was the learning, the expansion and revision of knowledge and understanding, which occurred through individual negotiations with their knowledge, skills and abilities and what they encountered.

Responses of First Nations visitors have been separated and noted for their particular focus prior to those of non-First Nations visitors in consideration of their unique perspective and most likely, far richer understanding of their culture. Non-First Nations viewers' responses have been analyzed in depth for descriptions and explorations of meanings across cultures and for the methods which suggest how they negotiated what they were perceiving with their prior knowledge. This study which focuses on those viewers who were perceiving another culture has therefore excluded First Nations' responses from the main body of this study to the best of my knowledge. This is not meant to diminish cultural differences among First Nations but rather to focus on understanding across cultures. In reporting these findings, I acknowledge the limitations in knowing visitors' thoughts from relatively short observations and interviews and of my perceptions based on my own personally and culturally directed perceptions.
Korosick's (1996) research concerning understanding art has provided a reference for exploring the focus and negotiation of perceptions in audience responses. She suggests that understanding art is dependent on the individual's disposition toward learning, their knowledge base or prior knowledge, knowledge searching strategies, and ability to transfer or recycle knowledge from one context to another. Viewers’ comments revealing dispositions have reflected their interests and prior knowledge, affected emotional response, and motivated individuals to interact and think. Interacting with the museum's multiple sources and methods of providing information and contexts of culture, viewers were able to use the resources for searching according to their individual means. It should be noted, however, that findings which describe knowledge can clearly not be distinguish as prior or new knowledge but rather as responses which point to specific perceptions, revelations, revised and newly understood knowledge and concepts concerning cultures made during the museum visit.

Responses are presented in the following pages first, through indications of interests and verbal and written responses, and secondly, as the methods individuals used to draw meanings or understandings from what they encountered.

Indicators of Interest in Responses

Indications of interests describe audience profiles, attendance in particular areas of the exhibition, and questions asked gallery personnel. These provide clues to disposition toward learning, reasons for attention and motivation, and diverse approaches used to find meanings among these viewers.
Profiles of the Adult Audience

Among the audience interviewed were individuals and groups from Germany, Britain, Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Hawaii, New York, Washington, California, Alberta, eastern Canada, the interior of British Columbia, the coast of British Columbia including the Queen Charlotte Islands and Vancouver Island, and the greater Vancouver area. The research subjects identified themselves as visitors to the city or accompanying out-of-town-visiters, professional and hobby carvers, artists, elementary school teachers, art students, college and university students, parents encouraging their children to learn, family groups supporting each others' interests, relatives of exhibited artists, couples in the city on business, and collectors of Aboriginal masks. First Nations and non-First Nations people were among this audience. Among these, a German couple planning a boat trip to Alaska along the Northwest Coast indicated great interest in the exhibit from their broad knowledge of nationalities. Their local host, on the other hand, had no time for First Nations masks and indicated no interest. The situation of these two couples suggests connections and greater understanding could be made from the exhibit and the future Alaska trip.

Reasons for attending provided particular orientations and objectives in what visitors looked for, their ways of thinking about what they saw, their point of view and their understanding of the concept of culture and specifically, First Nations' culture. Viewers came who were "not familiar with Northwest Coast Native culture" (I p. 2, 1) and "didn't know anything about these Natives" (I p. 26, 41). They were history buffs who were attracted to the old and new and the "juxta-positioning" of cultures through time (I p. 27, 19); those who "have friends who are Native...so wanted to see it" (I p. 2,
to see the work "of a lot of friends" (I p. 28, 45), "Dad's stuff and... Dad's brother's" (I p. 6, 14); groups "who get together every week and carve" (I p. 3, 44) and come for "a little more knowledge... appreciation for style and various forms" (I p. 3, 47); individuals who came with others who have particular interests so that "he educates me" (I p. 5, 18); individuals who came to "enjoy the beauty of it" (I p. 13, 21); and who came feeling social attachment to participation in gallery functions (FN p. 99) having volunteered with a previous First Nations exhibition "curated by Doris Shadbolt" (I p. 1, 1).

Several interviewees who appeared of non-Canadian origin spoke in incomplete sentences searching for appropriate words (I p. 25, 38, I p. 37, 11, I p. 40, 20, FN p. 121). Several spoke with difficulty, incomplete sentences and fragmented thoughts, but for lengthy periods of time (FN p. 125; I p. 51, 30; I p. 2, 27). It appeared that speaking was not easy for these viewers, yet they continued to speak, seeming to enjoy sharing their thoughts. Others spoke without hesitation (I p. 9, 42; I p. 13, 48; I p. 15, 2), some tumbling over words with excitement (I p. 3, 40; I p. 8, 46; I p. 19, 28), appearing pleased to converse with someone about what they were experiencing. Conversely, several individuals I approached either turned away before being spoken to or gave very brief replies before moving away.

**Site Attendance**

My observations of the audience included noting spaces and aspects of the display that were well and not well used on the second floor galleries, the fourth floor Open Studio, and in the rotunda during dance performances. Viewers' attention to elements of the museum presentation indicated audience interest and interaction and suggested acknowledgment, recognition, or thinking was taking place. I have interpreted this
attention and acknowledgment as the viewers' reception of and avenue for interpretation or negotiation of meaning.

Particular areas of the exhibition were more or less occupied than others. Viewers were observed constantly moving in and around the displays, conversing in groups and spending various amounts of time looking at particular masks. These interactions and interview responses indicated a great amount of attention was paid through personal choice to the masks displayed.

Among the second floor exhibition spaces the flow of people was most often absent from the Reading Room and markedly diminished in the Methods and Materials area and in the Comments Corner. The Reading Room, located near the beginning of the exhibition, and Comments Corner near the end, occupied small alcoves which were less obvious public spaces, despite the wall labels visible from the adjoining galleries. Of 41 visitors who I intersected after passing by the Reading Room, 21 noticed the room and 8 went in. Only one remained more than 15 seconds. Remarks concerning their interest in this activity included: "This [gallery] space is so stunning that your eye doesn't wander [to the reading room]" (FN p. 128), [I'm] "not here to read" (FN p. 128) and "[ I ] found various books and a catalogue, but [have] limited time. [ I ] want to see the masks" (FN p. 128). Documenting one half-hour period, 24 visitors passed by the Comments Corner but only 6 entered the space. All six read some of the comments, one made a comment for the wall and two commented without putting it in writing (FN p. 127). I suspect that fatigue, without visibility of seating from outside the Comments Corner, and enticement into the adjacent, larger and brighter gift shop area had some effect on the audience' decision not to explore this space further.
In the Methods and Materials area (directly behind the Extrapolation wall, the seating area, and the video "In the Land of The War Canoes") attendance on five occasions over several days was significantly lower than the adjoining spaces. During one 15 minute observation period (FN p. 136) a comparative use of areas noted 5 individuals spent time in the Methods and Materials area, 20 watched the centrally placed Curtis video, 10 read the Extrapolation Wall text, and 10 walked through the space without viewing any of the three areas. During this particular time, 18 sat and 6 individuals stood to watch the video "In The Hands of the Raven" at the far end of the room. Others, uncounted, moved through the exhibition of masks. A father with two young sons confirmed my observations concerning the use of the Methods and Materials area when he remarked that despite his very positive feeling, "not many people viewed this [area]" (FN p. 138). It appeared that those who read the text wall or watched the video didn't necessarily move to the Methods and Materials space (FN p. 189).

As the above statistics indicate, significant interest was shown in the two videos, "In the Land of the War Canoe" (Curtis & Burke Museum, 1972) and "In the Hands of the Raven" (Madder, 1998). Observations indicated when the 1972 Curtis film was not running, many more individuals looked at the Extrapolation wall. Whether this was due to the film distracting attention is questionable. I also noted on Thursday evenings, with more young adults present, viewers more frequently read the extrapolation text.

In observations of different areas, I overheard a group of eight, senior, American tourists in this area say they had had enough and were leaving (FN p. 136). It appears this place in the exhibition may have been a point at which viewers became fatigued and found it difficult to sustain interest or energy (Belcher, 1991). The frequent use of the bench
seating (FN pp. 105, 135, 136, 138, 141) at this site between the Curtis film and the extrapolation text wall may suggest the seating was intended for relaxation and drew viewers away from the Methods and Materials area.

In the Open Studio space, on the fourth floor, audience attendance appeared to fluctuate dramatically depending on the touring schedule on the second floor and Supersundays, (days of family interaction at the Gallery,) which filled the Open Studio with both adults and children. On Supersundays many additional tables and chairs were required to accommodate the crowds (FN p. 197). The presence of the carvers consistently drew audiences over the other interactive sites in this Open Studio area. An extreme example is one occasion, with seating for approximately 12, an audience of 31 was counted directly around the carver. No one was at the game table or the reading area. One adult was drawing, another watching the video (FN p. 191). During observations I documented, other than Supersundays, a greater proportion of attention and interest was consistently shown to the carver.

The Dance Performances, which had been advertised on site and through local media, were attended by crowds who filled the rotunda and winding staircase, crowded into the second floor landing, and leaned over the second floor balcony. The pre-dance drumming by one First Nations' dance troupe alerted gallery visitors to the dance site where they remained for the duration of the performance, many choosing to participate in the communal dancing at the end of performance.

To summarize observed areas of interest based on attendance in particular areas, four levels of interest were found. The most interest was shown by attendance in the mask exhibit areas, in the tours, in the videos 'In the Land of the War Canoes' and 'In the Hands
of the Raven', in dance performances, and with the carvers. Somewhat less interest was shown in reading the extrapolation wall among certain groups of people and in the Comments Corner. Notably few showed interest by attendance in the Materials and Methods area and the least showed interest in the Reading Room.

Questions

The museum audience had multiple opportunities to ask questions. Tour guides were commonly asked questions. Tour audiences asked about the potlatch ceremony (FN p. 87), what various masks represented (FN p. 175), and traditional customs (FN p. 200). Questions asked of the carvers focused on the materials and techniques (FN pp. 94, 146, 184, 185, 195) and traditions within communities (FN p. 94) and communities within Nations (FN p. 195). A member of a First Nations Dance troupe stated that most questions he was asked concerned the costumes and the materials used in the dances (FN p. 18). I noted questions between the audience and the dancers regarding differences between Nations and languages and the history of trade between communities (FN p. 19). Questions asked of myself as the interviewer, focused on functions and descriptions of the potlatch traditions (FN pp. 9, 31), the labret as a characteristic among cultures (I p. 15, 26), the masks as representations and symbols (I p. 20, 39; I p. 21, 39), and the repatriation of Aboriginal art (I p. 36, 15).

The majority of direct questions I heard and recorded related to the traditional customs, beliefs, meanings, costumes, and ceremony relating to masks of First Nations people. I suspect, however, that many viewers didn't have enough information about the meanings masks had for First Nations people and felt something was missing or wondered about the meaning of the masks without asking a direct question. Responses recorded
during non-First Nations' interviews and categorized in the following pages under "inquisitiveness," "frustration," and "curiosity" provide evidence to support this belief.

In summary of these indicators of interest from visitor profiles, sites they frequented and questions they ask, it appears that the audience included an international group whose cultural background was predominantly Eurowestern and who attend for entertainment and education. Fitting with previous research (Hein, 1997), visitors appeared to be an educated middle class group who, in the majority of cases, had come with some knowledge of First Nations' culture, and therefore, had some areas of cultural knowledge to reinforce, could make connections to new knowledge or had a base from which new understandings could be constructed. Questioning and searching for information indicated viewers were interested to know more and add to their knowledge. Social interaction appeared to be a frequent theme as visitors attended in couples or groups, visited the exhibition to acknowledge work of artists they knew or had previous knowledge, or interacted with the First Nations' personnel in person or with video recordings at the museum. These findings do not reveal areas which attracted visitors with particular interests, however, it does indicate that visitors were motivated and interacted with multiple media and contexts and were curious to know more.

Verbal and Written Responses of First Nations' Visitors

First Nations' response exemplifying an 'insiders' cultural understanding and unique perspective have been noted prior to non-First Nations' viewers. Although their responses may not be the absolute groupings of Native individuals I came in contact with
during observations and interviews, they are responses of First Nations' people as far as I could determine by their conversations and my judgment in observing these respondents.

First Nations' responses were particularly decisive. All suggested a positive attitude with the exception of one respondent who stated she had been separated from her culture and felt she didn't know it. While several among the ten individuals interviewed were carvers or had relationships to the artists whose work was exhibited, many expressed great pride and support for their culture with seeing their nations' masks in this large civic gallery.

Deep Emotion

Similar to many of the non-First Nations initial responses, this group's comments indicated that they found it "very touching" (I p. 41, 29) and "very moving" (I p. 6, 49). Stronger affective responses were noted by First Nations' viewers who "felt like crying with joy and pride" (FNcc p. 228), and felt "an emotional connectedness I cannot explain" (FNcc p. 228).

Closeness to Their Culture

They expressed a sense of being spiritually close to their culture. These included statements that it was a "remarkable, intensifying exhibit that brought shivers to my soul and let me think about the culture of our Native ancestry" (FNcc p. 228) and of sensing the "spirit and the reverence that the exhibition captures" (I p 7, 12). First Nations visitors noted being physically closer by "being able to get a closer look at them" (I p. 42, 3), an "opportunity to see really, really old masks. A lot of them from all over the world" (I p. 42, 9). One individual explained the spiritual and physical closeness with the comment
that "seeing the artwork reaffirms your interest in knowing your culture and being part of your culture" (I p. 41, 45).

**Cultural Values**

Acknowledgment and pride of cultural values was expressed. Some noted "feeling a lot of respect" (I p. 32, 26), that "the wrapped mask...It shows we take care of our own masks" (I p. 3, 38-39), "respect [for]... the spirits of our ancestors" (FNcc p. 231) and for their community of relatives, "my father's...his Dad's... and his Dad's brother's" (I p. 6, 10). Others acknowledged the value and pride in their traditions and "how they evolved, we know how they keep...it's history, even before my time" (I p. 32, 1) and of "the stories [which]...teach. It's a way of thinking and a way we believe (I p. 31, 40).

