AN EXAMINATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN

THEIR UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM THROUGH DIALOGUE AND PEER

LEARNING

by

CARISSA MARIA DICINDIO

(Under the Direction of CAROLE HENRY)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study focuses on the experiences of student docents and non-art majors visiting their university art museum together. Through a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, it was constructed to understand how these students built meaning through dialogue with each other and with the works of art and how they learned from each other as peers. It also considers how this museum visit potentially changes the perceptions of both the student docent and the museum partner through their experiences together.

Studies specifically focusing on university students' experiences in museums are minimal, and as museum educators move forward with programs and exhibitions designed to reach this audience, it becomes critical to understand how students perceive their time in museums. Working with student docents in the inaugural year of a new student docent program and their museum partners, non-art majors with whom they chose to visit the museum, this study used recorded dialogue of the gallery visits, interviews, and concept maps to better understand how these students interacted with each other and

with the works in the museum. It also considers how these visits can result in transformative experiences for both the student docents and their museum partners.

The goal of this study is to create pathways through which university students can connect with works of art through dialogue and peer learning in hope that this research will help university museums rethink how their students can utilize the museum for experience, understanding, and learning opportunities. I discuss not only the important role of the student docents in the engagement of the non-art majors in the galleries, but also how the non-art majors contributed to the student docents' experiences. In this study, I demonstrate the need to create opportunities such as this one for more students during a time when they are shaping their independent identities so that they can understand the intrinsic benefits that will make them want to return to the museum and make it part of their lives. I also stress the importance of providing spaces for students to interact with art that is both private and special.

INDEX WORDS:     Art Museum Education, Art Education, Dialogue, Hermeneutics, Peer Learning, University Art Museum, Docent

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree


DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY


ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

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May 2012

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, especially my husband, Patrick, for his love, support, and amazing ability to make me laugh, and my son Graham, whose sweet smile makes every day perfect. I am very lucky to go through life with both of you in it.

**Acknowledgements**

There are many people who are part of this paper and to whom I owe enormous thanks, especially the professors who served on my committee. I am deeply grateful to Carole Henry for her invaluable feedback, patience, and thoughtfulness and for her vast knowledge of museum education. I would also like to thank José Blanco for his enthusiasm of my research and sincere interest in reaching new audiences in museums. I also owe many, many thanks to Tracie Costantino for her wonderful insights and encouragement throughout this program and her dedication to research and art education. Finally, I would like to thank Richard Siegesmund for challenging me with new ideas and for his thoughtful criticism of my work. I am a better scholar and museum educator because of the four of you.

I would also like to thank the students who went through the art education program with me, particularly LaDonna Canup, Juyi Chia, Jackie Ellett, Keri George, Carolina Blatt-Gross, Lauren Kucera, NaJuana Lee, and Winnie Smith. I also am very grateful to Bryna Bobick, whose friendship and collaborative spirit have helped me through these past four years. Finally, I am deeply grateful to the staff, community docents, student docents, and student interns of the Georgia Museum of Art, especially Cece Warner, whose support and encouragement are a huge part of the reason I am a museum educator.

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**Introduction**

*The University Art Museum*

Increasingly, university art museums are being asked to justify their relationships to the academic missions of the institutions of which they are part (Goethals & Fabing, 2007). The pressure to be a stronger presence at the university is growing as universities are facing budget cuts that affect funding of the art museums on campuses (Willumson, 2000). University art museums must find ways to reach their students by offering academic programming designed specifically for them and incorporating themselves more effectively into the social realm of the campuses. In becoming an integral part of the fabric of the university through both course connections and by reaching students during their time out of class, the museum not only validates its position on campus, but also creates an environment in which students and faculty can understand its potential role in their lives. Most importantly, these opportunities to visit the museum offer members of the university a chance to make intellectual and personal connections with works of art. Once these audiences have made these initial connections, they will be more likely to come back to the museum to further explore what it has to offer (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of university students in their university art museum. I designed a case study to examine the dialogue that takes place when a non-art major visits an art museum with a peer who is experienced in

looking at and discussing works of art and how this experience potentially changes the perceptions of both students. This study took place at a university art museum that is part of a large Southern university. Although it is easy to identify the museum at which this study took place based on the information provided, I provide contextual details but chose not to name it in order to focus the data more on the study itself and less on the specific institution. The museum was founded in the 1940s with around one hundred American paintings. Today, the museum has a large permanent collection made up of over 8,000 paintings, sculptures, works on paper, and objects of the decorative arts. The focus of the collection remains American, but also includes European, African diaspora, and Asian art.

The museum is located on the eastern part of campus next to other university arts institutions on campus. It is situated adjacent to a large art school that has over 1,000 undergraduate students and nationally-ranked graduate programs, a performing arts center, and a large music school. It is also located in close proximity to the university fitness center, the large student center, and the most recently constructed dorms on campus. However, staff at the museum and faculty at the university often hear from students that they have not visited the museum, and some students do not know where it is located.

As curator of education at this museum, I am responsible for creating programs and opportunities for university students to visit the museum. One of the first programs I created for university students was a student docent program, which began in the fall of 2010. These students participated in docent education sessions, led by me, to learn more

about the works of art in the museum's collection and how to talk about works of art with other audiences including other university students.

This new docent program coincided with the reopening of the museum after a major expansion project that closed the building for two years. Before this renovation, all exhibitions changed every three months, and staff and community docents had to write materials and learn information for tours every quarter. Because students' schedules are busy and sometimes erratic, it would have been extremely difficult to begin a student docent program without galleries that remained static. With the expansion, selected works from the museum's collection now remain relatively permanent in a new wing. Thus, part of the motivation to design the new student docent program was the new galleries, because students could now learn about works in the galleries and design tours without having to start over every three months with entirely new exhibitions.

The museum reopened in January 2011, and the newly trained student docents began to give tours to a variety of age groups during the remainder of the academic year. In the next few years, I hope to create a specific program in which the student docents will work with freshman classes to get the students to visit the museum during their first year at the university. By considering peer learning and dialogue between students in the galleries for this study, my research will directly impact future programming at the museum.

Studies specifically focusing on university students' experiences in museums are minimal, and as museum educators move forward with programs and exhibitions designed to reach this audience, it becomes critical to understand how students perceive their time in museums. Blanco (2010) argues that all departments on university campuses

can benefit from working with campus museums and art centers in the community. Willumson (2000) emphasizes the need for museums to regain their roles as integral components of academics on university campuses, although the object-based focus of the museum may seem to be in contrast to a university's move towards theory-based research. This study is important to both university museums and academic departments as we consider ways in which we can work together.

*The Shifting Roles of Curators and Educators*

Historically, the museum has been an institution that educates the public through its collection (Mayer, 2007a). The collections of museums were often started in concert with academic departments on campus whose faculty either began the collection for teaching or advised the university on which works to collect (Willumson, 2000). In traditional museum practice, the art museum curator, with a background in art history, imparts or transmits knowledge to its visitors, providing information; visitors are expected to leave the museum with the knowledge given to them by the curator or docent. Additionally, the curator is seen as a connoisseur, or someone who attributes works of art to particular artists, times and places, styles, and schools (Ebitz, 1988), and in this role, the curator promotes cultural literacy by identifying and classifying works of art and choosing exemplars in these categories. This type of curator has its foundation in an essentialist philosophy that is based on the classical concept of essence. In art, it means that there is a singular truth to a work of art and that all works of art have certain properties that make them art (Leddy, 1998). This philosophy relates to transmission

pedagogy in that there is presumed to be a single set of information that can be passed from one person to the next (McLean, 1999).

In the 1970s, the role of the art historian began to change and a "new art history" (Rees & Borzello, 1986, p. 2) developed that was based on the postmodernist concept that knowledge is not concrete, but a social construction (Preziosi, 1989). Diverse theories that began outside of art history, including Marxism and feminism, began to influence how art historians viewed and interpreted works of art (Mayer, 2007a). Today art historians incorporate cultural, political, and social issues into their scholarship (Henry, 2010; Kai-Kee, 2011; Weil, 2002). As the field of art history changed, so did the work of the curator. Exhibitions, museum collections, and even museums themselves now reflect a wider range of cultures and social issues that are relevant to a broader range of audiences (Weil, 2002).

As the focus of the curator has changed, so has the perspective of the museum educator. These changes correlate with our understanding of how visitors learn about and experience works of art in the museum. Through learning and cognitive studies, we know that understanding is shaped by the experiences and knowledge that visitors bring with them in their interactions with works of art (Hein, 1999). Historically, learning has been studied from a positivist paradigm in a behaviorist methodology in which the conditions are the same for each person studied in a controlled environment. However, this approach does not reflect the real world situations in which we learn. When we go to a museum, we use our experiences and perspectives of the world to understand what we see. Likewise, the environment, other visitors and staff, and objects of the museum all impact each person in different ways, creating highly personalized experiences.