**Continuity**

Among the many comments concerning culture, First Nations' visitors express the continuity of their culture. Comments indicated concern for the continuity in "I realized my people don't practice their culture" (I p. 41), others acknowledged "a really big evolution of the culture...[that] the masks and the culture don't remain stagnant in time, ...they continue to evolve, ...and the artists adapt to different styles and techniques" (I p. 42, 16), and that the exhibit "gives quite a bit of coherence and continuity to people who know quite a bit about Northwest Coast culture" (I p. 23, 14).

**Sharing and Educating**

Another theme emphasized sharing their culture. They stated they were "pleased to share our culture" (FNcc p. 253) and that "it's nice to see them out for the public, where everyone can see." (I p. 6, 18). The idea of sharing went beyond mere pleasure to that of educating "the uninitiated, people who have very little knowledge of west coast
cultures" (I p. 23, 14) and "two different cultures [who are] meeting and enriching each other" (I p. 26, 48). Another interviewee proposed that for those outside the culture "to get a better understanding" they have to see the masks danced and used with songs (I p. 12, 2). Alternately, they also saw their masks as art and that "it's an education, collectively, with all the art style" (I p. 12, 20).

Critiques of the Exhibition

Also notable were the First Nations' critiques of the exhibition. One gentleman stated it was "very interesting the way they transgress the boundaries between an ethnographic exhibit and an art exhibit with using the names of the artists and not going into great detail in explaining the meaning and function of the different animals that are depicted with the birds" (I p. 22, 28). It was complemented as "most interesting... the structure of the whole exhibit (I p. 22, 22), had "an extremely powerful closure" [with the wrapped mask] (I p. 7, 4), and had tours which gave "good information" (I p. 7, 11).

Criticism of Educational Possibilities

Criticism also focused on what educational possibilities were lacking. "This show does great honour and teaching about our intimate craft. I only wish some of the creatures' stories / meanings could have been explained and some of the Nations' languages shown" (FNcc p. 228). The exhibit was criticized for lack of "any documentation ... that these were confiscated pieces" (I p. 12, 24), that "You don't have a mask without a story (I p. 31, 16), and that "In the spirit of greater understanding there should be more explanation and contextualization" (FNcc p. 228).
Other Responses

Other responses to the exhibit by First Nations visitors showed concern for more representation of their Tsimshian (FNcc p. 229) and Haisla nations (FNcc p. 229), that "native masks are not art or something to display in a gallery or museum" (FNcc p. 231) and that masks should be returned to their rightful owners (FNcc p. 229).

In summary the First Nations' responses indicated affective, factual and critical reactions to seeing their culture displayed. They acknowledged characteristics and qualities of their culture, interest in sharing and having the display educate despite a lack of historical and contextual information, and approval and disapproval with various elements of the display.

Verbal and Written Responses of Non-First Nations Visitors

The findings from non-First Nations interviews have been grouped under three main themes, firstly, affective responses, secondly, factual knowledge, and thirdly, attitudes, ideas and concepts, each having multiple categories. In total, they have reflected a range of individual cognitive skills and abilities, prior knowledge, and interests in looking and understanding the meaning of the masks of the Northwest Coast First Nations.

Affective Responses

Affective responses of viewers were very positive for the large majority and represented a range of emotions. These included the stunned and speechless, the captivated and inquisitive, and the frustrated.
Fascinated

Beginning with the most extreme were those who were nearly speechless, fascinated with the overall exhibit or with particular aspects of the museum presentation.

The whole exhibition, it was absolutely stunning. It was a fascinating experience (I p. 15, 9).
I'm completely amazed (I p. 2, 6).
It's great. Wow...I'm surprised at the depth of what is here (I p. 5, 19).
It's fabulous. (pauses, turns to partner) Say something profound Pat (I p. 9, 49).
Spectacular (FNcc p. 130)
I was absolutely fascinated by this [dance] performance (I p. 38, 8).

Enlightened

Others indicated being enlightened and implied knowledge or understanding had been gained. The responses indicated individuals came with various levels of knowledge.

Some learned new facts while others indicated new ways of seeing and thinking about the masks.

I didn't know about that. I thought it was only one ceremony of marriage. And I didn't know anything about how the dances were owned by families and shared (I p. 22, 47).
The artwork is totally different...The people in the Four Corners don't do this kind of thing (I p. 26, 17).
I didn't realize ...I've never seen...I always thought...You never question (I p. 2, 41).
Enlightening exhibit (FNcc p. 255).
I was walking around with my eyes and heart really wide open, like a child (FNcc p. 241).
A real eye-opener. We'll be back. (FNcc p. 252).

Transformation

A number of visitors felt they had greater understanding or felt a transformation in their thinking.

Thank you. I'm beginning to understand (FNcc p. 253).
I discovered something about this culture, even now after having been here for fifteen years. (I p. 40, 39)
You can see how it might make sense and explain what's happened. (I p. 27, 28)
It opens up a little bit to what you think (I p. 4, 20).
Transformative, inspirational and soothing (FNcc p. 235)
Amazing. Transformative. Thank you (FNcc p. 235)

Enjoyment and Appreciation

In contrast, a number of viewers were more passive receivers of the museum's presentation and indicated simply enjoyment and appreciation.

I was just coming to see and just enjoy the beauty of it (I pp. 13, 21).
I just love looking at the masks (I p. 5, 12).
I appreciate the talent, the creativeness of the artist, but it's really not my field. (I p. 13, 31).
Appreciation is long overdue (FNcc p. 229)

Inquisitive

Alternately, a larger number of viewers were more engaged and inquisitive.

I wonder if it's because we're Caucasian (I p. 10, 31).
I viewed the old movie... and was curious to find out exactly... That's why I'm up here looking at a book (I p. 17, 6-10).
What would it be like to be in a Longhouse with a fire in the middle? (I p.29, 50)
I want to see more how they work...how they're structured. (I p. 42, 6)
What's the function of it ? (I p. 15, 26)
Would be nice to know how the masks were used, their purpose, why. What the spirits mean. (FNcc p. 130).
Love to see them in dance. How about sound effects (FNcc p. 130)
Need more commentary to explain terms, significance / use of masks (FNcc p. 241).
What do they mean? Tell me more cultural significance (FNcc p. 237).

Frustration

Viewers also described a sense of frustration with not knowing.

I don't know what a "Bagwas" is (I p. 20, 11).
I think there's a lot of guess work. Not so much who made it but what it was (I p. 48, 37).
...it gives a Native word and you have no idea what the Native word is...I know some of them, but I don't know that one. There are four of them in a row. So it doesn't really tell me anything.... I'd like to have that [context] right away. I'd like to see that. How it says 'representing so and so.' Would be good to know then. (I p. 28, 4-11)
I can't get a lot of information (I p. 13, 2).
What are they trying to portray. I need a little bit more (I p. 30, 15).
I found that difficult not to understand what those things represent, why they used
the different symbols... maybe I need to think about it more. Need to have it soak
in... It's almost too disembodied from day to day living (I p. 20, 39-48)... I need to
hear a little bit more about what their life was like (I p. 21, 1).

Spiritual Presence

Non-First Nations' viewers also recounted feelings of a spiritual presence.

I'm really blown away by the moon mask. I just want to gaze at it forever. I can
feel a spiritual vibration, even from the new masks. It's not just the old ones. I'm
just floating around letting the masks speak to me (I p. 19, 43).
I get the feeling that something is there beyond the physical appearance (I p. 46,
25).
Sometimes there'll be a modern mask that has that feeling of presence behind the
mask. I don't think I can describe it. It's just a feeling. When I look at the mask,
something is there. The spirit is there (I p. 29, 17).
The fact that it's all face, personalizes almost. As I walk through and look, and
then I'll look from a distance... I think they all have character (I p. 21, 49).
These masks are alive. There is a spirituality behind them (FNcc p. 253)

Other

Other affective responses of enjoyment and enlightenment were apparent in
behaviour illustrated by the fast paced and excited replies of interviewees. An extreme
example was apparent when four seniors from Florida were recorded in the background of
a tour guide's conversation and later interviewed (I p. 19, 20) with difficulty. The four
talked over each other, excitedly exclaiming and proclaiming their thoughts. Excitement
was also expressed among individuals in groups who used run-on-sentences and phrases
that flowed non-stop as if trying to compete for the speaker's platform. One gentleman
from a group of three hobby carvers remarked before being cut off by his companions:

We've all been studying on our own with numerous books and have been
collecting bits and pieces and trying to appreciate the Haida and I guess
the Kitskan and Ksan styles that appeal to us and I'm trying to do my
own designs and so just picking up... (I p. 3, 46)
The many positive affective responses appeared to stimulate and motivate individuals to look and think. Often beginning with positive and pleasant attitudes and alert demeanour, individuals were stimulated and motivated to look for more, acknowledging facts or content of what they saw, questioning, exploring ideas and concepts, and searched for more clues for greater understanding. The following edited example illustrates how a viewer was motivated by what she encountered.

Oh it's all fascinating...the tour guide was talking about the potlatch ... quite contemporary ...I think it’s really important [to realize the presence of First Nations in contemporary society] because of the actions that are happening now...The Nisga’ negotiations...Education is really essential...the role of secrecy...some of the cultures don’t reveal their dances and their masks and their stories and legends...makes it harder for the outside culture...Cultures that have shared...undergone alterations and influence...Trying to figure out what the relationship is...[Coast Salish] most secretive of the coastal people... exceedingly rich...You don’t have Coast Salish in the exhibition...Kind of the opposite technique of [the] education idea that you can generate respect for a culture...but Coast Salish have kept behind closed doors. Kept visitors to an absolute minimum...relatively successful in maintaining their culture that way. (I p. 34)

This viewers’ response reveals the continuity from ‘fascinating’ affective thoughts, to facts of the contemporary presence of First Nations people and conceptual ideas of educating the public, to critical thinking about the museums’ lack of Coast Salish masks represented in this educational venue and the relationship of secrecy which maintains culture.

**Factual Knowledge**

Responses described cultural facts and information that viewers recognized as familiar, as new knowledge, and for some, as facts that were missing. These facts were categorized as cultural information (customs, values, beliefs and attitudes) and artistic qualities characterizing First Nations' masks (based on artistic elements defined by
Eurowestern standards). These facts occurred frequently and were broadly distributed throughout the interviews.

Cultural Information Acknowledged

Cultural facts frequently related to customs or traditions of the masks.

Interviewees referred repeatedly to the Northwest Coast First Nations' history in terms of the old and new.

The mixture of the old and the new (I p. 8, 2).
The age of each of them and comparing the old and the new (I p. 14, 6).
His work is in the 1930s between the old masks and the contemporary masks (I p. 49, 35).
Very similar traditions were carried over. Some of them were over 100 years old. That was really nice to know that was still alive (I p. 21, 38).

The custom of mask-making was seen as heritage continuing from the past to the present.

I see that people are creating new masks...It's nice to see that it is still vibrant and alive (I p. 46, 1).
...the present day artists ...with the old. Heritage lives on. (I p. 27, 1).
...to see the new transforming masks with the dates 1996 or 1998 (I p. 46, 48).
It was interesting to see all the names repeated...how its all been passed down (I p. 16, 38).

The historic evolution of the masks was perceived by similarities maintained and changes developing over time.

You can see how this is a developing art (I p. 37, 50).
I really like the perspective of what it was in the 1800s when they made those masks. And the new masks, it's very interesting to see how it's evolved, yet it's somewhat similar (I p. 42, 27).
I like seeing the current masks and then relating it to the older masks. Seeing the differences...the evolution and where the masks are going...and how they relate to the past and the time (I p. 29, 4-9).

Respondents acknowledged the use of the masks in ceremonial customs as an understanding of masks having a general function or purpose.
They used the masks for different kinds of events during the life, like for wedding, when someone dies. It's ritual (I 11, 44-45).
I was interested in the cannibalistic ceremonies (I 17, 5).
I liked how they were used in ceremonies and dances (I 17, 45).
...it could be connected to any kind of ceremony (I 22, 44).

Responses concerning specific functions or purposes of the masks suggested some individuals had prior knowledge or had been exposed to and understood the information which complemented viewing the masks. Others indicated they understood general purposes but that they wanted more specific information.

The widespread number of purposes that they fulfilled, I didn't realize it was so great, so wide until I saw the exhibition, the whole range of purposes ...and the importance of the link with traditions of the past (I p. 17, 18).
...the potlatch culture, giving everything away (I p. 10, 44).
I look at these masks as a way of telling, telling about culture of tradition [to kids] growing up (I p. 38, 27).
I'm more interested in...why they were made (I p. 21, 39).
The fact that they aren't just decorative. They seem to have some purpose, some relationship to how a person lived in the present (I p. 22, 15).
What has intrigued me is what's behind the masks, the rights, the story. Even the difference in that there were masks made for sale and masks made for ceremony (I p. 52, 9).

Audience responses indicated the spirituality of the masks was seen as a powerful presence which had a relationship to humans.

There's some kind of supernatural. They thought the masks possessed power (I p. 21, 41).
What I looked for in the masks is...the presence of a spirit... I think that it's that the person who made it has given so much of his spirit that they imbued that object with the spirit from themselves and their ancestors. It is like a presence (I p. 29, 16).

What was interesting to me was how it was connected between us being human and...to nature and to the spirit (I p. 40, 34).

The representation of spiritual themes noted by the large text titles in the different coloured galleries were acknowledged, although often without a clear understanding of particular meaning or significance.
I couldn't quite tie the masks into the four different worlds (I p 20, 25).
It's such wonderful linking of multiple worlds, human and nature (I p 46, 44).
I think the way they divided it into four worlds, the undersea world and so on...I
guess I saw them [before this exhibition] in general, rather than understanding
what they represented (I p 8, 19).
[ I was interested in] just what it represents, what all these other worlds, these
various worlds represents (I p 8, 47).
I didn't know about the sky and worlds. I think it helped with the cosmology, the
different aspects...(I p 30, 6).

The symbolism of the characters and their features were also noted although most often
not understood.

I thought from what I know of this exhibition, that the mask [in the Karen
Jamison dance performance] probably was [symbolic of] the other world
and the girl represented trying to escape, evidently, this world (I p. 25, 40).
I'm not really sure yet...It's very expressive with the different masks representing
different things (I p. 30, 32).
...the red nostrils and a few things like this...I found that difficult not to
understand what those things represented, why they used the different symbols
(I p. 20, 37)
We didn't understand the (spirit) names (I p. 41, 19).
... exactly what the masks were (I p. 43, 11).
...the complexity is inside...a special folk art (I p. 26, 47).

Other facts acknowledged by the viewers less frequently related to the political history
concerning the interrelationship of the First Nations people with the Western-Europeans.

...the government took the potlatch items and distributed them to museums and
the tribes successfully won a court action and the government wouldn't return
them until they built a museum (I p. 14, 47 ).
Think of how much of it was destroyed. You know it was a crime. It's such a
shame (I p. 4, 35).
What struck me was the number of old masks don't belong in British Columbia.
Obviously people who were here earliest, didn't appreciate the beauty. Didn't
people,... at the turn of the century...realize that they were representing a culture,
recognizing the beauty and importance of the pieces here (I p. 47, 7). The politics
reflects that the people were dispensable and their culture was dispensable (I p.
47, 20).
The repression here is just as bad as the Americans. It was a holocaust (I p. 19,
30).

Much less frequent were acknowledgments of oral traditions which had been recounted
by visitors’ interaction with First Nations staff.

Oral traditions were very rich (I p. 51, 46).
...the stories connected with the masks (I p. 13, 4).
The stories that went along with [the exhibit]... enriched and gave us backing
(I p. 42, 31).
[The] tour helped a great deal to introduce me to the culture...I only wish the
guide had more stories to tell (FNcc p. 233).

Also mentioned in the interviews, albeit infrequently, was an attitude or position attributed
to the culture of Northwest Coast masks.

One of the things we were talking about was the role of secrecy, you know,
because some of the cultures don't reveal their dances and their masks and their
stories and legends. They keep them to themselves. (I p. 35, 32).
The ones made for sale don't hold anything more than the right to look at it. It
doesn't hold the right to use it or dance (I p. 52, 12).

Artistic Characteristics and Qualities

A significant number of responses focused on the artistic elements
and characteristics of the masks and their creators to describe the Northwest Coast First
Nations masks. The most frequent theme related to the materials used in making the
masks, including the wood, mechanisms used to enable movement, and decorative
elements.

...they used so many different other materials in the masks, the copper, the cloth
(I p. 10, 21)
The modern ones have hinges, the older ones have ropes and strings (I p. 10, 27)
...different paint...he used acrylic paint which gave it quite a different effect
(I p. 8,4).
...interesting to see the different types of woods (I p. 15, 48).
The stone mask was incredible (I p. 24, 44).
...some have fur, some have feathers...they use shells (I p. 37, 32).
Haida faces had painted design (I p. 25, 33)

The artistry was spoken of in relationship to the carving tools and techniques used

I'm sure they've created their own tools for a particular method (I p. 16, 48).
You can tell the difference in the tools (I p. 9, 6).
They didn't have the tools that we have available now (I p. 21, 47).
...the mechanical aspects of some of these masks that I hadn't expected really, the little strings that made them move, and the things that make the wings flap and the necks go up and down (I p. 9, 12).
...all the wooden hinges and wooden things and the mechanisms in there to make the face open up, the wing pieces come out (I p. 4, 40).
...the difference between the carving out and the painting in (I p. 37, 3).
I was fascinated by how they were made, how they were carved (I p. 47, 40).

The **creativity and skill** of the creators was appreciated and highly praised as being extraordinary, amazing and stunning.

How they constructed it...How they laid it out, the drawing, the sketch in one inch squares so that it was symmetrical (I p. 28, 33).
I appreciate the creativity and talent of the artist (I p. 13, 31)
The quality of the work, it's extraordinary (I p. 21, 45)
It's so well laid out (I p. 28, 37)
...their skill of painting (I p. 30, 41).
Some of this stuff is absolutely amazing, beautiful workmanship and detail (I p. 44, 16).
The skill level of the artisans is absolutely stunning (I p. 47, 36).

Visitors recognized the variety and uniqueness of **styles and designs**.

There isn't any one style. There's such a variation ... You could pick out a Haida piece. You could distinguish it from Klingit, Tsimshian or West Coast wherever (I p. 4, 31).
It's much more sophisticated (I p. 2, 7).
The Haida masks are more human in nature, more plain (I p. 11, 17).
...of the older masks many of them seem quite crude and some are quite exquisite. Dempsey Bob...his carved figures are morphing into each other (I p. 24, 24).
There are the ones that became very square, sort of, the Nuu chal nulth, they're pointed (I p. 14, 25)
... the complexity with which they are made or painted or designed (I p. 47, 46)

The **character of the masks** were identified as a variety of creatures: animals, fish, humans, ghosts, and wild beings.

...older ones have a character (I p. 1, 13)
...more animals than the Hopi or Navajo (I p. 2, 5)
Lifelike ones are wonderful (I p. 11, 28)
...the conceited white woman (I p. 49, 8)
There was the one with the eyes bugged out and the mouth was kind of like this [gestures]. I forget what that creature was, but the other tribal group had it more like horns...[that] were birds (I p. 50, 37).
...the salmon mask here with a beard of salmon (I p. 46, 9).
...that canoe with all those [white masked] people. It looked like a bunch of ghosts (I p. 42, 48).
...human and eagle faces (I p. 40, 25)
Gogit, the wild man of the woods (I p. 30, 5)
...this woman in the wild woods (I p. 38, 29).

Specific features of the masks were identified including the labret worn in the lower lip, the weight of the masks, the transformational features, and the expressions of masks.

I've never seen the ones with the labret (I p. 15, 14)
...the concept of the labret (I p. 5, 42)
We were talking about the contemporary masks having more distinct features (I p. 9, 8)
The way the hair is plaited and the things put in the bottom of the faces and the decoration of the faces, like freckles (I p. 21, 12).
Some of the masks look quite heavy to wear (I p. 21, 22).
The weight of the things... they're wearing these things all the time in ceremonies (I p. 28, 25)
The transformation masks...the human face often opened up to birds (I p. 40, 30).
...the expressions of the masks (I p. 45, 37).

Attitudes, Ideas and Concepts

Individuals' conversations initially recounted affective responses and frequently acknowledged facts. They often broadened to propose personal positions or opinions, ideas, and more abstract or generic concepts.

Value and Respect for First Nations Art and Culture

Among these I found attitudes of value and respect for First Nations art and culture.

My idea of West Coast art was something much simpler (I p. 5, 14).
It's all been passed down... It has much more strength behind it (I p. 16, 44).
The culture is so rich (I p. 29, 14).
It holds it's own within other art forms pretty well (I p. 45, 42).
A lot of the problems that First Nations have in the contemporary world is just
sheer ignorance by non-First Nations...lack of respect for it (I p. 35,17).
Obviously people [of European descent] here earliest didn't appreciate the
beauty...recognize the beauty and importance of these pieces (I p. 47, 12)

Valued for the Experience of Learning and Understanding

Visitors valued the experience of learning and understanding about First Nations
culture. They indicated the experience had expanded their ways of seeing and
understanding and they anticipated building on what they had learned to gain greater
understanding in the future.

[This was] an opportunity to learn a little more about Northwest Coast art and
culture (FNcc p. 255).
It brings up a lot about their culture. It's like a stepping stone for finding out more
(I p. 51, 50).
There's much for me to learn about First Nations and this is a great vehicle for
education and making First Nations' art accessible (FNcc p. 233).
[It] opened many new aspects of Natives of the Northwest Coast. A great lesson
in understanding and acceptance (FNcc p. 253).
I feel this will guide me, to help me understand these people (I p. 38, 17).
Important to see, but when looking at others' culture and the past we should try to
learn from it (FNcc p. 228).
This sort of thing is essential not only for white people to learn, but also for their
own culture to do the research (I p. 36, 7).
I am definitely interested in learning more (FNcc p. 233).
I believe education will bridge the gap between cultures (FNcc p. 231).

Exposed Assumptions and Revised Previous Ideas

Responses exposed assumptions and revised previous ideas. Individuals suggested
they had acquired new information which had changed their way of seeing and thinking
about how these cultures has been represented. The thoughts included changes in factual
knowledge to critical thinking about concepts that had been construed.
I think there was an assumption that the culture was much simpler before we showed up and they had finer tools. You could only do so much rendition. But that's obviously not true (I p. 24, 28).

Everyone thinks that it's a dead culture... you know, pagan, historic. It's still alive (I p. 35, 14).

It's obviously his [Edward Curtis'] interpretation of what their life was like (I p. 24, 32).

I was wondering if it [Curtis film] wasn't a whole bunch of misconception (I p. 50, 47).

I always thought it [mask material] was always wood (I p. 2, 48).

You tend to think of Northwest [culture] as an entity, rather than as two or three dozen different distinct groupings with their own art and history (I p. 50, 16).

**Similarities and Differences Among Cultures**

Visitors expressed cross-cultural understanding in their comments concerning similarities and differences among cultures, including among the First Nations represented.

The different tribal groups had the same sort of characters and myths, but there's so much different (I p. 50, 15).

I get a flash to another culture. I could see African, but also Asian (I p. 47, 42).

There are some similarities among indigenous cultures from many parts of the world (I p. 15, 23).

We have something similar in our culture (I p. 38, 32).

Even the natives in South America have the labret (I p. 18, 2).

... these masks in this culture... then you go to the Russian icon... the Greek had some god and they had these statues... we all have these images (I p. 41, 1)

It gave me a perspective of the difference in cultures (I p. 27, 22).

The repression here is just as bad as the Americans (I p. 19, 30).

**Perspectives of Others**

Visitors' also acknowledged gaining insight into the perspectives of others. Some suggested an uneasy conscience or shame in the domination of a Western viewpoint.

[The Curtis film] struck me as being how a white audience wanted the native culture portrayed (I p. 46, 35)

Watching old Western movies makes me sad and shameful (FNcc.p. 252).

I never really knew that a native person had that perspective on their history, that they actually thought that they were inferior... to the white race. You can see how it might make sense and explain what's happening ... It made me conscious of the Western invasion (I p. 27, 25-29).
The politics reflects that the people were dispensable and the culture was dispensable (I p. 47, 20).

Other comments suggested that the arts were an expression of other's perspectives including reference to the Salish who keep to themselves.

[Dance is] a dialogue between cultures (I p. 38, 9).
"It is interesting to note that all tribes have a similar spirit, Keeper of Drowned Souls. (FNcc p. 239).
Wish I could see some Salish masks. I know that the Salish elders forbid it but that is why Salish are so unknown (FNcc p. 229).

Creation of an Environment

Viewers responded to the creation of an environment for the masks in the use of wall colours, lighting, and dioramas in the exhibition design.

...even the paint on the walls... allow the [mask] pieces to have this shelter (I p. 7, 2)
"Seeing the dancing set up with full costumes [in the dioramas] because these things had costumes... [I] get a sense of how these things were used (I p. 14, 34).
I think it's really important the way ...the entire exhibit is displayed, the colours they used on the walls, the lighting, it really enhances it. Really makes it...effective (I p. 9, 20).
The whole atmosphere the undersea world creates, it makes you feel like you're in the sea. It makes it very dramatic. The way the very first one [at the entrance] is against a black [actually dark green] background. You just come in and there it is, the sun (I p. 48, 11).

Cultural Context

Conversely, visitors spoke of the museum display and environment created for the masks as out of cultural context and preventing a rich experience. Viewers stated the effects they felt and offered suggestions of what could give the masks more context.

When you see the masks in the cases it dissociates what they were actually used for (I p. 14, 33).
[masks are] out of context and culture here...seems very empty (FNcc p. 241). They are so static now. When they are danced they're totally alive and all their actions mimic the movements of that particular animal in the real world. You get an interpretation (I p. 29, 40).
Found the strong colours of the walls too dramatic and distracting. Would have preferred more reference to where they were used (FNcc p. 241).
Native music backdrop would give another sense experience (FNcc p. 239).
Like to see some representation of a smoke house where these masks would be danced and to hear the music or songs...more individual and cultural context needed (FNcc p. 237).

Difficult to Understand the Culture

Visitors suggested the lack of cultural relativity and the differences in viewers' experiences made it difficult to understand the culture.

Without dancing it ...it doesn't get used for its intended purpose, something is lost... Putting a mask on display in a case, there's a ...kind of distancing (I p. 7, 25).
It's almost too disembodied from day to day living...I need to hear a little bit more about what their life was like (I p. 20, 50).
You can look at it and put it into context culturally, but real understanding of culture...you are remote from it and your own experiences are so different (I p. 50, 6).

Other

Among other responses were those which suggested a limited understanding of the art or culture. Comments indicated: superficial looking, as in "A lot of the masks were quite contemporary rather than traditional" (I p. 1, 9); broad and vague statement such as "They had certain abilities and they presented faces and features" (I p. 27, 11); and misconceptions in that "They have a wonderful imagination. They don't have anything to copy" (I p. 31, 2) and "I liked how all the masks kind of seemed to be similar, how they show human and eagle faces" (I p. 40, 24). One visitor appeared not to understand the meaning of First Nations spiritual heritage in her comment "they didn't have as much knowledge as they have in the more modern times so that would make a difference as to how they would represent masks (I p. 20, 33).
Visitors indicated varying abilities and knowledge to make sense or connections with what they experienced. Those who indicated misconceptions or little knowledge or understanding made statements such as "it's too much. You can't take it all in" (I p. 20, 48) and that they "need to have it soak in" (I p. 20, 47). Others who appeared to have come with more knowledge, remarked on new information, explored new ideas, made connections, and stated they were wanting to return, had been "here a month ago" (I p. 22, 19) or were on one of multiple visits (I p. 37, 8, I p 31, 4). They stated that "there's lots of relevant messages for today in it [and drew conclusions that] we can transform ourselves. We can be transformed" (I p. 46, 44).

In summary, the audience expressed affective responses to their experience; they recounted information transmitted; they interpretive ideas and concepts formed. They demonstrated awareness of particular cultural and artistic characteristics of the First Nations masks, and acknowledged learning and understanding by critically analyzing and solving problems which had conflicted with previous perceptions. Responses also indicated a desire for, and frustration in not having more information to make greater meaning of the masks.