As a result, the paradigm of museum education has shifted from a positivist approach to constructivism (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1999; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999a). We now see the viewer not as an empty vessel that the museum can fill with information, but as a person who will build his or her own meanings and make his or her own choices in the learning environment of the museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). In other words, the museum is a different experience for each visitor.

Hein (1999) contrasts the traditional lecture and text approach in which the teacher presents the material through transmission pedagogy with constructivism in which "both knowledge and the way it is obtained are dependent on the mind of the learner" (p. 75). These two approaches result in two types of museums; the "systematic museum" that relates to the transmission of knowledge and the "constructivist museum" in which the "personal knowledge" of the viewer is emphasized (p. 76). Hein argues that focusing on the viewer's learning rather than the information to be learned will create an environment in which each visitor can create his or her personal understanding through interactions not only with objects, but also with other people.

In a way, museum educators must harmonize their old practices with the new. According to Ebitz (2007), the role of knowledge and connoisseurship, fundamental to the "object-centered paradigm" (p. 23), was used by most museum educators through the 1980s. Interpretation was based on learning about the object, and models, including Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) (Clark, Day, & Greer, 1987), were built on this concept of "acquiring the knowledge and skills of the experts in the disciplines that address art" (Ebitz, 2007, p. 23). However, educators wanted this knowledge to lead to personal experiences with works of art, and as they began to concentrate on these

visitors' experiences instead of the object, the focus moved to an approach that centered on the museum audience (Adams, Falk, & Dierking, 2003; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999a).

With these changes in both curatorial and education departments, the structure of the museum is changing. In Villa Bryk's (2001) article, "Reports of Our Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated: Reconsidering the Curator," the author, a curator herself, discusses how her field has changed over the past twenty years. As the museum's focus shifts from its collection to its audience, the role of the curator no longer holds the sole position of authority. In many institutions, no longer is the curator responsible for deciding and delegating the design and interpretation of exhibitions in today's museums. Curators now must work with other departments of the museum to create a unified vision that reflects the ideas of many, instead of a singular viewpoint. Although acknowledging tensions in this shift, Villa Bryk sees this change as ultimately positive. She writes, "While the challenges curators faced at the museum seemed daunting and at times, painful, those feelings diminished as we embraced new perspectives, learned new skills, and adjusted to new ways of working with others" (para. 3).

As Villa Bryk indicates, this shift of power is still in process, and in many museums, there is still dissonance between the curatorial and education department regarding how and why decisions are made. For many curators, the focus remains on the object, but museum education has shifted from the collection to the visitor as we understand the museum from the perspective of its audience, and there is a need to work together to create a more cohesive vision. Although museums continue to preserve and collect art and artifacts, how they educate has changed as we learn more about the ways in which visitors make meaning in museums. Just as the museum no longer relies

completely on the curator, the museum educator cannot solely dictate the direction of the museum.

While the role of the museum audience has changed the way museums function, the education component of museums still must exist in harmony with the other purposes of these institutions. This point is especially important for university art museums in which they must reach both traditional patrons of the museum as well as the university faculty and students. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011d) write that art history will not disappear in the twenty-first century museum and will be "the critical foundation of museum education" (p. 152). However, the museum educator will move into a more central role of the museum. They write, "The galleries are redefined as a place of freedom, where visitors are not overwhelmed by the institutional voice, where they instead are brought together as valued communities of study and reflection, engaged in the enterprise of examining and interpreting art" (p. 152).

This dualism between the information museums can share and the meaning visitors construct in their interactions with works of art is critical to combining the roles of the curator and the educator in museum programming and is reflected in the design of my study and the student docent program. Student docents participated in an education program during fall semester of 2010 in preparation for tours conducted in the following spring and summer, including their tour with a non-art major that is the focus of this research. Part of the planning involved for this docent program, and a challenge in any docent program, is the balance between helping docents facilitate interactions between visitors and works of art and increasing knowledge about works of art that includes historical, biographical, and stylistic information (Sweeney, 2007). The blending of these

two components reflects the different facets of the museum that includes the role of the educator who helps visitors construct their own understandings of works of art and that of the curator whose research and connoisseurship helps us to understand the work of art's place in history and culture.

The student docent program I designed reflects the interests of both the curators of the museum and the educators. It includes content as well as direction on working with different audiences and understanding the needs of visitors. Because I am an educator, I worked with the students on understanding how visitors construct meaning and learn and experience through dialogue and interactions with other visitors and with works of art. Indeed, it is important to note that the focus of the student docent program was interpretation through dialogue rather than a formal approach to art criticism. Curators of the museum also spoke with student docents, and publications written by curators and other scholars on the museum's collection and special exhibitions were given to the student docents to study as part of their training.

*Background of the Student Docent Program*

The student docent program was designed after recognizing a desire from students to have more opportunities to become involved at the museum, specifically in working in the galleries. As part of my position in the Education Department, I am intern coordinator at the museum, and I have also worked directly with university students who volunteer for monthly Family Day programs. One request I heard often from students was that they would like to have opportunities to work in the galleries and give tours.

The museum has a community docent program, a group of volunteers that has been part of the museum since the 1960s. However, this group meets on Monday mornings, is composed of older adults, many of whom are retired, and the program includes a two-year commitment. Although a few students have participated in the community docent program during my time at the museum, for most students, it is not conducive to their schedules or academic needs. I decided to start a program designed specifically for university students that would work with their schedules, have flexibility, and create a group of peers who could work together to give tours at the museum. The student docent program includes a one-year commitment and opportunities to meet with me individually to make up sessions they have to miss, or in the case of a few students who have class during the education sessions, opportunities to work on the program independently. It is open to undergraduate and graduate students. The students meet on Thursday nights from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and the program is designed for them to work together and become a cohesive group that can help each other with tours. These docents can even pair up to be partners on tours.

*Selection Process for the Student Docent Program*

Through listservs, websites, and email, the student docent program was promoted to students at the university of which the museum is part in August 2010, as they returned for classes. It was immediately popular with former and current interns at the museum and students associated with the museum's student association, of which I am an advisor. Although I had hoped to get a diverse group of both male and female students from a variety of majors, the students were all women, and mostly white. Most of the students

who applied came from studio art, art education, or art history backgrounds, and two students came from the department of textiles, merchandising, and interiors. Being an art major was not a requirement of the student docent program, but because this was a new program, former interns and students affiliated with the museum were especially interested in it and promoted it to fellow students. Students who applied to the program submitted an application with a reference and résumé, and I interviewed them each individually. All of the applicants were accepted into the program except for one who was graduating before the museum would reopen and would not be available to give tours in the spring.

*2010-2011 Student Docent Program*

The first year of the student docent program correlated with the reopening of the museum, but in order to prepare student docents for the opening, the program began in August of 2010. Because the museum was still under construction, I met with the student docents in one of the art education classrooms of the art school, adjacent to the museum. We worked with reproductions of works in the collection and during one session, with an exhibition of student work at the art school.

Because the works were not hung in the galleries, and in some cases, not selected until a few weeks before the reopening, many of the student docents voiced their concerns of feeling unprepared to give tours with the opening of the museum. An anonymous online evaluation of the program that I designed at the end of fall semester for student docents reflected their apprehension of the reopening. This evaluation can be found in Appendix A. Indeed, it was difficult for students to prepare for tours, and while

the preparators were still in the process of hanging the works in the galleries, we began holding meetings in the museum so that they could become familiar with the space and placement of the works in it. The student docents also received copies of the newly published catalogue that included one hundred works of American art, as soon as copies came to the museum in January. Finally, a student docent, who had given tours at the museum as an intern in the Education Department, modeled a tour for the group during a session before the reopening.

As discussed above, the education sessions for student docents balanced learning information from curators about the collection and special exhibitions at the museum with learning about how to talk about art and help audiences connect with works of art during tours. The latter part was conducted by myself as coordinator of the program, a professor of art education with experience working in museum education, and a community docent who has a strong background in working with children. The dialogic component of the program focused on interpretation rather than a critical approach to examining the works. We also included a great deal of discussion on different ways in which viewers could interact with works of art, including formalism, technique, information about the subject, biographical information about the artist, and connections with other subjects and disciplines in order to help student docents create entry points into a dialogue with visitors who would come from different backgrounds and have diverse interests.