Methods Used By Visitors To Know And Understand

Methods used by visitors to know or create meaning from their perceptions are seen as negotiations. Individuals negotiated with the museum presentation in varying ways and to various degrees for education and entertainment, choosing areas of their interests and concerns, enhancing and developing their understanding of First Nations culture and of themselves. Viewers made comparisons, contrasts and connections to their
views of the world. They were curious, questioned, imagined, and thought about meanings and contexts within the exhibit to clarify and verify, revise ideas and assumptions, expand and construct ideas. Considering the outcome of these negotiations of cultural knowledge and understanding, the museum can be seen, not only as one which mediates a representation of First Nations’ culture but mediates education by providing a particular teaching and learning forum for a public audience.

Korosciks’ theory of facets of learning and Jeffery-Clay’s (1998) metaphor for thinking as a web-like construction have provided a base for uncovering methods of knowing and understanding. Individual disposition toward learning, group dynamics, searching strategies, and transfer or recycling of knowledge from one context to another, suggests how the breadth and depth of thinking and understandings is construed.

**Direction From Interests**

The disposition of individuals toward knowing or learning was apparent in response to self and museum directed interests which motivated, and encouraged inquiry and curiosity to know more about First Nations' cultures. Self directed, personal interests were apparent in viewers reasons for attending the museum and focusing attention on particular topics or particular media. Visitors noted they "learned by looking" (I p. 26, 44) or "from the extrapolation text" (I p. 22, 42). Interest created by stimulation at the museum site was indicated by positive affective responses to the museum environment exhibits and programmes and by the realization that they were acquiring facts and new understandings and were actively engaged in thinking, revising, and altering previous knowledge and conceptions. In addition, viewers were most likely encouraged by their awareness of and interest in personal growth.
Social Interaction

Social interaction occurred among visiting couples, groups, and notably, between the First Nations staff and artists with the viewing public. These group dynamics illustrated how social interaction increased their knowledge, by directing attention and information perceived, by discussing interests and concerns, and by providing new and not previously considered contexts.

A group of carvers found a common interest and paid attention to details as they analysed a particular transformational mask which had multiple characters changes. One of the group concluded: "We called it Motorola [after] a fellow we used to work with" (I p. 4, 44). Interviewees often recounted that they and their companions "were talking about..." (I p. 9, 12; I p. 48, 35), that "it reminded us..." (I p. 15, 19), or that "I come with him and he educates me" (I p. 5, 18). These social interactions which gave individuals opportunity to compare ideas, gain knowledge, discuss and debate contrasted sharply with the single university student whose immediate response was "I didn't really learn, just looking" (I p. 11, 38) yet when engaged chose to discuss the traditions she had learned about. I suspect that memories of this museum visit and other related cultural knowledge can be reinforced by group interactions on site. These memories, like those recalled from sites of prior knowledge (noted in the following pages) can build future connections and elaborations, and create webs of information concerning culture.

Social interaction with First Nations staff and artists provided information not available through the display and created a sense of the real and living culture of First Nations people. About the tour, visitor stated it "was helpful. It brought it more to life" (I p. 13, 7) and "It added to[seeing] it...enriched and gave us backing" (I p. 42, 32).
Interaction with the authentic, contemporary, and very present culture contrasted with the distance created by the cased, silent and static masks, the theme which focused on history, and the culture represented in a site physically distanced from its natural setting and in a context of a museum with Eurowestern aesthetic values.

Interaction with First Nations people was noted as important to the audience by their numbers around the tour guides, the carvers, and the dance troupes; by the positive affect, attention and questioning which these interactions promoted; and by the information gleaned from these interactions found important to interviewees. The audience responses acknowledged the value of cultural information and understanding gained from interaction with First Nations representatives, adding compliments and suggestions.

[The tour guide was an]asset to the Gallery (FNcc p 233).
[She] gave fascinating narration, history, experiences, cultural background behind the masks (FNcc p. 233).
Knowledgeable and articulate (FNcc p. 233).
The tour by KS was very enlightening and informative (FNcc p. 237)
The guided tour helped a great deal to introduce me to a culture which I've known nothing about. I only wish the guide had more stories to tell (FNcc p. 233).
The storyteller, Victor Reece was a real joy to listen to. We need more of this kind of display of Aboriginal origins. It is important to bring it back to life (FNcc p. 237).
Like to see people in the masks (FNcc p. 241).
Not enough guides to answer questions (FNcc p. 233).
It is vital to have a First Nations' person as part of the understanding of the exhibit. Otherwise it is trivialized and made only art. (FNcc p. 233).

Comparisons and Contrasts

Comparing and contrasting was evident in thirty of the fifty-four recorded individual and group interviews, one of which used the word "different" twelve times.
Indigenous People of the World

The broadest comparison referred to the Indigenous people of the world through comments which identified and defined culture by geography or nation.

...indigenous people from many parts of the world (I p. 15, 23)
... American Indians (I p. 9, 35)
[and the Canadian Indians of] "the northern interior of British Columbia...and Saskatchewan" (I p. 10, 3)
...different cultures [within the Northwest Coast Nations exhibited] (I p. 4, 32).
[dancing which] looked Tahitian" (I p. 4, 32)
[the labret which] reminded us of Africa" (I p. 15, 19)
[and] the natives in South America (I p. 18, 2)
[the tradition of legends to teach children was] similar in our (Icelandic) culture (I p. 38, 32).

Historical

Historical comparisons were made with multiple and frequent references by individuals to ‘old and new’ and with terms such as:

eighteenth century and nineteenth century (I p. 48, 1)
comparing the nineteenth century with the contemporary (I p. 9, 5).

Northwest Coast Masks

Comparisons were made of differences among Northwest Coast masks:

different tribal groups [that] had the same sort of characters and myths (I p. 50, 15)
the simple and complicated ones (I p. 46, 48)
[the particular styles, as in the] Kitskan and Ksan styles (I p. 3, 51)
[those which had] the presence of a spirit (I p. 29, 15)
the texture and the different stuff they use (I p. 37, 35).

Religious Comparisons

Religious comparisons were drawn between the spirituality of the masks and other cultures' spiritual beliefs.

It’s [like] God coming down and taking the form of animals or humans. (I p. 24, 10)
Comparisons of Perspectives

Comparisons of perspectives were noted in the 1914 film "In the Land of the War Canoe" and the contemporary film, "In the Hands of the Raven."

"how a white audience wanted the Native culture portrayed" (I p. 46, 35)
[The Western-European anthropologists]" interpretation of what their [First Nations] life was like" as compared to what and how the people would like their culture presented (I p. 24, 31).
the "juxta-positioning of the Western culture... when they showed the [First Nations] people dancing [to drumming] and Mozart['s compositions and French ballroom dancing]" (I p. 27, 19).
First Nations people dressed in Western clothing and positioned for a Western wedding photograph (FN p. 140).

Viewers also found comparative perspectives in both contemporary society and 18th century First Nations' society.

Our "contemporary [white] world [demonstrates] ignorance... and lack of respect [of First Nations culture in comparison to the museums' display which is] wonderful ... so that you get a much stronger sense of the cultures and who created them" (I p. 35, 20).
The "image of the Conceited White Woman. I'm sure that's how [First Nations people] saw this [European] stereotype" (I p. 10, 35).

Connections to the Viewers' World

Respondents made connections which linked First Nations' cultures to conceptions about their own world. Personal associations and concerns linked with observations of the exhibition to make meanings, knowledge and experiences personal.

Country, Society, and Community

Connections were made to the respondent's country, society, and community:

I'm beginning to understand the cultural complexities which existed in Canada before the arrival of the European... a vital part of our history (FNcc p. 255)
The Northwest Coast Indians are more sophisticated... California Indians... are very, very primitive in the Sacramento area... where we live, (I p. 2, 8). I'm from the Northern Interior of B.C. but used to be from Saskatchewan... I know more about the inter-linkage between the Carrier from our area and the Haida on the coast who used to come out and slave, used to come and capture the carrier and haul them back as slaves (I p. 10, 2). We're from Chicago. I knew nothing (I p. 26, 12).

Personal Lives

Connections were made to their personal lives, often relating to friends and relatives, but also their homes and religious practices

I just returned from the Queen Charlottes a couple of weeks ago and fortunately got to go through some of the ancient village sites (I p. 16, 1). I came with my folks who collect contemporary masks (I p. 26, 38). And my daughter has a jewel in her belly button, so it [the tradition of body adornment] goes on, eh (I p. 45, 2). There's one we call 'Motorola,' the fellow we used to work with (I p. 4, 43). My father-in-law was an instrument in contracting First Nations people, like Henry Hunt, to come and carve for the government. I've been involved since those days and have collected a few pieces myself and some of the pieces have been handed down to us (I p. 44, 10). I thought she [an infant] could be stimulated by the faces (I p. 26, 34). This exhibit has reminded me of the importance to practice spirituality, bring back beliefs, faith .... I will revisit... my spiritual practice (FNcc p. 239).

Viewer's Culture

Viewers drew connections in relationships of First Nations cultures to their own:

I grew up in a fishing town. There was also a spirit world there (I p. 38, 23). They tell stories. Their culture is very much oral, but ours is written (I p. 39, 34). We have dance but we don't carry the cultural heritage of dance like this dance (I p. 39, 36). [Dance is] a dialogue between [our two] cultures (I p. 38, 9). The one that is a Conceited White Woman, that's a hundred years old... I wondered if when someone collected that, someone was pulling their leg (I p. 49, 8).
Sites of Prior Knowledge

Connections were also made to sites of their prior knowledge of First Nation's culture including First Nations art and culture seen in:

[the same site] years ago (p. 1, 3)
a few museums around Sitka, Kitchikan and Juneau (p. 21, 32)
the Charlottes and Smithers (p. 24, 22)
the school system and growing up in [the city and area of] Victoria [and seen in]
galleries on Quadra Island (Ip. 5, 29)
the Museum of Anthropology [at the University of B.C.] (Ip. 52, 4)
the recent exhibit in Seattle
a couple of books that are pretty popular (Ip. 3, 6)
[the children's book] we are reading [at home] (Ip. 42, 38)
[post secondary studies of] the History of Civilizations (Ip. 2, 28)

Curiosity and Questioning

Curiosity and question defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, 1980) suggests two different kinds of inquiry. Curiosity, or "the desire to investigate and know," (p. 276) and question, "an interrogative expression often used to test knowledge" (p. 939) both indicate interest and in the case of questioning, possible debate or disagreement with what was presented. Curiosity took the form of single statements or questions while the debatable kind of questioning frequently presented as a more complex conversation. The later often focused on the 1914 Edward Curtis film.

Curiosity showed inquisitiveness and interest in inquiring and knowing more about the culture: its history, traditions and beliefs:

How did this stuff come [here]...since 1870? How did it get here (Ip. 29, 2)?
What is a potlatch? What kind of gifts would they give away (Ip. 9, 31)
What intrigued me was what's behind the masks: the rights, the story (Ip. 52, 9)?
What is the function of it (Ip. 15, 26)?
What are they trying to portray? I need a little bit more (Ip. 30, 15).
It blows my mind how an artist takes something solid and see this mask or form
inside of it and can pull something out of it (I p. 52, 20).
Do you know if the labret was confined to the Haida (I p. 49, 11)?
What I really wanted to see was the canoes in the water, and I presume those were real house fronts (I p. 24, 33).
It just wets your appetite to want to see more and know more about this culture (I p. 26, 9).
We have this [sense of spirits which explain things] inside us too. Even though we look at ourselves as modern people that don't believe in such things (I p. 39, 53).

Questioning often implied an analysis, judgment or disagreement. Two topics in particular which created dissonance concerned the Curtis film and the cultural relativity of the museum displaying First Nations artifacts. Other topics which viewers found problematic concerned previous beliefs and the contradiction of the sacred masks not intended for display, yet displayed flagrantly in the museum.

I was wondering if it wasn't a foundation of a whole bunch of misconception (I p. 50, 47).
I viewed the old [Curtis] movie and found it was so fictionalized that I was curious to find out exactly what was the status of head-hunting or cannibalism (I p. 17, 5).
Would have liked more text discussion of the inaccuracies of the depiction of the Northwest lifestyle in the Curtis film (FNcc p. 252).
To think it's from all kinds of museums around the world. How can they? Is there a move to repatriate some of these masks (I p. 36, 14)?
Putting it in context is difficult in this kind of setting (I p. 51, 38).
When I sat down and started watching the (Curtis) film I associated it with barbarianism. I thought they were really loud, shouting and pushing people around, and that is not at all what I associate with First Nations' people. I did grow up in a Native community on Vancouver Island and have had a lot of exposure to Native people throughout my life and continue to have it. And I've always seen them generally speaking as gentle. How they are portrayed there, that to me was like the deepest Africa. That's not the image that I have seen portrayed before (I p. 40, 9).
How can something so sacred be exposed to casual viewers (FNcc p. 225).
Imagination

The audience used imagination to make meanings. Imagining gave individual opportunity to generate fanciful personal ideas and to develop thoughts about First Nations culture.

This is what it's all about. Kind of your own perspective, your own imagination (I p. 3, 30).
The undersea and underworld ones interest me a lot... greater imagination (I p. 49, 18).
You don't want someone telling you what each piece represents... I'd rather imagine what it represents (I p. 3, 28).
Even in this setting many masks inspire fear. Imagine them in their traditional setting (FNcc p. 253).
Imagine it being worn in a ceremony or danced around the fire... I'm just trying to imagine what each character is saying or doing or how they're acting or dancing or interacting (I p. 51, 39).
It brings so much to my mind... the things that were before (I p. 34, 24).

Manipulating Information

In negotiating with what individuals knew and perceived, visitors manipulated information to clarify, verify and add knowledge, to acknowledge assumptions, revise and expand ideas, discover new ways of looking and realize the need to think further. These negotiation processes lead some visitors to recognize the learning and thinking with accounts of knowledge they gained and synthesized.

Relating Information Within the Exhibition

The audience related information within the exhibition. Viewers drew connections from texts (FN p. 85) to the visuals presented, made repeated glances from text to the masks (FN p. 192) and repeated phrases from the texts in their conversations. Visual information from one information site, such as the dance performances or one of the three videos, provided visitors with references "to see the masks in context" (I p. 48, 18). The
Methods and Material area gave viewers information, such as the weight of the masks (I p. 28, 25) which viewers acknowledged they had not previously known and considered in relationship to the stamina of the dancers they had seen in the films.

**Clarifying, Verifying and Adding Knowledge**

Viewers indicated they had clarified and verified prior knowledge and added knowledge indicating they had created change in their knowledge or understanding about First Nations culture.

I knew before, but its still new (I p. 11, 10).
I was wondering if it wasn’t a foundation for a whole bunch of misconception.
We’ve seen a lot and watched a lot of it on [the Knowledge TV station] (I p. 50, 49).
[We] learned a lot more about [First Nations masks] than we ever knew existed (I p. 1, 42).
...a little more knowledge, more appreciation (I p. 3, 47).
I didn’t realize that they used so many different other materials...and I didn’t understand how the transformational masks worked...The modern ones have hinges and the older ones have ropes and string (I p. 10, 21).
...the labret. It was absolutely new to me (I p. 15, 16).

**Revised and Expanded Ideas**

Visitors manipulated information by revised and expanded ideas and understandings:

I was surprised at how many masks were still being made...[and hadn’t know the] number of purposes that they fulfilled...and the importance of the link with traditions of the past (I p. 17, 13).
It opens up a little to what you think (I p. 4, 21).
...divided into the four worlds has given me a ways of looking at some of the masks. I’ve seen them...a long time ago...in a general [way]rather than understanding what they represented (I p. 8, 21).
...to see all the surnames repeated. ...its all been passed down. It’s the only way to sustain history ..to pass the same thing down, it has more strength behind it (I p. 16, 25).
Exposing Assumptions

As noted earlier visitors exposed and revised assumptions about First Nations culture such as masks having been simpler before Europeans showed up (I p. 24, 28), First Nations culture being a dead culture (I p. 35, 14), about masks always being made from wood (I p. 2, 48) and of Northwest Coast culture as being an entity without different and distinct groupings of their own (I p. 50, 16)

Linking Information

Viewers linked information to construct ideas outside of concepts intended by the exhibition. These often include perceptions of their own cultures:

The [history of] repression here is just as bad as the Americans (I p. 19, 30). We have something similar in our culture (I p. 38, 32). …that those [First Nations] people felt they were inferior to the white race... You can see how it might make sense and explain what’s happening (I p. 27, 24). The part about the [stages of] carving...gives you a feeling about how hard it is to make (I p. 27, 47). When you look into the carving, you get an insight into the person that did it and you can see how much that individual learned from just making that mask, regardless of what the mask means or how it is used (I p. 20, 4).

Other Methods

Other methods of understanding First Nations' culture came from the a sense of a spiritual power in the masks creating an understanding of the beliefs and values of First Nations cultures.

The feeling of presence behind the mask. When I look at the mask...something is there. The spirit is there (I p. 29, 17) Dance enhances the relationship with the real world through the masks. You're in a spiritual relationship (I p. 30, 1). I can feel a spiritual vibration...the masks speak to me (I p. 19, 46) The masks possess power (I p. 21, 41).

While yet others expressed their need for time to "think about it more [and]...have
Visitors’ attention to and attendance in participant programmes demonstrated their use of visual, auditory and tactile senses and physical (dancing) activity in their experience with this cultural presentation. In particular, the art projects mounted in the Open Studio illustrated manipulations and interpretations in the individual creations of supernatural beings and completion of the artist’s design as the second half of the mask image provided.

Negative responses to processes which created cultural knowledge or meaning was apparent in comment “You can look at it and put it into context historically, but [you can't] get into real understanding of the culture because you are remote from it and your own experiences are so different (I p. 50, 5). The viewers denied his capability of crossing into the cultural borderlands and sharing commonalities. Others found “There's a lot of guesswork” (I p. 48, 37) or that they “need to hear a little more about what their life was like’ (I p. 21, 2) to make it meaningful. Another visitor suggested the lack of knowledge by non-Natives was due to "the role of secrecy" (I p. 35, 33) of certain Nations which was "kind of the opposite technique… of educating the public” (I p. 35, 43).

Summary

This chapter has drawn attention to the diversity of visitor orientations based on profiles, site attention, questions visitors asked, and their written and verbal comments. The later have revealed affective responses, factual knowledge, attitudes, ideas and concepts generated by the museum experience.
Significant methods used by visitors to find meaning, know and understand First Nations' cultures included taking directions from their interests and negotiating previously held knowledge and meaning with new perceptions individually and through social interactions. They compared and contrasted, made connections to their own world, were curious, questioned, and imagined. Negotiating with direction from interests and what individuals knew and perceived, visitors manipulated information to clarify, verify and add knowledge, revise and expand ideas, expose assumptions and recognize the need to think further.

Communication between the museum presentation and the audience represented multiple avenues for accessing information and multiple possibilities for negotiating with learning and thinking. Visitors add to and create webs of knowledge and personally meaningful interpretations of First Nations cultures. These findings have not presumed that all visitors have had positive learning experiences, although a positive outcome was, by far, the response of the majority of visitors.

This chapter has described the audience's perceptions and methods of understanding and thinking about their perceptions. It has revealed that the museum mediated not only First Nations cultures, but a particular teaching and learning environment for these visitors. The following chapter will briefly review the study and highlight the significant findings.
Chapter 6
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Recent studies in museum education have shown interest in presenting cultural exhibitions and appealing to diverse learners. Little has been studied concerning what meanings or understandings are made from exhibitions of culture and how the relationship between a museum presentation mediating another culture is negotiated in the minds of the viewers. This chapter will discuss the relationship of the museum, visitors, and First Nations cultures and meanings and understandings which have been made. In particular, the partnered presentation of the museum's and First Nations' cultures, the significant presence and voice of First Nations people, visitors' motivations for engagement and learning, and the diversity in visitors' outcomes will be discussed. Constructivism (Hein, 1998), mediated learning experience (Kozulin, 1998) and facets of cognition (Koroscik, 1996), draw together this chapter by addressing theory underlying the presentation and interpretations of culture in an art museum.

The Partnered Presentation

The postmodern shift in thinking about art from a dominant Eurocentric perspective toward that of many cultural ways of seeing and knowing has been demonstrated by art museum exhibitions representing diverse cultures. This study describes this shift in a partnership of an art museum with First Nations' people. It has presented as a complex juxtaposition of cultures, that of a formal Eurowestern display of
art, based on concepts which value art forms and their history with those of continuity and
spirituality embedded in First Nations' cultural beliefs and values.

This partnership drew attention to the predicament of representing and interpreting
another culture. To satisfy the interests and points of view of the museum, First Nations
and viewing public, Clifford's (1988) position is particularly apt. That is, that exhibitors
need to consider the limitations, biases and constraints of particular perspectives. Such
vision requires recognizing the different values and beliefs and admitting within an
exhibition without trivializing or emphasizing them in a way that detracts from the
conceptual intentions. This considered, the museum's presentation did not prevent
visitors from noting controversial or confusing issues. Visitors' responses noted several
issues concerning the amassed and exposed First Nations masks. Firstly, certain visitors
perceived the position of First Nations’ peoples, questioning the long-contentious issue of
how masks had come into the hands of collectors. Secondly, while the museum presented
these masks to attract and appeal to a variety of public interests, this was found to conflict
with Chief Robert Joseph’s statement in the final exhibition gallery. Joseph stated that
masks are traditionally carefully kept, wrapped and hidden by families who have inherited
them and have the authority to own or possess masks until they appear for a limited time
in their family's traditional ceremonies. The boundaries between art and culture were seen
as conflicting. A third issue concerned the masks being situated out of time and place,
thus changing the contexts for non-First Nations interpretations and for the artists' and
communities' intended meanings and purposes of masks. Fourth, was visitors’
perceptions of the lack or equal representation of certain Nations. A predicament lay not
only in what could be respectfully presented, but how to provide multiple levels and
avenues of information for the range of knowledge, skills and abilities among the audience without trivializing, disrespecting or undervaluing the artistic merit or the cultural importance of the masks.

It is important to acknowledge here, that while this study has explored the results of the partnership, extensive mediations and negotiations among First Nations and with museum personnel preceded the public display and programming (Personal conversations with Programme Staff, Sept 1998). Agreement by 14 of the Northwest Coast Nations to exhibit masks an exhibition opening ceremony by First Nations people, and the inclusion of First Nations personnel during the exhibition, illustrated the intentions of both museum and First Nations' cultures to recognize both art and culture. It was the intentions of the curators to encouraging public appreciation and understanding of the First Nations' masks as art and culture, as well as curiosity to know more about First Nations.

**Formal Perspectives**

Characteristics of a Eurowestern formalist perspective were juxtaposed with First Nations' view of continuity through time. The exhibitions' underlying formalist aesthetic approach was supported by the silent communication from the museum's architecture and exhibition display: the classical building set apart from surrounding structures with exterior and interior columns and broad staircases, expanses of granite and marble, grand central rotunda, and in the large and high gallery spaces, glass cases which framed the masks for close scrutiny of properties, comparisons and contrasts, and focused lighting. Aesthetics also defined history in qualities such as the aged masks' patina, and in the evolutionary development of structural and stylistic properties suggested by the relative dates, artists and Nations noted on labels.
Unlike a formal aesthetic approach, historical content of the exhibition also documented cultural continuity and social contexts. Texts, videos and tour guides' dialogue identified early trade, the ban of potlatches, the seizure of masks and other paraphernalia, ceremonies and spiritual beliefs. Dialogue from First Nations people recounted the continuation of long-held practices and behaviour associated with the masks within their communities and families. Archival film and photographs and books contributed historical illustrations, anthropologists' reviews of historical circumstances, and Aboriginal peoples' stories carried from their ancestors. Continuity of the masks was emphasized by repetitions of characters from one or many Nations over centuries in time which were noted by visitors' many comments comparing and contrasting the 'old and new'.

The more formal aesthetic and historic contexts may have provided some viewers with familiar and anticipated ways of looking at and thinking about the masks as art objects. On the other hand, the broader cultural contexts served as a means toward understanding different ways of seeing and thinking about the masks, particularly when confronted with themes of multiple spirit worlds and unfamiliar images portraying supernatural beings.

Originality of the artists, considered a formalist characteristic, was down-played in the museum's presentation. While known artists were named with their carvings, the display emphasized masks for comparative or progressive styles over time and between nations to illustrate the continuity of the spirits' presence. The small exhibition space, "Traditional Variations," focused on three artists, acknowledged the existence of change
in original images, styles and carving techniques, and briefly drew attention to the divergence of contemporary artists from the traditional representations.

Language and Voice in Communication

Communication through a 'language' or means, and a 'voice' or point of view was shared by the museum and First Nations. While both had their particular orientations, manner of presentation and contexts, they also shared communication avenues. Texts were an example. Bold museum titles defined themes of the galleries and the organizing concepts for interpreting the masks. Labels reflected the history of Northwest Coast First Nations people noting their title, date, carver, Nation or where they were held and materials. The titles, names of mask characters, introduced new terminology for some non-Native viewers, who then searched for meanings. Text panels described the spirits or the worlds with quotes of Kwakwaka'waka ancestral songs and brief narratives. The intrinsic sense of spirit suggested in "Assemble at your places men. At the edge of the world!" or "I went down to the underworld with the chief of the ghosts" was followed by interpretative narrative with adjectives such as "powerful," "serene," "malevolent," and "fearsome." Short First Nations' quotes above displays, the predominantly First Nations' comments on the Extrapolation Wall, and more lengthy explanatory documents partnered First Nations' language and voices for interpretations with those of the museums'.

The museum's exhibition language presented designed environments and multiple socio-cultural contexts which enlivened and encouraged active engagement. The broad spaces of the themed galleries were modified with stunning wall colours of (royal) red and deep blues and greens suggesting natural settings. Large, life-sized action scenes, transforming masks and the directed gazes of the spiritual mask characters stimulated and
engaged visitors imagination. The inclusion of sounds of First Nations' voices, drumming and dancing from recorded and actual activities interrupted the hum of visitors' conversations and the subdued ambiance of a museum adding context for interpretations. Communications through actual and virtual First Nations people invited active participation and added dimensions for viewers' knowledge and thought.

First Nations languages and voices documented in videos and their living presence captured languages and voices through attitudes, dialogue and actions during tours, storytelling, dance ceremonies, carving demonstrations and community education activities. Such behaviour, words, and actions described and explained values and symbols showing, for example, respect for the elders and natural materials and attitudes of sharing. In contrast to the language and voices of their living presence, the exhibition included the language and voice of Edward Curtis, the early European, twentieth century anthropologist. His text and film documents an interpretation of First Nations culture, through a story line, in a staged action drama which included his collection of costumes and props. For some viewers, this voice created dissonance and particular engagement in thinking about interpreting culture.

**Contexts of Social Structure**

The partnered exhibition representing the voices and styles of the two participant cultures provided a means for interpreting the culture and meaning of masks by informing viewers of the structure of First Nations' society (Geertz, 1983). In addition to historical information previously mentioned, economic, political, social, and spiritual contexts described First Nations culture. Such a concept of culture can be considered a Eurowestern notion and one used to organizing what is seen and known. It may not,
however, be how First Nations choose to define their society. Connections and shared
social structures of First Nations and Eurowestern cultures were presented through the
exhibition in references to First Nations' society and European contacts with First
Nations' society. Occasionally, one society's views of the other was included.

Economic contexts noted the potlatch which referred to relative wealth of
communities, payment of witnesses, and masks as cultural property; the livelihood of
Native peoples and their reliance on and respect for natural resources; and trade and
commerce with Europeans.

Political systems and powers were made apparent in the "powerful ancestral
spirits" (noted in Introductory Gallery text panel) conveyed by attitudes and beliefs
reflected in stories, personal comments, and texts; in the hierarchy among and within
families; in the human inner struggle of power with spirits; and in the power of White
governing authorities to eradicate the potlatch ritual.