A syllabus for the first year can be found in Appendix B. The fall semester was designed to prepare student docents for the reopening of the museum by incorporating sessions on which contextual information was the focus and others during which we

worked on tour techniques and learning how to engage visitors in dialogues with the works of art. The student docents met with each of the curators to learn about the collection through photographs and presentations when the museum was not open and in the form of tours with the chief curator even as art was being put back on the walls in January. I worked with reproductions to help student docents feel more comfortable talking about art to groups of their peers, who in this case were the other student docents. An art education professor worked with students on additional techniques to engage adults in the galleries by using one of the galleries of the art school that had an exhibition of student work at that time. Finally, a community docent who has a special interest in working with children demonstrated techniques and offered suggestions on how to work with younger audiences in tours.

It should be noted that although the focus on the student docent program shifted to tours in the spring semester, I had hoped to continue to meet with student docents through March. However, because I went into labor with my son earlier than expected, we did not have as many opportunities to meet after the reopening as I had hoped. As the syllabus reflects, we were able to meet three times before the reopening in January, but only once in February. I came back from leave for a final meeting in April during which we talked about the student docents' experiences giving tours in an informal conversation.

The pedagogy of the program focused on helping visitors of any age have experiences with works of art and was influenced by the theoretical framework discussed at length in Chapter 2, my studies through the masters program in art history and the doctoral program in the Art Education Department at the University of Georgia, and the curriculum of the Teaching Institute of Museum Education (TIME) led by Rika Burnham

and Elliott Kai-Kee I attended in August 2010. Burnham and Kai-Kee's work (2005, 2007, and 2011) also is discussed in Chapter 2 in detail. A consideration of dialogue, free choice learning, and hermeneutics were all included in this training at TIME. Reading assignments and session topics, listed on the syllabus found in Appendix B, reflect the concepts and philosophy stressed in the program this first year.

*Reflections on the First Year*

I considered the student docent program to be successful the first year. From the time of the reopening to the end of July, just before the new program was starting, student docents gave 102 tours to a variety of age groups and audiences. While over half of the students gave five or more tours, others had scheduling conflicts that allowed them to give only two or three tours, or in one case no tours, but their work as a group contributed greatly to the museum's programming. Many of the student docents were interested in working with children, and as a whole, the student docents gave 63 school tours for students in grades K-12. Some were interested in giving tours to university groups, and this number increased as the student docents felt more comfortable talking about the collection and gaining contextual knowledge that they could integrate more easily on tours as they became more familiar with the museum and its collection. They gave 22 university tours by the end of the summer. We have difficulty receiving tour evaluations back from groups who go on tours at the museum, but overall, I heard positive feedback on the tours the student docents gave, and staff and community docents complimented their work on many occasions.

Although I tried to design the student docent program to be flexible, I could not control when organizations requested tours, and some of the student docents were not able give many tours due to their schedules. Some of the student docents also found that they were busier than expected in the spring semester and were not available as much as they had planned. Because I was not working for as long as I had hoped during the spring semester, the student docents did not have opportunities for informal feedback or formal assessment of their tours from me, something I changed the following year. An anonymous online evaluation sent out to the student docents reflected their thoughts on the program, and overall, they had positive experiences as student docents. This evaluation is included as Appendix C.

The research and skills of the student docents became especially apparent to me when listening to the audio of the participants of the study in the galleries with their peers. Their knowledge of the works of art and techniques in engaging the non-art majors in discussions of the works of art was impressive and demonstrated their dedication to the program and to the museum. Their enthusiasm for and experience with the collection will be discussed further in Chapters 4 to 8.

*Key Terms*

In this study, I worked with student docents, who were all university students at the institution at which the museum is located and members of the museum's student docent program. These students had undergone educational sessions that focused on looking at and talking about art with other people of different age and experience levels. The student docents were majoring in art or from the department of textiles,

merchandising, and interiors, which includes the history of dress and fashion, and had experience in museums. Their training in this program and background make them *advanced amateurs* in museums, meaning that they are visitors with a strong interest in art who are not employed in an art museum profession at this time (McDermott-Lewis, 1990). However, many of these student docents are planning to go into the field of museum education after graduation. The non-art majors, called museum partners in this study, are university students who do not have as much experience looking at art and do not regularly visit art museums. These students are considered *novice visitors* (McDermott-Lewis, 1990).

Student docents were trained to facilitate *interpretation* of works of art through dialogue. Barrett (2000) creates a definition of interpretation that reflects its complexity and importance as meaning making when he writes,

> To interpret is to respond in thoughts and feelings and actions to what we see and experience, and to make further sense of our responses by putting them into words. When we look at a work of art we think and feel, move closer to it and back from it, squint and frown, laugh or sigh or cry, blurt out something to someone or to no one. By carefully telling or writing what we see and feel and think and do when looking at a work of art, we build understanding by articulating in language what might otherwise remain only incipient, muddled, fragmented, and disconnected to our lives. When writing or telling about what we see and what we experience in the presence of an artwork, we build meaning, we do not merely report it. (p. 7)

Thus, meaning is constructed through intellectual and emotional responses to the work of art that have been translated into language. This interpretive process through dialogue is the focus of my study.

The role of interpretation is fundamental to the museum experience. The types of experiences that I am looking for in the galleries, what I call *engaging experiences*, focus on dialogue and interaction between the students and the students and the works of art. I also look for experiences that could be considered *transformative* in that they change the viewpoint of the students. These experiences are outlined in the theoretical framework (see Chapter 2) in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975/ 2006, 1986), Martin Buber (1958/ 1986), John Dewey (1934/ 2005), and in transformation theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). I also will be looking at *peer learning* in the data from this study that will refer directly to Lev Vygotsky's theories (1978), also discussed in Chapter 2.

*Paradigm and Methodology*

Theories incorporated into studies and programming in the field of museum education vary greatly (Ebitz, 2007). Vallance (2007) argues for a cohesive theoretical framework to unify museum education. Mayer (2005) sees this change in museum education occurring by bridging theory and practice. This study works within a constructivist paradigm. Through constructivism, we can gain an understanding of the personal nature of the museum experience (Hein, 1998). However, Phillips (2005) outlines the complexity in the wide spectrum of constructivism in research. My understanding of constructivism is through the work of Dewey (1929/ 1960) who writes that knowledge is socially-constructed and based on experience, but because there are

power relationships within these social realms, I also acknowledge that it can be influenced by power differentiations within social groups (Nelson, 1993, Phillips, 2005).

Because I focus on the experiences of the students in my study, I use a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. Van Manen (1990) explains that through phenomenology we can come in "more direct contact with the world" (p. 9) rather than try to explain or control it. Phenomenology is about understanding the world and experiences in our everyday lives by finding the essence, or universality, in individual experiences (van Manen, 1990). Understanding phenomenology through a hermeneutic lens helps me to understand how our own histories influence our interpretations of these experiences. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, I use open interview techniques and opportunities for open dialogue in order to provide space for the students to share their experiences and ideas rather than impose barriers that limit their responses.

*Research Questions*

For this study, I worked with the seven students currently in the student docent program at the museum in which this study takes place. As mentioned above, each student docent was asked to choose a partner who was a non-art major and a university student with whom they visited the museum and to spend about an hour in the galleries of the permanent collection. They then returned for a follow-up interview to reflect on the experience in the museum. Because the student docents were considered to be representatives of the museum, I was able to get permission for the pairs of students to be in the galleries without security.

I used a specific type of concept mapping (described in detail in Chapter 3), audio and video recordings of the students' time in the museum, and interviews to answer the following research questions:

- *What factors impact positive or negative perceptions of university art museums for university students?*

- *How can students with experience visiting art museums facilitate engaging experiences with non-art majors in a museum?*

- *How do the perceptions of students about university art museums change after they visit a museum with a peer?*

- *How can university art museums facilitate dialogue between students in galleries through works of art?*

These questions were designed to understand the experiences of both the student docents and the non-art majors in the museum in order to create programming and materials that will help to facilitate positive interactions in the galleries.

Indeed, the goal of this study and the student docent program is to create pathways in which university students can connect with works of art through dialogue and peer learning. I hope that this study will help university museums rethink how their students can utilize the museum for experience, understanding, and learning opportunities. It reveals the many connections that these students, both docents and non-art majors, made between their experiences and works of art in the galleries.

**Chapter 2**

**Literature Review**

*Theoretical Framework*

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975/ 2006) wrote, "The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (p. 103). Thus, the work of art is elevated beyond an object to an experience that has the potential to transform the person interacting with it. This concept is central to the theoretical framework of my research in which I examine the role of dialogue in university students' interactions with each other and with works of art in their university art museum. In my study of student docents' tours with non-art majors, I consider how these dialogues between students, and also with the works of art, can result in transformative experiences. These students had opportunities to create meaning, or interpretations, about the works of art that build upon their own knowledge, traditions, and cultures. This study examines how dialogue between two students and the works of art with which they interact, can generate learning and enhance museum experiences for both students.

This research is supported by theories of hermeneutics, the aesthetic experience, and peer learning to create a foundation of literature on which I build my study. Gadamer's hermeneutics informs my understanding of dialogue that will also incorporate the work of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* (1958/ 1986) and the aesthetic philosophy of Dewey (1934/ 2005) to form a theoretical framework based on dialogue and experience. I

also incorporate Vygotsky's theory of peer learning (1978) into this framework to better understand how the students develop and learn from each other during their time in the museum.

*Hermeneutics*

Hermeneutics is a central component to my framework. It is traditionally defined as a theory of interpretation (Foster, 2007) that began through the interpretation of biblical texts. In the twentieth century, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics expanded this meaning. Through Gadamer (1975/ 2006, 1986), the exchanges between two people or a person and a work of art were incorporated into hermeneutics, and instead of focusing only on text, dialogue became an important component of these interactions. By considering the concepts Gadamer introduced in his most influential work, *Truth and Method* (1975/ 2006), referred to here as *TM*, and in the collection of writings *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (1986), written as *RB*, in which Gadamer expands his theory of aesthetics, we can better understand how meaning is constructed through our experiences with works of art.

For my study, Gadamer's hermeneutics is crucial to understanding the dialogue between the two students and between the students and the works of art. According to Gadamer, we can enter into dialogue with not only another person, but also a work of art because art speaks to us and answers our questions just as another person does in conversation. Gadamer considered this dialogue to be an ongoing experience with art. This type of experience is called *Erfahrung*, a "genuine experience" in art that is "induced by the work which does not leave him who has it unchanged, and we inquire

into the mode of being of what is experienced in this way" (*TM*, p. 86). This type of experience is an authentic encounter with a work of art that could also be called an aesthetic experience. Gadamer distinguished *Erfahrung* from another type of experience, *Erlebnis* that refers to an immediate response that happens before "interpreting, reworking, and communication" (*TM*, p. 53), but at the same time, has a lasting impression on the person. *Erlebnis* happens to us in the moment. Thus, our initial impression of what we see in a work of art can be described as *Erlebnis*.

In this study, I looked for indications of genuine experiences, or *Erfahrung*, to understand the impact of these experiences on the perceptions of students in the museum. When we are in a museum, we have opportunities to engage in dialogue with works of art that can be transforming, and it is this role of hermeneutics and its components that make up part of this theoretical framework to understand the aesthetic experience.

For both student docents and their museum partners, their own experiences and understanding will be a part of their dialogue with the works of art because, when we participate in this type of experience, our histories and cultures are part of our interactions with art. In this way, *Erfahrung* relates to the concept of *Bildung*. Gadamer quoted Johann Gottfried von Herder to define *Bildung* as the "rising up to humanity through culture" (*TM*, p. 9). Everything in *Bildung* is retained and preserved; therefore, Gadamer saw it as "a genuine historical idea, and because of this historical character of 'preservation' it is important for understanding in the human sciences" (*TM*, p. 10). Through an awareness of our connection to the historical, we see ourselves as part of the larger whole, "the universal" (*TM*, p. 11).

In *Bildung*, we can understand another and see ourselves in that person. The concept of *Bildung* relates to tradition in that we are a part of what has come before us, and this idea that we are not private, isolated beings ties us to history and culture. *Bildung* is interesting in that it has such a close relationship to culture, but at the same time, it goes so far beyond culture in its relationship to our cultivation of the mind through knowledge. This concept is similar to Carl Jung's (1954) collective unconscious. For Jung, the collective unconsciousness was "an inherited brain which is the product of our ancestral life. It consists of the structural deposits or equivalents of psychic activities which were repeated innumerable times in the life of our ancestors" (Jung, 1954, p. 117). However, while Jung's theory emphasizes the biological, for Gadamer, *Bildung* was never presented in this manner.

Gadamer (1975/ 2006, 1986) emphasized that there is knowledge in art. He argued that our awareness is expanded by our interactions with others through horizons, which means to see beyond what we know in our immediate presence. When we visit an art museum, our horizon can expand as we engage with works of art and through dialogue with others. Museums allow us opportunities for what Gadamer calls "fusions of horizons" (*TM*, p. 301) through these interactions with others. Although students may not have been aware of how their perspectives were expanding or changing during their time in the museum, I looked for evidence in the data that indicate these new understandings.

Gadamer's view of aesthetics, made up of history, culture, and knowledge, is different than Kant's version of aesthetics in his works *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/ 1998) and *The Critique of Judgment* (1790/1957) that focuses on beauty, specifically what characteristics make something beautiful based on feeling and emotion,

or more specifically, pleasure and displeasure (Ginsborg, 2008). Because it is not based

on the external qualities of the object, it is subjective (White, 2009). Kant draws from

Baumgarten, but instead of focusing on the senses, sees aesthetics as a judgment of taste

(White, 2009). Kant's interest in the beautiful missed the point in Gadamer's eyes

because Gadamer saw aesthetics as a path to discover the truth in art through life and

history (Vattimo, 2008).

Gadamer used the terms play, symbol, and festival to describe our experiences

with works of art. Gadamer defined play as any action that is a "to-and-fro movement

that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end…rather, it renews itself in

constant repetition. The movement backwards and forwards is obviously so central to the

definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement" (*TM*,

p. 104). When engaged in dialogue through play, the action of looking at the work and

the visual response of the work of art by the viewer are the subjects of this activity.

Gadamer emphasized the importance of the interactivity that takes place when viewing a

work of art when he wrote, "The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between" (*TM*, p.

295). Thus, in this continuous exchange between two people or between the viewer and

the work of art, we construct and build upon meaning through interpretation. This

meaning is different than what the individual players understand or experience because it

is constructed through their interactions with each other. The subject of this interaction is

the play itself, not the individual players.

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011c) discuss gallery teaching as a type of play, and link

the idea to Gadamer. They write,

A pedagogy informed by interpretive play implies a certain way of thinking about

artworks. By their nature artworks are meant to be seen and considered by

viewers, who in turn experience and receive the works when they enter their

world and play along. Artworks are not static, passive recipients of interpretation.

They *play to* an audience, acting on their viewers, catching their attention with a

striking detail…or a puzzling juxtaposition… (p. 128, italics in original quote)

In this study, the dialogue between the students and between the students and the work of

art is the subject, not the individuals, because I am interested in understanding their

experiences with each other and with the works. It is for this reason that students worked

together in the galleries and were together during interviews about the experience.

Gadamer suggested we have room to interpret meaning in the work of art by

bringing our own culture and experience to these interactions known as play. We

combine what we have experienced and learned with the meaning that the work of art

conveys to us. Gadamer saw the symbol in art as an entity that now stands on its own, a

unique work that is independent of its creator, the artist. The work of art speaks to us

directly, not as a medium through which the artist communicates, but as its own being

(Kelly, 2004). As such, it holds meaning within itself, and therefore, contains truth.

Of a symbol, Gadamer wrote, "The particular represents itself as a fragment of

being that promises to complete and make whole whatever corresponds to it. Or, indeed,

the symbol is that other fragment that has always been sought in order to complete and

make whole our own fragmentary life" (*RB*, p. 32). Gadamer drew this definition from

the ancient definition of a symbol as a "token of remembrance" (*RB*, p. 31). Symbols are

pieces that we need in order to see the whole and to complete our understanding. This

idea relates to the concept of the hermeneutic circle in that we must understand the parts to see the whole, while at the same time, we need to understand the whole to see the parts. As we learn and experience individual works of art, we constantly revise our understanding of the whole, or in this case, of art (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007). Similarly, when students have individual experiences in art museums, they use this information to revise their perceptions of museums in general, while at the same time, their understanding of the concept of museums as a whole influences each subsequent individual experience in a museum.

Through symbol, we can find ourselves in works of art, and through that recognition, the work of art becomes a part of us (Costantino, 2003). This recognition of one's self in the work of art relates to *Erfahrung*. Gadamer described the aesthetic experience as a "mode of self-understanding" in that "[s]elf-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other" (*TM*, p. 83). It is through *Erfahrung* that we can learn about ourselves in our interactions with works of art, or the other.