Social contexts were woven throughout the exhibition. Adjectives used in labels
(including the "Conceited White Woman") defined characters. Symbols such as labrets
and decorative objects and materials described social status among the Human Face
Divine display. More significant was documentation of the social purposes of the
potlatch, the significance of the land, cultural identity through art, inheritance and
ownership of masks, teaching and learning of their heritage from elders and artistic
performance, and more specifically, the essential, disparate units, referred to as
'vocabulary' in the 'Hands of the Raven' video, within the mask designs which were learned
and practiced by mask carvers.
Spiritual contexts of the masks and the spiritual lives of the First Nations were described by texts, comments, and actions of the Native artists and tour guides. Short quotes from Kwakwaka'waka songs illustrated legends and myths and described relationships between men and spirits, while comments and demonstrations revealed social and personal interpretations of spirits. The display of specific creatures and supernatural beings illustrated the four Spirit Worlds, respect and authority for them, and the continuity of beliefs in multiple spirits by many Nations.

Reflection

Reflecting on this partnered presentation, I find myself asking if these choices of representation and interpretation based on western standards, (the value in formal aesthetic qualities, honour for the past, and support of a belief system based on spirituality), have directed most visitors to accept the assumptions of value based on the Eurowestern museum perspective, outweighing the First Nations' way of seeing masks as inseparable from the meaning of life. Meaning from the perspective of First Nations was apparent when the masks were connected with the activities, thoughts, beliefs and feelings of First Nations people witnessed at the dance performances, through the First Nations' dialogue and the use of the Robert Davison's mask in the creative Open Studio activity. Could the masks have been displayed in a public institution in any other manner to give greater attention to the values of First Nations' cultures and less to the museum's culture?

Bersson (1987) suggests:

critical examination of our own socio-cultural contexts [for studying art] enables us to comprehend the dominant features of our conditioning. It is only when strongly divergent cultures, such as those of...traditional societies contradict our
own world view that we become aware that we are products of a peculiar Western culture (p. 84).

If art viewers acknowledge their own enculturated ways does that enable them to accept another cultures' positions and work democratically with these differences? Can presenting culture in an art museum have positive social consequences?

Hamblen (1987) suggests in her discussion of democracy in a pluralist society that "if we are to educate toward an aesthetic and societal respect for diversity, complexity, and conflicting traditions, our framework of study needs to allow for, if not embody controversy" (p. 23). She suggests "merely allowing for diversity is not sufficient without an ongoing critical, reflective stance toward what is chosen [by museums]" (p. 24).

Museum selections and distributions of aesthetic knowledge maintain particular values and are politically grounded. Are viewers aware of, or do they consider those things that were not selected or included and why? Could pluralism be presented more clearly with the inclusion of more specific context concerning the meanings and values of the masks for First Nations societies; the symbols within the masks; how tradition has evolved and changed to contemporary time; how characters and symbols differ among Nations

The Living Presence of First Nations People

The attitudes, actions, and spoken and recorded dialogue by First Nations' people in carving, storytelling, dancing, drumming, singing, and touring visitors added to cross-cultural understanding. The living presence of these people, the authorities of the culture, provided a variety of interpretations from which visitors conferred meaning. Their knowledge of both First Nations and Western cultures places them as effective bicultural
communicators, able to cross borders and readily understanding and empathize with another culture (Prosser, 1978).

Native spokespersons shared information, answering questions and demonstrating skills and artistry. Their multiple perspectives described significance of the masks according to their individual circumstances. The tour guide recounted personal knowledge, informing visitors of specifically intended social meanings and values for families and community groups. She reinforced information provided in the documents informing viewers of the purpose and social functions of ceremonies, adding interpretations from her experiences. Dance troupe spokespersons also described social and cultural meanings and functions through introductions and interpretations of their dances, drumming and singing. They described traditional protocol which respects physical and spiritual elements of the world, specifically the members of their community and spirits depicted by the masks they danced. Carvers illustrated the social and cultural practice of mask-making, added personal preferences, changes in practices and materials. They informed visitors of the relationships of apprentices and elder carvers, the social function of the masks to match the person they are made for, and stories to teach and reinforce appropriate behaviour.

Consistent among the tour guide, dance troupes, and carvers was the inclusion of the humourous side of their lives, the many personal anecdotes, and a respectful, open, and friendly attitude toward visitors. These subtleties and the nuances of their living presence as they interacted with museum visitors, suggested an attitude of sharing and familiarity.
While information provided by the actual living presence of First Nations' individuals was "very poignant" (I p. 43, 44), communications in videos and in First Nations' quotes in the text panels and on the gallery walls also described attitudes they held. Multiple and diverse contexts, such as Kwakwaka'waka songs and carvers' statements of respect for natural materials, described beliefs and values masks hold. The oral, non-didactic manner, their choice of words, terms, and references, their attitudes of respect and sincerity, and values expressed provided a unique means for the museum audience to comprehend First Nations' view of the universe and ways of seeing their culture. The multiple spokespersons in video and texts also described diverse perspectives of their culture, giving a variety of meanings for interpreting and constructing understandings and meanings.

In the rich and personal details provided by the presence of First Nations' people, the reality of their contemporary culture was a contrast to the distance created by the underlying formality of the museum display and architecture from another time and culture frame. McLouglin (1993) writes that First Nations' people are immobilized when they are positioned to be understood within a confined context such as a museum. She describes Natives situated to a time and place by an exhibition displaying a context of tradition, which removes them from contemporary western culture. The museum observers, on the other hand, are mobile, seeking information and knowledge from a position within their active contemporary lives. Visitors interacting with First Nations' people in person or through recent videos can realize a relationship of tradition with contemporary living. Through conversations, not lectures, with First Nations' speakers, a wide variety of meanings about their ancestors and their living culture were evoked. The masks, an
element of their cultural fabric, served as a vehicle to illustrate their very real lives.

Defined more specifically than the broad contexts of their continuing history and ordered spiritual world, personal relationships to the masks demonstrated the range of ways masks are experienced and the intrinsic meanings they held for individuals in the culture.

This living presence of First Nations' people in the museum illustrates a borderland (Garber, 1995, McLoughlin, 1993), a place where cultures intersect, where the centre of power is diffused and where there is an interface between people and the cultures from which they speak and act (McLoughlin, p. 4). In the social interactions, the distance defined by the museum space and its particular choice of themes was diminished and the reality of the co-existence of peoples and their common concerns were illuminated. Visitors asked questions, listened with interest and amusement to speakers, responded with shared thoughts, connections, associations, similarities and differences, acknowledging relationships of common interests and concerns.

Borderlands were illustrated by viewers who acknowledged commonalities among cultures. Human faces and hair were decorated and styled, descriptive titles identified characters; common contemporary issues in videos noted concern and respect for natural resources and the education of children; co-operative choreography blended cultures in the Karen Jamison dance performance; and the Open Studio’s hands-on activity offered one half of an illustration of a Robert Davidson carving to examplify an elder artist and spiritual performer teaching an apprentice. The intersection of people from Native and non-Native cultures and diffusion of power was evident in the shared traits and common issues illustrated and demonstrated.
The presence of First Nations' people which conveyed multiple layers of meaning for visitors was unfortunately, not included in all visitors' experiences. Visitors did not all choose, or have the opportunity, to hear a tour, visit the carver in the Open Studio, observe a dance performance or listen to the commentary of First Nations elders in the videos. Many social and cultural contexts would have been missed by visitors who had no interaction with the First Nations people. Respondents who indicated frustration and curiosity to know what the masks meant, their particular purposes, functions or actions may have been among the viewers not interacting with First Nations people and missing opportunity for greater social and cultural understandings.

Motivation for Learning

The audience was motivated to learn about and understand what they were experiencing. Significant motives or agents which activated visitors' responses of excitement, enthusiasm, fascination, and curiosity to know and understand were communicated through the responses and behaviour of visitors. Viewers were motivated by the museum's environment, the amount and variety of contextual information, and personal interests. These appeared to stimulate viewers to acquire information, connect knowledge and possibly store information.

Environment and Affect

The significance of the museum environment, the primary communicating medium for visitors (Dean, 1994, p. 3), was confirmed as a motivating factor by the majority of visitors initial, affective responses. Visitors described an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward "the whole exhibition [which they found] absolutely stunning... a fascinating
experience" (I p. 15, 9). Surprise, excitement, enthusiasm and curiosity stimulated and motivated viewers to further engagement and thinking. Csikszentmihalyi (1995, in Hein, 1998) calls "this kind of experiential state the flow experience, because it… [describes] a state of mind that is spontaneous, almost automatic, like the flow of a strong current… [and affirms] it is likely that the initial curiosity and interest will grow into a more extensive learning interaction" (p. 146). The aesthetic appeal of the display including the enveloping wall colours, focused lighting, clearly visualized features, and positioning of the masks (which in some situations appeared to be looking into viewers' eyes); the great number of masks; and their spiritual nature had a significant impact and lead viewers to "wonder" (I p. 10, 31), "to get the feeling that something is there beyond the physical appearance" (I p. 46, 25) and to be motivated into a deeper relationship with the exhibition.

**Contextual Content**

The museum provided multiple contexts and perspectives of First Nations' culture to which viewers were "completely amazed" (I p. 2, 6) "surprised at the depth" (I p. 5, 21), hadn't "known about" (I p. 22, 47), "realized… [or] seen" (I p. 2, 41). Visitors' remarks acknowledged they gained unexpected knowledge or insight from the informative cultural contexts of the masks. Their concentrated attendance in areas of the displays, tours, videos, and performances verified the contexts of First Nations' cultures that they experienced. These contexts and experiential sites included elements of the social structure of First Nations' society and diverse perspectives from First Nations' artists, elders, curators, scholars and community members acting as tour guides, and those perspectives of Native and non-Native historians, anthropologists, the museum's curator,
designers and educators. Visitors' heightened interest and excitement with all they encountered lead a number of visitors to comment that they needed more time in the exhibit, that they had returned for a second or third time, or planned to return.

Using Spradley's (1980) metaphor of cultural knowledge like a body of water, the museum's presentation of masks is like the visible surface of the water with the vast amount of knowledge invisible beneath the surface. Only a portion of what constructs the meanings of the masks and of the culture have been presented. The combined contexts of the museum and First Nations perspectives were, however, valuable and acknowledged in Spradley's statement:

The First Nations' person... was very good at explaining the hidden aspects of the masks. Otherwise we would just be looking at the masks as a work of art and we'd not really be understanding why it was created. It was very, very helpful to link it all together. (I p. 44, 25-30)

Visitor Interest

Visitors' attendance in particular areas and their focus on particular ideas suggests personal interests motivated their desire to experience, explore, know, and learning. Interests were notably a starting point for viewing the exhibit. Diverse interests guided orientations and the acquisition of information and thinking about First Nations cultures. Artists and crafts-people, students, teachers, history buffs, international travelers, those who knew little or wanted to know more, and those who came for social interaction and recreation with friends and family were motivated to look and experience the exhibit in relationship to their prior knowledge, experiences, and social circumstances. Visitors who "collect Hopi pottery...and know Apache and Navajo" tribes made "a lot of associations
with the northern tribes... spirits that are similar, but artwork that is totally different" (I p. 26, 16) and stated they "want to learn a lot more about it" (I p. 26, 26). For a viewer who came for the aesthetic pleasure of "just looking at the masks" (I p. 5, 12), she found she was "really surprised" at "the concept of the labret" (I p. 5, 42) and drew connections to similarities among "all the cultures around the world" (I p. 42, 46). Such examples of the visitors' interests, their self-direction and attraction to museums' contexts, perspectives, and avenues for experiencing and building knowledge appeared to move individuals beyond their interests to engagement, discovery, and further inquiry.

Diversity in Visitor Outcomes

Learning has traditionally been defined as the acquisition of facts, the connection of facts to prior knowledge and the manipulation of knowledge to generate greater understanding of the world in which we live. More recently, effective learning has been seen as "casual, informal and unpredictable" (Vallance, 1995, p. 9) and "socially constructed and shaped by individuals' particular interests and values" (Roberts, 1997, p. 2). Diversity among viewers' learning from their explorations and web-like constructions of information and concepts is seen as creating both conceptual knowledge and personal meanings. Moreover, meaning, as an outcome, "no longer represents the significance intended by a sender to a receiver, [but]... a process of negotiation between two parties in which information (and meaning) is created rather than transmitted" (Silverman, 1995, p. 161).
Affective Learning

Roberts (1992) writes that, in the past decade, education and learning which has traditionally been associated with the communication of information has been studied for affective learning related to the acquisition of attitudes and values. She admits that affective learning "has never fit into a museum's dominant epistemology" (p. 164) which values scientific and historical methods to produce and communicate knowledge. She agrees with Csikszentmihalyi that it is "expressive, affective, leisure kinds of experiences which give meaning and value to more instrumental activities...and [people] come to know what is rewarding to them[elves]. It is here that they discover the criteria by which they evaluate all other life activities" (p. 166). From documentation of a majority of positive affective responses which stimulated and motivated viewers, I propose that a positive attitude toward First Nations culture was either previously held or generated by the presentation, and furthermore, that such affective learning had an impact on the revised assumptions and transformations viewers experienced.

Personal Learning Experiences

Visitors create meanings and shape their experiences in museums. Silverman (1995) describes both perception and learning as occurring "through a constant process of remembering and connecting... [of people placing] what they encounter within the context of their experience" (p. 162). In a negotiation with information transmitted and shaped by prior knowledge, personal learning occurs which may not be consistent with the museums' intended learning.

Presuming the museum experiences may be one or many in the construction of a learned outcome, it is difficult to ascertain from the limited data of this study where, in the
web of accumulated and connected ideas and knowledge of experiences, particular learning had been reached. It is evident, however, from responses of personal associations and connections, from interactions and conversations among visiting groups and with gallery personnel, from accounts of imagining, and from many illustrations of playful and whimsical creation of mask images in hands-on activities that the process of personal learning occurred. While concepts were understood concerning aesthetics and artistry, the spiritual worlds, the history and continuity of mask-making, and of trade and commerce, personal experiences and learning expressed themselves in dialogue, at times like revelations (I p. 40, 39), concerning religions of the world (I p. 41, 3), the complexity of culture (I p. 51, 50), how culture is (mis)represented and (mis)interpreted (I p. 36, 7; I p. 27, 25), where knowledge of First Nation's (I p. 13, 4) and their own culture has come from (I p. 39, 39) and how culture finds expression (I p. 45, 2).