Just as a work of art speaks to each of us and is relevant to everyone, so is the festival. Through symbol, art communicates both the past and the present as we engage in dialogue to create meaning with it. Gadamer further emphasized the temporal nature of art in his discussion of the festival and its relationship to the aesthetic experience. A festival is an event that occurs every year, and in that way, it is an ongoing experience. At the same time, each year, there is a single festival that is celebrated individually, and every repetition is unique (Bruns, 2002). Again, this concept relates to the idea of the hermeneutic circle in that it is both a type of event that can be understood as a whole, but

these events are also singular and can be experienced individually. Festival also relates to tradition in this combination of past and present and that we are part of tradition (Costantino, 2003).

Gadamer distinguished two types of time: time that needs to be filled or else we will be bored and time that is "autonomous" (*RB*, p. 42). He related the festival and art both with autonomous, or "filled," time in that this type of time is not constructed from empty moments. Rather, the past and the present come together in the autonomous temporality of the festival because the festival is not a uniform, linear progression but a singular event in which time stands still. When we participate in a festival, or in a dialogue with a work of art, we are participating in something larger than ourselves, and time does not have the same relationship to us (Bruns, 2002).

In festival, and in a work of art, we can experience a single event with an immediate response or have an ongoing interaction in which we are engaged in a larger experience. Like a festival, when we visit an art museum and have an engaging experience with a work, in other words, when we enter into a dialogue with that work, we can understand it in terms of its past and how it is communicating to us in the present. In a work of art, we can always find something new, and as we have new experiences, we will create different meanings with the same works (Johnson, 2000). In the case of this study, the student docents who came to the museum with non-art majors saw works of art with which they had previously interacted in new ways as they built on their understanding through dialogue. They also focused on their conversations with each other rather than keeping track of time during their visit.

The concepts that Gadamer proposed as the structure of dialogue form the foundation of the theoretical framework of this study. The fusion of horizons as we expand our awareness and learn about the other through our interactions is very important to my understanding of museum experiences as individuals expand and build upon their knowledge through their interactions with others. Through dialogue, or play, we are able to build meaning to create something larger and different than ourselves. Symbol helps us to understand ourselves better through our experiences with the other. Finally, the concept of festival can be used to understand the new experiences that we have each time we encounter a work of art.

*I-Thou*

Martin Buber's *I-Thou* offers a philosophy that shares similar concepts with Gadamer's hermeneutics but incorporates additional components to my theoretical framework. Like Gadamer's hermeneutics, Buber's *I-Thou* focuses on the authentic relationship between two entities that can also include two people or a person and a work of art. This theory centers on the relationship between, instead of the experiences of, the participants. Buber discussed this theory in an existential manner in which people are brought closer to the sacred through these relationships (Jay, 2005). In Buber's *I and Thou* (1958/ 1986), Buber set up the discussion for two types of relationships, or what he calls "primary words" (p. 19). The primary words reflect relationships between two beings (Mayhall & Mayhall, 2004).

Buber called the first, more common type of relationship, *I-It*. He related *I-It* relationships to observation, the material world, and separation. These relationships are

not entirely reciprocal and can be a relationship between a human and an object or when one person talks at another person, but does not allow the other person to be fully present in the relationship (Friedman, 2003).

Buber contrasted *I-It* relationships with *I-Thou* that he described as a pure relationship in which the parts do not exist in the same way separately.[1] The *I-Thou* interactions are not forced and happen through a genuine exchange; they represent the essence of an interaction in which both participants take part equally and are fully engaged in the relationship between each other (Moore, 1996). In an *I-Thou* relationship, both participants are entirely present and are aware of their interaction (Avnon, 1998). It occurs between people to create a "genuine dialogue" instead of a more one-sided "monologue" (Kramer, 2003, p. 78). Buber believed that humans must strive for authentic *I-Thou* interactions to be truly present in the world.

Buber described *I-Thou* relationships as unique and sacred, but not permanent. These exchanges end when they have been "worked out" or realized and then become *I-It* relationships (Buber, 1958/ 1986, p. 30). In an *I-Thou* relationship, the exchange seems to happen effortlessly and without awareness that this new shared relationship has been formed. According to Buber, it is this spirit that generates the *I-Thou* relationship, and it can take different forms of language to create this connection. Rather than an inward spirit of an individual, Buber saw the spirit as "the relational element of interpersonal life" (Stawarska, p. 158).

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[1] The English translation of Buber's *Ich und Du* by Ronald Gregor Smith, used for this paper, translates the title as "*I and Thou.*" Another English translation by Walter Kaufman (1970), translates *Ich and Du* to "*I and You.*" For a comparison and discussion on the similarities and differences between the two translations, see Kramer (2003).

In both the *I-Thou* of Buber and Gadamer's play, the interaction evolves and develops from the space in-between the players, as the participants engage in a dialogue in which they are no longer the focus or subject of the activity. Both Buber and Gadamer saw this dialogue as a way to true understanding (Kepnes, 1992). However, Buber's *I-Thou* relationship is less about language and culture than Gadamer's interpretation of the interaction between a work of art and the viewer. For Buber, although we can reach *I-Thou* relationships through language, it is the "nonmediated prelinguistic sphere of the between" (Kepnes, 1988, p. 20) through which the interpretation exists. For Buber, this type of dialogue precedes language and culture and thus implies that it precedes symbol as well. In fact, he relates the *I-Thou* relationship to an infant in the womb of the mother (Buber, 1958/1986). This concept relates to Kant's (1798/ 1978) concept of "productive imagination" that is "an original representation of the object" that " precedes experience" (p. 56). We understand our world through productive imagination in order to comprehend experiences as they are happening (White, 2009). Productive imagination helps us to make sense of the objects we encounter in new experiences.

Facial expressions, gestures, and silence also can be forms of dialogue for Buber (Buber, 1965/1975, as discussed in Avnon, 1998; Kepnes, 1992). Buber believed that in the immediate interaction between a viewer and a work of art, culture is not an influence in this relationship (Kepnes, 1992). Rather, this interaction is pure and influenced by the sacred. Although in my study, the linguistic role of dialogue in interpretation is important, the role of expressions, gestures, and silences are also a necessary component of understanding these experiences, which is the reason I used videos in addition to the audio recordings in the galleries.

For my study, the pre-linguistic sphere that Buber stressed in gesture, silence, and expression is as important as the linguistic experiences emphasized by Gadamer. Like both of these philosophies, the focus will be on the interaction, or the play, and the connections that the students made with each other and with works of art through dialogic interactions. The histories, traditions, and cultures that we bring to our interactions and that the works of art carry with them also are part of my theoretical framework as components of the aesthetic experience and how we create meaning with works of art.

*An Experience*

Like Buber and Gadamer, for John Dewey (1934/ 2005), an experience does not just happen within us, but instead, our interaction with the objects and events in our world compose the experience and are fundamental in our interacting with a work of art. In *Art as Experience* (1934/2005), Dewey argued that when we are immersed in experience, there is no distinction between ourselves, these objects, and the events because we are a part of a larger whole (Jackson, 1998).

As a pragmatist, Dewey sought to combine theory and practice and emphasized experience as the central means of education in order to make sense of our world (Gordon, 2009). Because of the importance of art in our everyday lives, Dewey believed that we must interact with works to truly understand them through our knowledge of the role of the artist and the place of art in our worlds. Dewey's incorporation of everyday experiences in how we understand art is a fundamental component of my theoretical framework. Because we constantly make connections between what we know and what we are seeing in museums as we try to make sense and build meaning from the works of

art, these interactions are especially important. Novice viewers, like the non-art majors in this study, especially need to find relationships between works of art and the outside world because these viewers may not be able to draw from art historical and studio backgrounds in their understanding.

In having an experience with a work of art, it is this interaction between the viewer and the object that is fundamental for Dewey (Costantino, 2003; Jeannot, 2001). As in the philosophies of Gadamer and Buber, there is a reciprocal relationship between the viewer and the work of art, and meaning is created from this experience, not from only the viewer or the work of art. Dewey called these moments *an* experience. *An* experience differs from the typical experiences we have every day, which could be compared to *Erlebnis* and *I-It*, in that in *an* experience, "[s]uch an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiancy" (Dewey, 1934/ 2005, p. 37). *An* experience and *Erfahrung* both describe an aesthetic experience that "exemplifies the essence and achievement of the most satisfying kind of experience" (Costantino, 2003, p. 86). This is the same concept as Buber's *I-Thou* relationship in that it creates unity and an authentic relationship.