Meanings which were intimate and more specifically reflected viewers' personal lives were also found to connect with broader issues. A father recounted after seeing the labrets in the lips of the masks that "my daughter has a jewel in her belly button. So it [the tradition of body piercing and adornment] goes on, eh?" (I, p. 45, 2). It appears that responses were the accumulation of perceptions, constructed knowledge and meanings brought about by viewers' particular perceptions and interactions with the museum presentation.

Dewey (1963) writes of experience as a "moving force" (p. 38) and the principle of continuity discriminating between experiences that are educationally worth while and those that are not (p. 33). With a constructivist view of learning, he states that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in
some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). I interviewed a woman in the
Open Studio reading area who was motivated by her prior knowledge and experience in
the museum to inquire and know more. She states:

    I was interested in the cannibalistic ceremonies because I'd never really
    thought about it. And I viewed the old [Curtis] movie and found it was
    so fictionalized that I was curious to find out exactly what was the status
    of head-hunting or cannibalism. That's why I'm up here looking at a
    book" (I p. 17, 5).

This woman's desire to extend the experience to gained a broader idea of cannibalism and
Northwest Coast Native culture exemplifies an educationally worthwhile and personally
meaningful learning experience.

    Linear thinking and objective knowledge is not necessarily the outcome of visitors'
experiences if personal learning occurs. Experiences which make connections to
memories and are linked to prior knowledge create and extend webs of meanings and
understandings and a knowledge base from which further knowledge is constructed.

    Walker and Chaplin (1997) explain personal learning experiences by the socially
and culturally encoded perceptions, understandings and meanings made from visuals.
They state "vision is informed by the social and cultural constructions that have coded
visual discourse over time, by the various interests and desires of the viewer, and by the
social relations that exist between the perceiver and the perceived" (p. 22). Roberts
(1997) acknowledges that knowledge which was at one time considered objective and
verifiable is now challenged by viewers' diverse social and cultural constructions, interests
and motivations (p. 2). Knowledge can be seen as relative to those contexts which produce logical thought and elaboration for different individuals.

Thinking

The range of visitors' thinking is illustrated in their awareness and appreciation of art, acquisition of objective knowledge as facts and concepts, and critical thinking and the manipulation of information which constructed new understandings. Koroscik (1995) states that social and cultural contexts of art, such as that provided by the museum, encourage visitors to think critically and gain deeper understanding of art.

The museum experience allowed visitors to confirm, build on, or challenge their existing knowledge. Familiar and new cultural facts and information concerning the masks, their artistic qualities, character, and traditions were readily acknowledged by viewers as were concepts of history and continuity, spirituality and culture.

Active cognitive engagement and deeper thinking was illustrated in visitors' comparisons ("the nineteenth century with the contemporary," I p. 9, 5), connections (between masks as spiritual objects and Russian icons, Greek and Roman statues," I p. 41, 3), interpretation ("The culture of the Indians [on the northwest coast] is much more sophisticated," I p. 2, 7), curiosity ("what's behind the masks? the rights? the story?" I p. 52, 9), and questioning ("How can something so sacred be exposed to casual viewers?" FNcc p. 225) of what they were experiencing. Visitors concluded with reflective comments that they had "discovered something" (I p. 40, 39), were "beginning to understand" (FNcc p. 253) and had "opened up a little to how you think" (I p. 27, 28).

Active problem solving illustrated by "I always thought" (I p. 2, 41) and "You can see how it might make sense" (I p. 27, 28) indicated viewers found discrepancy in their
previously conceived ideas and were engaged in resolving these. They exposed assumptions ("everyone thinks its a dead culture...pagan, history. It's alive!" I p. 35, 14) and revised previous ideas ("that the culture was much simpler before we showed up...but that's obviously not true," I p. 24, 28); acknowledged that they gained insight into the perspectives of First Nations' people ("I never really knew that Native people had that perception of their history." I p.27, 25); and suggested the experience was "transformative" (FNcc p. 35).

In addition to what they knew, hadn't known, and had come to understand, visitors noted frustration in not finding answers to what they wanted to know. They frequently asked what the masks meant (I p. 30, 15), "what they represented, why they used the different symbols" (I p.20, 39), and their cultural significance (I p. 2, 15). Labels which gave little detail and text panels which were relatively brief and included Kwakwaka'waka songs that could be conceived as cryptic, encouraged viewers to use their looking skills, prior knowledge, new information provided by First Nations voices and personal lives to make sense of what they were experiencing. Those who were unable to find information or make connections remained frustrated.

On the other hand, active thinking and problem solving was stimulated by dissonance created by several factors. Viewers perceived the Edward Curtis film to be an expression of "barbarism" (I p. 40, 9) which conflicted with their real contact with First Nations people. They spoke of the film as "fictionalized" (I p. 17, 5) and "in the context of the whole exhibit...a counterpoint" (I p. 46, 28) by the implication that a non-Native could be an authority to interpret Native culture. Dissonance was also suggested by visitors who made judgments of the lack of cultural relativity in the museum environment.
and were "uncomfortable about" the contradiction of exposing sacred masks (FNcc p. 228).

Thinking and learning outcomes from this cultural exhibition has been described as attitudinal, factual and conceptual and having various meanings and depths of understanding. The range of responses to the exhibition of First Nations culture, expressions of positive affect, personal interest, learning and engagement have reflected differences among the audience, their personal orientations, agendas, motivations and capabilities.

Understanding Cultures

The acquisition of concepts of First Nations culture can be tallied as facts viewers indicated they had gained of Northwest First Nations’ cultures. Conceptual understanding most frequently noted concerned the continuity of masks through time (I p. 21, 38), the spirituality that the masks expressed (I p. 19, 43), the ceremonies (I p. 22, 47), the materials used (I p. 10, 21), and the purposes and functions of masks (I p. 17, 18). Less frequent responses indicated viewers gained understanding of ownership (I p. 22, 50), of dance and storytelling as forms of cultural communication (I p. 38, 8; p. 42, 31), of the variety (I p. 2, 5) and variations (I p. 50, 37) of mask characters, of the richness (I p. 29, 14) and complexity of the masks as art forms (I p. 5, 14) and the comparative characteristics among Aboriginal cultures (I p. 26, 17).

More significant in cross-cultural understanding were the perceptions of similarities which unite people of different cultures, and the dissimilarities which cause people to hesitate or to be blocked from comprehending another culture. By being interested in searching for these similarities and differences, viewers are inclined to realize
the contexts of their own cultures. The museum visitors found many similarities and
differences among cultures (I p. 38, 32). They expose their culture's assumptions (I p. 24,
28) and revised previous ideas (I p. 50, 16), showed insight into the perspective of First
Nations people (I p. 27, 25) their own cultures (I p. 39, 37) and other cultures (I p. 41, 3). One visitor evaluated the significance of his perspective by stating that the exhibition had
"lots of relevant messages for today in it [from which]we can transform ourselves" (I p.
46, 44). Such interest or willingness to search for understanding and be empathetic to
another culture appears connected to individual viewers' awareness of themselves and their
culture, and their interest in growth and change.

Theoretical Orientations

This study deals with mediation between the museum culture, authentic First
Nations cultures, and the museum and the audience. These mediations occurred through
the languages and voices created by the museum environment, the themed exhibits of
masks, multimedia displays, texts, the display design, tours, demonstrations and activities.
The diverse responses by individual viewers to this mediation can be described as a
process of negotiation in which the experience has brought together individuals' interests,
prior knowledge, and socially and culturally based beliefs and values, to focus on and
expand notions of Northwest Coast First Nations cultures. Three overarching theories are
reflected in this analysis: constructivism (Hein, 1998), as a means of teaching to enable
viewers to personally negotiate meaningful way of thinking, mediated learning experience
theorized by Vygotsky (Kozulin, 1990, Rogoff, 1990, Daniels, 1996) and developed
further by Feurenstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum (1994) and facets of cognition in understanding art (Koroscik, 1996, 1997).

Constructivist Teaching and Thinking

Constructivist teaching in museums is described by Hein (1998) as one which is stimulating, challenging, and engaging, with encyclopedic-like resources from which visitors can choose interests to pursue (p. 38). This definition of teaching has been exemplified by the environment created by the museum, the inclusion of multiple contexts as resources, diverse First Nations perspectives, the museum culture's and First Nations' points of view, and learning situations for individual interests and learning styles. Visitors affective responses verified their stimulation, engagement, and satisfaction with challenges to their knowledge and understandings that the museum provided.

Jeffery-Clay (1998) emphasizes the importance of building on learners' prior knowledge in a way that constructs webs of knowledge with previous and new information, links new to prior information and knowledge, and creates more stable or new concepts. Visitors' diverse and sometimes personal connections to experiences or interests, their acknowledgment of new understandings, assumptions, and revisions of previous ideas illustrates the processes of visitors constructing these web-like structures and learning.

Constructivist teaching and learning in the museum allowed the public to interact with and manipulate a variety of topics relating to First Nations cultures, making their own meanings but not necessarily those intended by the museum. Visitors drew on and connected information to memories of family and their social lives while others found dissonance in the presentation and contested the interpretation of First Nations based on
their conceptions how culture should be interpreted. Those who were uninterested in culture, who were unable to make connections or had little prior knowledge remained entertained by the art, expressed frustration in not finding what they felt they needed to know, and infrequently responded with misconceptions.

Mediate Learning Experience

Vygotsky (Kozulin, 1998) proposed that higher mental activity is a function of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) and is based on his theories of the zone of proximal development and socio-cultural development. Although these theories were developed with a focus on child development, they can be applied to adult or lifelong learning, assuming that adults continue to learn and develop cognitive skills.

The zone of proximal development and socio-cultural development, proposes that cognitive development occurs, with assistance, through participation in problem solving activities slightly beyond ones' competence at a particular time. Research has suggested the assistance in child development is mediated through an adult, often a parent. In the museum situation, the assistance can be perceived as the museum intervention in the visitors' interpretation of First Nations culture and as the First Nations people whose language and voices defined and demonstrated their culture for the non-First Nations audience.

Vygotsky defined the zone of proximal development as the distance between actual development and a higher level of potential development (Daniels, 1996, p. 4). Mediated learning in the art museum challenged visitors to higher level thinking beyond entertainment and the appreciation of art, beyond affective responses and factual
information toward linking information and concepts and constructing new understandings.

Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural development describes the social and cultural tools from which individuals' behaviour and meaning systems are developed. He proposed that cognitive processes occur first on a shared social plane, are internalized, transformed, and form the individual plane (Rogoff, 1990, p. 14). Within broad cultures, such as national, religious or ethnic groups, and small cultures, such as families or classmates, meanings, behaviour and methods or strategies for understanding are created.

Feuerenstein (Feurenstein, Klein, & Tannenbaum, 1994) proposes that individuals have the potential to change or are modifiable if given the opportunity. The art museum is one such opportunity. While individuals came to the museum with particular socially and culturally developed understandings of symbols and methods or strategies for making meaning and constructing knowledge, they had the capacity to learn from their direct interaction with the masks and, more optimally, with the museum's mediated interaction which provided direction for new ways of looking or thinking about what was experienced. Instruction which is linked to one's cultural heritage, such as spiritual beliefs, and value for aesthetics and history, is thought to increase individual's cognitive modifiability, or openness to new thoughts or ideas (p. 138).

Vygotsky proposed three categories of mediators: material tools, psychological tools, and other human beings (Kozulin, 1998). Central to the category of material tools were the masks themselves. These were augmented with photographs and books, video and sound technology, displayed materials used in the creation of masks, examples of stages of carved masks, display cases and plinths, lighting, large spaces and broad walls.
Psychological tools are contemporarily defined as consciousness which is an "encompassing awareness of things and actively processes information. It analyses, synthesizes, deliberates, interprets, plans, remembers, feels and decides... and is... self-conscious" (Ratner, 1991, p. 14). Psychological tools in these active processes include meanings encoded from symbolic, social and cultural systems which individuals have established through their life experiences. Viewers drew on their encoded meaning systems. They found that First Nations legends were "similar in our [Icelandic] culture" (I p. 38, 32) and that masks with labrets "remind us of Africa" (I p. 15, 19). Meanings may have been associated with any element visitors were consciously aware of, including the physical features of the masks or the museum building, the texts including theme titles, historical information, First Nations' narratives and descriptive songs, or the appearances, dispositions, attitudes and gestures of socially interacting individuals.

Daniels (1996) acknowledges that "the very idea of [psychological] mediation carries with it a number of significant implications concerning control" (p. 7) in the political context of directing the mind and behaviour. In this case, the inclusion of the First Nations' people in partnership with the museum's staff diminishes this notion of control from one political standpoint of cultural understanding. Despite the fact that the exhibition was presented within the physical orientations of the Eurowestern museum and the conceptual orientation which valued certain historical and aesthetic perspectives, significance lies in the fact that First Nations' people were given control to interpret and represent their culture.

Other human beings, Vygotsky's third category of mediated activity, can be viewed on two planes: in the role of another person as a vehicle of meaning, such as the museum
or First Nations staff or as the ability, such as the visitors', to consider different points of view in his or her own mind. The mediating tool of social interactions with First Peoples was realized by visitors' who acknowledged greater understanding from the contexts provided by the tours (I p. 51, 4) and the films (I p. 48, 17). Interactions between social groups of visitors considered different points of view. They frequently wondered (I p. 34, 49; p. 49, 9) had discussions (I p. 34, 46), clarified their thoughts and perceptions (I p. 49, 29), and expanded their ideas (I p. 51, 50).

The museum's mediations created for the viewers "a whole set of dispositions, attitudes, modes of perceptions, ways of looking at things, ways of selecting and scheduling the things that [were] perceived" (Ratner, 1991, p. 32)

Facets of Art Cognition

Koroscik's (1996) theory of facets of art cognition focuses on the individual, his or her knowledge base, disposition toward learning, knowledge seeking strategies, and transfer of knowledge which facilitate higher order or deeper thinking. These facets of cognition are reflected in the descriptions of visitors and responses of the audience to the museum presentation.