Dewey believed that an aesthetic experience evolves over time, and "it involves at its last moment a fulfillment or closure of the felt relations of things in the experience, where that fulfillment or closure is itself the controlling purpose of the experience and is marked by a pervasive whole" (Fott, 1998, p. 102). Like Buber's *I-Thou* relationship, when we have *an* experience, we understand that it is complete. For Dewey, *an* experience is an experience that has reached its culmination, and in that way it differs from Gadamer who considered an interaction with a work of art to be never-ending.

However, Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) do not see these concepts as oppositions and relate the ideas of Gadamer and Dewey to gallery teaching; they write, "*An experience of an artwork in some way never ends, but in the hour or so that we have with a group of visitors, we hope to create whole experiences that reach culmination, when the thoughts and observations and feelings of the group come together*" (p. 157, italics in original quote). Although the single visit has ended in *an* experience, the impact of the visit will continue after the group leaves the museum. This point is important in my study in which I hope that the students want more from their visit at the museum and want to continue their experiences and understandings with the works of art they see on their tours. At the same time, they should leave the museum with a sense of completion, or a feeling that they had a complete experience with the works that they saw.

These different facets to a work of art help us to see the work from different perspectives, and as we change, we see new elements in the work or identify with it in new ways. Although the non-art majors will only be at the museum for one visit as a part of my study, I hope that they can glimpse the complexity of their interactions with works of art and have the desire to return to these same works later. Dewey (1934/ 2005) believed that interacting with works of art is a constructive experience; no two viewers will understand a work of art in the same way because "every individual brings with him, when he exercises his individuality, a way of seeing and feeling that in its interaction with old material creates something new, something previously not existing in experience" (p. 113). For Dewey, as for Gadamer, the work of art becomes something new each time a viewer has an aesthetic experience with it and can only be considered a work of art when it is a part of such an experience.

Dewey also included an emotional element to this experience that does not exist solely in the person having the experience, but as a reaction to the objects with which he or she interacts (Fott, 1998). There can be many different emotions at the same time, all unified by being a part of *an* experience. When there are conflicting emotions in these experiences, reflection arises and contributes to future experiences. Fott (1998) explains that understanding things through reflection "enables us to experience them immediately in more meaningful ways" (p. 104).

For Dewey, thinking is a process that includes interaction between a person and the person's experiences in the world (Brigham, 1989; Dewey, 1968). Dewey considered thoughts, solutions to problems, and works of art to be "new organisms" (Brigham, p. 15) in the world, and he believed that qualitative reasoning is strongest through the visual arts. Siegesmund (2005) describes the role of qualitative reasoning in understanding art through the work of Eisner (2002), who argues that students can use visual elements in a work of art to create connections between what they see and describe in the object and larger ideas.

Siegesmund identifies three skills that compose qualitative reasoning: explore, attend, and interpret, based on Dewey (1934/ 2005). Siegesmund writes, "These are the capacities to actively explore perceptual detail, to attend to emotional reactions from sensory input, and to interpret these qualities of experience in a way that creates meaning, which is expressed through a selected meaning" (p. 19). By incorporating activities that include exploring, attending, and interpreting into a dialogue with visitors, they can develop qualitative reasoning skills that can be applied to understanding visual messages in works of art and in everyday life.

In the works of Buber and Dewey, there is a spiritual component to these interactions. For Buber, the *I-Thou* relationship that we can achieve through our interactions with another person or a work of art brings us closer to a spiritual level because these interactions are sacred. For Dewey (1934/ 2005), we can access the spiritual through the senses, and so, as we interact with the physical properties of a work of art, we can reach a spiritual awareness embedded in the "sensuous imagination" (p. 31). Dewey described these experiences through the role of art in ritual and religion in which emotion is generated through symbol. Like Gadamer, Dewey recognized the role of symbol in the communication between the work of art and the viewer in which they become a part of us through experience. In my study, I looked for evidence that the participants had an experience in the galleries that they considered unique or that made them aware of larger, more philosophical concepts as evidence that they were engaging in interactions that, if not described as sacred, were special and transformative.

This idea of a transformative experience relates to transformation theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Transformation theory focuses on adult learning and "refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8). By opening our minds, or as Gadamer would say, expanding our horizons, to new experiences and viewpoints, we can change our traditional thoughts or ideas and be better informed to act on them. Because the students may have had preexisting ideas about what they would see in the museum, what it would be like in their roles as docent or museum

partner, and whether or not they would enjoy the experience of interacting with works of art, transformation theory plays a role in how this experience shaped their understandings of art museums and whether or not they will be more open in the future to visit art museums with a peer or on their own.

*Peer Learning*

Gadamer considered the role of dialogue with a viewer and a work of art or between two people to be crucial to the generation of meaning. Because my study considers how dialogue between peers in the roles of the student docents and non-art majors can create meaningful experiences in the art museum, Vygotsky's (1978) concept of peer learning also is a fundamental component of my theoretical framework. According to Vygotsky, children have the capacity to learn with the assistance of an adult or their peers at a different level than the skills they can learn on their own. The potential of what they can learn when working with others is in the skills that they are still developing but have not yet mastered. This concept, called the zone of proximal development, is defined by Vygotsky as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In other words, our developmental levels are different when we compare the skills we have mastered and the ones we are building as we learn from those around us. Gadamer and Buber both touched on this concept in that the relationship created by the participants in authentic interaction, the in-between, is

unique with each person and can be constructed beyond what each person brings to play as the players continue in their dialogue.

Although at first we only imitate our peers, we eventually learn and develop these skills as they become a part of our own vocabulary. Vygotsky built on Piaget's work on language development in children as a means to communicate with those around them. As this communication becomes important in interacting with others, it also becomes internalized as an independent activity that the child does without his or her peers (De Lisi & Golbeck, 1999). Thus, we develop on a social level before we develop psychologically (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). As Hogan and Tudge (1999) point out, Vygotsky's concept stresses the relationship between the person and the environment. In other words, the individuals and the contexts in which he or she is situated mutually influence each other through interaction rather than only the context affecting how the person learns.

Although I am working with adults and not children for this study, Vygotsky's concept of the development that can be obtained by working with more advanced peers and that is different than what we can learn on our own, revealing the potential of our learning, provides an important perspective. This concept "enables one to realize that human learning, mental development, and knowledge are all embedded in a particular social and cultural context in which people exist and grow" (Gordon, 2009, p. 52). Peer learning is especially important here because I am interested in the experiences of the non-art majors with a peer who is more advanced in looking at and talking about art through their education and experiences as student docents. Through a dialogue with the student docents, these non-art majors were able to learn and develop their understandings

about interacting with works of art in ways that they would not be able to do on their own. However, at the same time, the student docents gained new perspectives about the works of art as they interacted with students with different backgrounds and experiences than their own. Rogoff (1990) stresses the importance of shared decision-making in the interactions of peers as a collaborative process. In the museum visit, both the student-docents and the non-art majors had the opportunity to choose the works they wanted to see and discuss and had equal control over the direction of the dialogue.

In my study, Gadamer's hermeneutics is the foundation of my theoretical framework with the work of Buber and Dewey supporting different components of the aesthetic theories in Gadamer's work. For Gadamer, the role of language and culture is integral to the dialogic interactions that we have with works of art. I believe that tradition, culture, and history are important components of these experiences. Buber's understanding of other forms of dialogue through gesture and silence and the elevation of the *I-Thou* relationship as sacred supports my understanding of the aesthetic experience as special and unique. Dewey's description of experience as a part of the work of art and the role of the viewer's perception in generating these experiences helps me to understand the role of experience in our interactions with works of art. Finally Vygotsky's concept of peer learning adds the necessary component of building meaning and understanding through dialogue with peers who are more advanced in their interactions with works of art. These philosophies support the phenomenological methodology for my study designed to understand the experiences of the students during their time at the museum.

*Historical Overview of Empirical and Theoretical Research*

Art museums were built on a foundation of contributions by the wealthy. Early picture galleries of artists in the eighteenth century in Boston and Philadelphia were among the first places for the public to view works of art. In 1784, Charles Wilson Peale is credited with starting the country's first museum. However, it was not an art museum but a collection of natural and cultural artifacts meant to stimulate curiosity (Rice, 2003). After the Civil War, wealthy individuals helped cities establish museums that were opened to the public to "encourage the study of fine arts" (Stankiewicz, Amburgey, & Bolin, 2004, p. 84). Other museums began from large world's fairs, such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which evolved from the Centennial Exposition of 1876 (Stankiewicz, Amburgey, & Bolin, 2004).

Only during Progressivism did the concept of a "genuine public institution" (Mathews, 1975, p. 318) become the role of museums as they became conscious of the need to reach more diverse audiences. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Metropolitan Museum of Art included in its 1879 annual report that the museum should "stimulate and aid the working people of the community" (quoted in Zeller, 1989, p. 15). In the beginning of the twentieth century, this concept of museums reaching the masses was championed by John Cotton Dana who, as founder and director of the Newark Museum, began classes for immigrants, traveling exhibitions to churches and schools, and programs for children. He believed that the museum could be "an instrument for self-improvement" (Yellis, 1990, p. 169) and "dedicated his downtown museum to the practical interests of local citizens" (McClellan, 2008, p. 34). Unlike leaders in the museum field before him, Dana was interested in learning about the needs of the

museum's audiences and bridging the gap between the community and the museum. Through the work of proponents such as Dana and Theodore Low of the Walters Art Museum, educational programs in museums were developed to reach everyone in the community (Zeller, 1989). Indeed, one of the earliest uses of the term "docent" was found in an article of the bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston in 1906, where docents were described as representatives of the museum whose role was to educate the public (Kai-Kee, 2011, p. 19).

In the 1930s, museums became more accessible to general audiences with two developments (Schwarzer, 2006). First, modern architecture and design created museums and exhibitions that were more functional and less intimidating. Secondly, the role of education gained an important place in the museum due to the hard times of the Great Depression. As public schools felt the economic pressures of the times, museums began offering more classes and educational services through charitable funds.

However, as Kai-Kee (2011) discusses, the goal of teaching in the museum is debated continuously through the history of museum education with some philosophies focused on helping to facilitate an aesthetic experience through appreciation and some concentrated on imparting information through art history. John Dewey saw the museum as a place that should not be cut off from the world, but instead, be a part of it. He began *Art as Experience* with a critique of the art museum that he saw as an institution that separates art from life. Dewey believed that taking art out of the context in which it was created removes it "from the scope of the common or community life" (Dewey, 1934/ 2005, p. 5) and places it on a pedestal.

It should be noted, as Hein (2004) points out, that Dewey visited museums throughout his life. In his support of the Barnes Foundation as an educational institution, Dewey implied that he saw potential in the museum as a place for education and the development of aesthetic perception. The importance of the museum also can be found in Dewey's *The School and Society* (1900/ 1990) in which the museum, located at the center of the school, serves as a place that synthesizes the arts and sciences studied in classrooms around the museum (Costantino, 2004; Hein, 2004). According to Alexander (1998), " It is not so much that Dewey hated museums…as that he worried about beginning our *reflection* upon the nature of the aesthetic experience and art by thinking of our experiences of fine art" (p. 5, italics in original quote). Dewey wanted viewers to be able to understand aesthetic experiences in the outside world and make the connection between these experiences, the raw experiences, and our responses to works of art in the museum.

For Dewey, the role of the museum as an educational institution lies in the development of experience-based exhibitions in museums as opposed to the traditional information-based model (Van Moer, De Mette, & Elias, 2008). Thus, when the role of the museum is to educate the public in perception and in connections to the real-world experiences of the viewers, it benefits art rather than isolates it as an elitist institution. As Costantino (2004) describes, "On Dewey's view, museums can and must do more than simply display works of art and expect immediate moral and aesthetic uplift in the viewer; they should train the viewers of art to see so that these aesthetic lessons can be incorporated into everyday life" (p. 408).

Unfortunately, the philosophies of these early thinkers were not the norm in all museums. As Kai-Kee (2011) discusses, education in museums was uneven and unstructured; it grew out of demand from the public rather than through theory and planning. At the same time, it also was becoming more popular. In 1939, Laurence Vail Coleman wrote *The Museum in America*, in which he counted around three hundred museum instructors and more working part-time (Coleman, 1939; Kai-Kee, 2011). Gallery talks and informal lectures were the focus for adults, and by the late 1930s, major museums were also incorporating children into their educational programming (Kai-Kee, 2011).

In the 1940s and 50s, museums began working with volunteers to meet the demands of the public, and many worked with local chapters of the Junior League to fill these roles in the museum (Kai-Kee, 2011). Attendance continued to grow, and by the 1960s, new museums began popping up around the country. Volunteers became increasingly important, and it was seen by some as a mark of inferiority for education departments to use volunteers when curators had moved away from working with individuals who were less qualified than themselves (Kai-Kee, 2011). Because the education departments could not meet the demands of the public without the use of volunteers, their work in museums continued to grow.

Indeed, these volunteers were needed as museum programming became more and more diverse to include studio and multidisciplinary activities that incorporated music and dance into the gallery experience. By the 1970s, museum education professionals began to question the goals of such diverse programs (Kai-Kee, 2011). Mayer (1978) asked, "We could see that children were enjoying dancing in the gallery- but were they

learning anything?" and proposed that it was not enough for students to simply have a "good time" in the museum (p. 18). They could gain more from a museum experience than simply have fun.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, museum educators began to unify their profession. The Museum Educators Roundtable, a discussion forum where both theories and practical applications are discussed by museum educators, began in 1969 to foster "professionalism among museum educators by encouraging leadership, scholarship and research in museum-based learning" (Museum Educators Roundtable [MER], 2010). The organization publishes the *Journal of Museum Education*, which began in 1981 and continues to be a source for articles that relate to issues and themes in the field. In 1978, *The Art Museum as Educator* was published and included case studies of art museum education programs throughout the United States (Newsome & Silver, 1978). In the 1970s, interactive teaching methods in the galleries sparked a new type of museum experience that included conversation and storytelling (Mayer, 2005).

However, reports on museums in the 1980s exposed a disconnection between museums and the public and demonstrated the need for more research in the field of museum education (American Association of Museums, 1984; Eisner & Dobbs, 1986; Eisner & Dobbs, 1988). These reports were calls for action, and studies since this time have responded to the recognized need to understand visitors' experiences in the museum. In 1987, the "Denver Meeting" included twenty-five museum educators brought together to discuss the future of museum education and define the field (Kai-Kee, 2011). The group, led by Patterson Williams, recommended gallery teaching "that was object based, took place within a trusting environment respectful of learners' abilities, actively

engaged the learner, encouraged divergent outcomes but also distinguished opinions from fact, and taught looking skills" (as discussed from an unpublished document in Kai-Kee, 2011, p. 41-42).

The Denver Meeting also discussed the role of subject matter in museum teaching based on a trend from the mid-1960s to add art history and criticism to the art education curriculum (Kai-Kee, 2011). In 1970, Edmund Feldman (1997/1970) proposed a method of art criticism in which the viewer describes, analyzes, interprets, and evaluates works of art in a sequential order. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in 1982, the J. Paul Getty Trust created a center for art education that supported discipline –based art education (DBAE) that incorporated studio art, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics into the curriculum (Clark, Day, & Greer, 1987). In 1986, Ralph Smith wrote "Excellence in Art Education," an essay commissioned by the National Art Education Association, and as Kai-Kee (2011) discusses, this work and the ideas behind DBAE influenced the discussions of the Denver Meeting. However, as Rice (1988) discusses, for museum education, in which the focus was on meaning and interpretation, DBAE was too rigid; museum educators needed a more holistic approach to talking about and interacting with works of art.

Key large-scale studies in museum education published in the early 1990s have provided a foundation for contemporary literature in museum education. In 1990, J. Paul Getty Trust published a study they funded conducted by social scientist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi with researcher Rick E. Robinson in the book *The Art of Seeing*. This study focused on the experiences of museum professionals with works of art in museums in order to better understand how people approach and respond to art. Through qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires, the researchers found that art could be

approached through "the perceptual-formal dimension, the emotional, the intellectual, and the communicative aspects of the experience" and suggest ways in which museums can facilitate responses to works of art (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 4).

In 1991, the J. Paul Getty Museum published *Insights* based on a large study of focus groups at eleven museums that were formatted as roundtable discussions consisting of museum staff, visitors, or non-visitors. After the preliminary focus groups, participants visited the museum with a diary to record their experiences, and then reconvened for post-visit focus groups. The non-visitors who visited the museum as a part of *Insights* (1991) reported in the preliminary focus groups that they did not go to museums because they would rather do something else in their free time and thought they would be bored at a museum. They also thought they did not have the knowledge or the experience to go to a museum, and they would not understand or appreciate the works of art, believing they would be "embarrassed" (p. 10) in this setting. As Falk (2009) writes, "People who perceive no relationship between what they think museums afford and what they see as their identity-related needs will not have any desire to visit a museum" (p. 212).

However, after the visit of non-visitors to the museum in the Getty study, many of the respondents reported positive experiences, emphasizing the calm atmosphere of the museum space and noted their concentration and absorption in viewing particular works of art. This study demonstrates the need to draw visitors to the museum and provide opportunities for them to understand what the museum can offer them. It also shows us that first-time and novice viewers can have meaningful experiences in museums without extensive training or programming.