The knowledge base, including all knowledge, skills, and experiences, differs among individuals. Descriptions of diverse interests (historians, teachers, international travelers or artists), reasons for coming to the museum ("to enjoy the beauty of it," I p. 13, 21 or to be educated, I p. 5, 18), and visitors' foci of attention which were illustrated in conversations and attendance in particular areas, suggested fields of knowledge held by visitors. Responses also indicate differences between novices who "didn't know anything
about these Natives" (I p. 26, 41) and those who had a base of knowledge and attended "for a little more knowledge" (I p. 3, 47).

The museum accommodated diverse bases of knowledge by including multiple information resources in displayed visuals and texts, literature in reading areas of appeal to ages and interests and education levels from children to adults, hands-on art activity, and areas for interaction with carvers, dance troupes, and members of First Nations' communities. These resources not only considered diverse interests but also learning styles with auditory, tactile and visual stimulation, group and individual interaction, and independent, self-directed opportunities. Unable to differentiate what was prior knowledge and acquired knowledge, I can only assume that these multifaceted resources could reinforce knowledge or add to the diverse knowledge bases of viewers.

Positive dispositions, or motivating factors among viewers were apparent in initial comments by the majority of interviewees who were stimulated and enthusiastic. Comments which followed revealed curiosity and questioning indicating interest and desire to know and think about what they experienced. The positive effect of curiosity was negated for some by not being able to find information ("I need to hear a little more about what their life was like," I p. 20, 50), to satisfy curiosity ("I don't know what a 'Bagwas' is," I p. 20, 11) or construct meaning (I couldn't quite tie the masks into the four different worlds," I p. 20, 25). In these cases a negative disposition deterred individuals' learning and thinking.

The museum's intention to create a positive disposition toward learning that can facilitate higher order thinking or deeper learning has been described in Chapter 4 through Belcher's (1991) theory of geographical, intellectual, conceptual and psychological
orientation systems for visitors. The physical plan, the basic and challenging information presented, the consistent conceptual themes, and the psychological support which reassured and familiarized visitors describes the museum's designs to accentuate visitors' positive dispositions.

Knowledge seeking strategies, or steps taken to construct new understandings or to search for new knowledge, was evidenced in visitors' investigation (of cannibalism, I p. 17, 5) in reading material, in discussions with companions (I p. 5, 19), in comparisons and connections to visitors' society and culture (I p. 38, 23), their communities (I p. 10, 2), families and friends (I p. 4, 43), and in contrasts of new and old (I p. 8, 2). Visitors interpreted (I p. 46, 43), explained (I p. 50, 4), challenged the authority presented (I p. 50, 47), and expanded information presented (I p. 47, 12).

The museum's provision of diverse media, materials and multiple perspectives, the purposeful arrangement of displays to juxtapose masks of different Nations or periods in time, to design sets for active imagination, and to limit text in labels encouraging inquiry and attendance to First Nations' voices were among strategies the museum implemented to encouraging knowledge searching and cognitive activity.

Transfer, a fourth facet of cognition is described as the "ability to recycle knowledge required in one context for constructing new knowledge in another context" (p. 11). With similarities to knowledge seeking strategies, transfers provide explanations and reasoning for the thoughts viewers had. An example was recounted by an Icelandic couple. The gentleman drew connections between the spirits of First Nations and his growing up in a fishing town where his community maintains stories of ghosts who drowned at sea (I p. 38, 25) similar to those the tour guide told of Gagiit. He recounted
how the cultural heritage of First Nations compared to that of his own, how the written stories from his culture "seems to have the same position...that the dance and masks have in First Nations culture" (I p. 39, 33) and that although his culture has dance, it doesn't carry the cultural heritage (I p. 39, 38). This same visitor went on to explain their spiritual connections with a character in a totem pole:

Very strange things we can tell you ...from just a few weeks after [we came to Vancouver], we went to the Museum of Anthropology and we suddenly saw all these totem poles. And we were very surprised. What is this? ... Life has [since] been very good to us in Vancouver and we sometimes say to our very good friends that there is an old man, a First Nations' man, who is protecting us. We don't believe this literally. In a way, [to] our good life...we see a connection...(I p. 39, 39-47)

His wife adds:

We aren't very spiritual people. But perhaps it is because of our own culture. My mother believed in elves. She was quite sure. She was born in 1907. There was a great tradition of spiritual things. They couldn't explain things maybe, and they used all the spiritual things to explain. So we have this inside us too. Even though we look at ourselves as modern people that don't believe in such things. But sometimes you must free yourselves [of] all the material things and think a little bit. (I p. 39, 48-53).

Most interviewees limited the depth of their conversations which might have revealed greater coherence of knowledge and connections they constructed within and across domains of knowledge. Several visitors also suggested they needed "to think about
it more, need time to have it soak in" (I p. 20, 46), suggesting transfer can occur much later at a time and place removed from the exhibition.

In review of the facets of cognition, viewers can be seen as negotiating with information and searching strategies that were, on one hand, rooted in their socially and culturally based knowing and thinking systems and, on the other, presented by those the museum mediated and directed. Outcomes of affective responses, accumulated knowledge, frustrations, curiosity, inquiry, and the creation of new concepts, personal meanings and understandings exemplify the diversity of thinking, interest in learning through art exhibits, and the potential of an art museum to educate the public through culturally partnered exhibitions.

Summary

This analysis has presented one perspective of what and how an art museum presented culture and what and how the audience made sense of that presentation. The findings discussed have focused on the partnership of the museum and First Nations' cultures, the presence of First Nations' people, visitors' motivations and diverse outcomes and theories which help explain these observations. It has become apparent through these discussions that an extensive number of meanings could have been conveyed and understood depending on individual perspectives and skills. From the customs, beliefs and values expressed through these masks and the contexts presented, viewers were affected, informed, actively negotiated meanings and understandings, and for many, acknowledged cognitive gains. The museum mediated a position between it's own culture
and that of others, promoting attention to alternate ways of seeing and knowing, cautiously changing the management of exhibitions for a changing society.

The following chapter will summarize this study and suggest implications of the analysis and further research in cultural exhibitions.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the study, draw conclusions from the preceding analysis and discussion, and offer some implications for practice and further research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the mediations of First Nations cultures by the museum presentation "Down From the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast," the negotiations of this cultural exhibition in the minds of viewers, and the relationship between the two. This was a qualitative case study conducted at a large civic art gallery during the summer and early fall of 1998.

Three curators represented particular perspectives of the exhibition. These included Peter Mcnair (Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery), Robert Joseph (Kwakwaka'wakw Chief), and Bruce Grenville (Former Curator, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia). One hundred and seventy-five masks were presented to illustrate representations of the human face and powerful ancestral spirits of the supernatural world, to show the continuity and change over the past two centuries, the aesthetic, social, historical, economic and spiritual contexts of their production and use, and to stimulate curiosity to know First Nations' cultures.

Observations of the museum presentation which included the display of masks and multiple, diverse and supportive programmes were conducted over a six week period. During that same time, 53 semi-structured interviews including 99 adults were recorded.
Together, observations and interviews with documents collected in the museum were analyzed to identify patterns and relationships. These patterns and relationships were illuminated and supported by literature reviewed, personal intuitive hunches and further inquiry. A reflexive stance was taken for objective and critical consideration of my assumptions, biases and particular perspectives as a researcher.

The museum presentation has been described as a representation and interpretation mediated through the languages and voices of both the museum and the First Nations’ people. Formal exhibition methods spoke from a position of Eurowestern culture, specifically with values of aesthetics and history, while First Nations’ spoke of their connection to the universe and of performance through their presence and arts to illustrate this belief.

The exhibition design oriented visitors geographically, intellectually, conceptually and psychologically for entertaining and educating experiences. An effective museum environment was created with colour, lighting, space, theatrical settings and sound. Open-to-the-air and encased masks were arranged in themes, groupings and individually with minimal labeling. The display was enriched with First Nations' historical text and scholarly quotes, video presentations from both Eurowestern' and First Nations' perspectives, programmes by First Nations' people (tours, dances, carving and storytelling), a broad assortment of related reading material, a tactile display, and explanatory documents. The mediation of culture was distinguished by the partnership of the museum and First Nations’ cultures which reflected both their languages and voices.

Audience responses drew attention to the diversity of visitor orientations by reviewing their profiles, sites attended, questions asked and verbal and written responses.
The audience described affective responses, factual knowledge transmitted, attitudes, ideas, and concepts. Responses indicated personal reveries, enlightenment, and a sense of value in the experience. They clarified, verified, and added knowledge, revised and expanded previously held ideas, exposed assumptions, found similarities and differences among cultures, and gained insight into the perspective of others. The audience negotiated meaning and understanding by acknowledging and manipulating their exhibition experiences with their prior knowledge, elaborating, and generating new meanings and understandings. These included direction from personal interest, social interaction, comparing and contrasting, making connections to their own world, showing curiosity, questioning and imagining. Negotiations and thinking that occurs after the museum visit most likely will draw on memories from the museum experience, in the same fashion that viewers recounted and referenced past experience.

This study addressed the significance of the partnership of the museum's and First Nations' cultures, in particular, the presence of First Nations' people; visitors' motivations for engagement and learning; and the diversity of visitor's outcomes. Theoretical orientations of this study have been found in constructivist teaching and learning, mediated learning experience and facets of cognition.

The following conclusions and implications have been drawn from this analysis.

Conclusions and Implications

The Complexity of a Partnered Cultural Exhibit

The partnering of cultures is a complex undertaking. The museum maintained its particular perspective of values and respected First Nations' cultural perspective, sharing
exhibition authority with First Nations' representatives and their beliefs. Interpretation of masks as art and of masks as an expression of First Nations' cultures drew together an aesthetic, theme-based display, multiple socio-cultural contexts for the masks, and the authority of First Nations' elders, artists and tour guides. Such an exhibition shared common visual objects and interpreted with different value systems.

These value systems, presented for a largely Eurowestern, public audience, created connections and cues through common, conceptual themes, sub themes, an environment which engaged and stimulated imagination, and social interaction with First Nations people. Most consistent was the attitude of respect for other's values conveyed by the museum's and First Nations' exhibits and programmes.

The museum provided multiple avenues for informing and verifying First Nations' perspectives of the masks in documents, short explanatory quotes, and performance which described and recounted meanings through attitudes, actions, and dialogue. These contexts served to inform and motivate thinking by those of diverse interests, intelligences and learning styles. It is also notable that First Nations' representatives who lived with one foot in First Nations' culture and the other in Western culture were empathetic resource people, able to cross the cultural borders and provide meaningful information. The value of communication from First Nations' individuals might best be evaluated by the differences between those who did and those who did not know or encounter First Nations' people.

The museum subtly conveyed a critical reflective stance by including controversial issues. The Eurowestern anthropologists as an interpreter of First Nations' culture, the government's ban of the potlatch and restriction of cultural practices, the First Nations'
perspective of Europeans in the title "Conceited White Woman" and the need for negotiation suggested by the Open Studio board game exemplified these subtleties. Admittedly, museum usually keeps controversial political issues out of exhibitions. For the viewing public, such subtle reminders engaged thinking and diminished distance from the actual issues in our contemporary world.

The dramatic display techniques including deep colours, simulated natural environments, open dioramas, engaging mask positions, and groupings of masks within and across Nations helped to deconstruct the formality of the museum and bridge a gap between where and how the two cultures consider masks. While dramatic effects could trivialize respect and significance of the masks, in this large display of masks the drama repeatedly refreshed and engaged looking and thinking.

This complex partnership suggested that museums planning cultural exhibitions reflected on cultural values and perspective, how they maintain these values, and how they can respect and exhibit the values of another culture. Representing a culture through multiple contexts, including the past and changes to the present, showing respect for those who have and do maintain the culture, and creating relevance to cultures in contemporary communities.

While the balance of cultural interpretations of masks could be debated, there is no doubt that the partnered exhibition stimulated learning, adding to public understanding of art and First Nations' cultures.
The Museum as a Site for Cross-Cultural Education

The effect of the museum to motivate and engage the audience and to enlighten, change attitudes, expose assumptions, revise previous ideas and generate a transformation in thinking about a culture clearly indicates their potential for cross-cultural education. Equally important, for those whose culture is exhibited, is that museums can reaffirm cultural values, encourage pride, and sharing knowledge with those less informed.

The diverse interpretations audiences found meaningful and the different thinking patterns and schema they engage in suggests there are innumerable possible constructions of meaning and knowledge. This implies that cross-cultural education among a diverse group of viewers, a nexus between the museum presentation of culture and the audience response, is one which should allow for diversity in the construction of meaning. By limiting direction for thinking from the museum culture's point of view, yet providing common cultural themes to encourage engagement and inquiry, the museum provides opportunity for understanding other cultural perspectives. Such a presentation which includes a large portion directed by those from the exhibited culture, with many of their perspectives, and through a broad spectrum of contexts, encourages viewers to learn, review and revise their understanding of this culture. With themes common to many viewers' cultures, familiarity creates connections, a sense of other culture's values, similarities and differences, and the diversity of thought among cultures.

No single exhibition can capture adequate dimensions of a culture. Rather, understanding another culture can be thought of as incremental and unlikely to be fixed or static. Cultural understanding can be described through the metaphor of people approaching a borderland between cultures. Some have no interest in moving from their
comfortable homeland to inquire about another, others reach the cultural border acknowledging facts that are presented, while yet others cross into the borderland, noticing and accepting differences and similarities, inquiring, revising previous interpretations, and gaining a broader concept of the place they experience. While many may explore the borderlands, few will travel far enough beyond the borderlands to know and live as if being of the other culture.

Further Research

This research explored the presentation of culture and the responses of a seasonal, adult audience. How other art museums or smaller community galleries present cultural exhibitions, who their audiences are, and what cultural understandings are generated from the differences would be of interest as a comparison for planning cultural exhibitions in different community settings. It would also be interesting and useful to know what a less selective and elite audience might require to be motivated to learn and think about another culture. Determining if an existing bias or prejudice in a community can be altered by an art exhibition would be particularly significant for cross-cultural education through art museums. Additionally, as the demographics of society changes, it may be worth considering how art exhibitions can help the present, dominant culture of Eurowesterners adapt their thinking and adjust to living among other cultures.
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