The findings of *The Denver Art Museum Project*, a report created to understand the experiences of novice visitors and advanced amateur visitors in the art museum, helped the Denver Art Museum create new interpretive materials based on the needs of these visitors (McDermott-Lewis, 1990). Through a series of interviews and evaluations, researchers found that novices want the museum experience to be pleasurable. Although they look for emotional responses in art museums, few members of this audience describe taking an active role in creating this connection with a work of art. Instead, they look for a work of art that holds their attention. Novice visitors often come to the museum without a plan of what they would see and do during their visits. They want to create social connections with works of art by relating elements of the work to their own lives and look for connections with the artists through indications of their personalities or biographies in their art.

Although this group understands that their experiences are limited and want help to get more out of their time at the museum, they also do not want the museum to interfere with these experiences and the pleasure they gain from them by providing them with too much information and structure. Alternately, advanced amateurs plan visits in advance, are more likely to prefer private experiences with works of art than novice visitors, and see viewer preferences as highly subjective, rather than making quick judgments of good art and bad art as novices do. This report is valuable in understanding the expectations and habits of novice visitors in the museum and is helpful in understanding the expectations of the student docents and non-art majors who participated in my study.

*Current Empirical and Theoretical Literature*

Today, museum education is becoming a discipline with more structure and organization as research and theoretical literature are more prevalent and offer support to the profession. Recent literature in museum education focuses more on the experiences we have in museums, and how visitors create their own understanding by incorporating previous experiences and knowledge with what they learn in the galleries. Indeed, constructivism has become a fundamental paradigm of museum education over the last twenty years, and its role is discussed in some of the literature in this review (Black & Hein, 2003; Hubard, 2007b; Illeris, 2005, 2008; Jeffers, 2003; Villeneuve & Love, 2007).

Because most of this research attempts to understand the personal nature of the visitor experience, the empirical studies included in this literature review, with the exception of Stone (1997), use either a qualitative or a mixed method approach. This format is supported by Allen et al. (2007) who note that qualitative methods are important components of research in museums and necessary to understanding the complexity of experiences. The methodology for most of the studies included here are case studies that work with a selected group of people and are phenomenological in that the focus is on the experience of the museum visitor (Creswell, 1998).

In the following literature review, I will focus on research and empirical studies conducted to understand the experiences of visitors and how to make museum experiences more meaningful for visitors in art museums. Because students in kindergarten through twelfth grade on fieldtrips often have limited experience looking at and talking about original works of art and visiting art museums, and because university students also visit the museum on fieldtrips or as part of a class assignment, relevant

research on the experiences of these students in the museum is included in this literature review.

The literature below offers a wide range of perspectives and approaches to understanding the museum experience. However, there are still gaps in this literature, especially among certain audiences, including university students and working with both visual and audio components in understanding how people look at and talk about art in the galleries of museums.

*The Museum Experience*

Greene (1995) links understanding works of art through our own experiences with creating empathy, building awareness, and inspiring action when she writes, "Participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, and to *become conscious* of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured" (p. 379, italics in original quote). Greene argues that participation is created by spending time with a work of art, guidance in interacting with the work, and discussing the work, and without this activity, visitors do not move beyond a superficial understanding of the work.

Understanding how visitors experience works of art in museums is a crucial component of museum education. By providing opportunities for visitors to learn without stifling their choices or overwhelming them with information, museums can better facilitate personal experiences with art. Longhenry (2007) discusses a study by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) in which visitors describe learning as a main reason

to visit the museum. However, these visitors prefer to be in charge of their own learning and are intrinsically motivated to have learning opportunities. Additionally, many participants associated the term "learning" with school and felt that it made the museum visit more like work than an experience to be enjoyed. They did not want to feel as though they failed to learn something during the visit. Longhenry (2007) found that for novice visitors, who do not want to appear inexperienced around more seasoned visitors, materials such as signage and guides are important components to their comfort levels as they explore the museum. Similar findings also were reported in *Insights* (1991). Both of these studies stress the need for visitors to feel comfortable in the museum environment and to have the space and freedom to learn on their own terms and make their own connections with works of art.

In her qualitative case study with Danish high school students participating in a three-week workshop with contemporary art, Illeris (2005), who observed these activities, found that young adults were more interested in discussing their interpretations and experiences with and listening to the ideas of their peers instead of the museum educator. These students preferred personal rather than intellectual experiences with the works and wanted multiple approaches to their interactions with art. These students did not want to "waste time" (p. 237) on discussions that did not make them feel involved or that they did not feel were relevant to their lives.

The personal connection with a work of art is a central component of these studies and was an important outcome of the experiences of both the student docents and the non-art majors in my study. In order to have an emotional connection with a work of art, the visit must allow for time for the viewer to directly interact with the object. Henry

(2007) describes this connection as a "meaningful experience" with a work of art that is "an experience of insight or emotion that is at the heart of our experiences, what is frequently referred to as an aesthetic experience" (p. 162).

Linko (2003) refers to this concept as an "authentic experience" (p. 65). She examines authentic experiences of visitors in museums and amateur artists through autobiography. In an excerpt from one of the autobiographies, a woman describes her initial discomfort in a museum where she feels inexperienced compared to the other visitors, but when she becomes completely absorbed in a painting, she forgets about her self-consciousness. Linko connects this type of experience to a relationship with a work of art as even novice visitors seek a personal connection to particular objects.

Finding ways to facilitate these experiences for visitors appears to be a delicate balance between providing too much information or contact with visitors and not enough information or ignoring them, and achieving this balance was an important component of the student docent training. Having material and opportunities available that are not required of the visitors could allow flexibility in meeting a wider range of visitors' needs. Moreover, visitors, especially young adults, need space and opportunities to make their own choices and meaning in museums, and I stressed this point in the student docent program.

As *Insights* (1991) and Longhenry (2007) discuss, in order to facilitate these experiences, visitors need to be not only comfortable in their surroundings, but also able to orient themselves in the space. Henry (2000) also discusses this part of the museum experience. She collected the recollections of college students who were art majors in a museum education course and found that the quality of experiences often related to the

exhibition environment and preparation. Crowds, exhibition design, and museum security are often issues that can create positive and negative experiences in the environment of the museum. Students consider having enough time to be particularly important as well as their physical and mental state while visiting the museum. Although these students were not novices in museums, their experiences emphasize how interactions with works of art are influenced by their surroundings. In the case of first-time or novice visitors who already may be uncomfortable in a new space, these factors would only add stress to the situation.

Fowler (2002) suggests frequent visits to the museum for classes of university students who are non-art majors during which small collaborative assignments are used to build skills in looking at and discussing works of art. In order to reduce anxiety in the museum, Fowler recommends explaining museum rules and what to expect before going to the museum and practicing discussing works of art with slides or postcards before the visit. Activities with maps of the museum can help students understand the layout of the museum before participating in assignments. As these studies demonstrate, orienting first-time and novice visitors to the space of the museum and letting them know what is expected from them is necessary for them to feel comfortable and to be able to interact with works of art.

The studies described above emphasize the need for visitors to feel like they have control over their experiences in the museum. This concept is a central component of Falk and Dierking's (2000) "free-choice learning" that is "non-linear, personally motivated, and involves considerable choice on the part of the learner as to what to learn, as well as where and when to participate in learning" (p. xii). Viewers structure their own

experiences at the museum through their choices in when to visit the museum, what to see, and how long to stay (Henry, 2007, 2010). Even for novice visitors, having the ability to choose in the museum gives them control over their experiences (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

Indeed, an important component of free-choice learning is having the ability to choose what one wants to see in the museum. Black and Hein (2003) conducted a study of a structured field trip to the MFA in Boston with fifteen non-art majors from a women's liberal arts college. Black assigned writing and drawing reflections to collect data on the experiences of the students. The researchers found a wide range of responses to basically the same experience. They also discovered that students had highly personal responses, and in the case of the assignment in which they discussed their favorite objects in the museum, over half included a work not in the museum activity. Black and Hein conclude that "analysis of the data illustrates the importance of personal meaning making during this structured museum visit" (p. 128). As in Illeris' (2005) study, the students preferred to make their own choices in the museum, and this is an important component of the museum experience.

In another study that incorporates choice into the museum experience, Jeffers (1999) examines how children discuss works of art with adults in galleries and art museums. Jeffers assigned seventeen of her university students in an elementary art methods course to visit an art museum or gallery with a child he or she already knew. These college students were pre- and in-service teachers who did not have a lot of experience in art museums. Similarly, many of the children they took to the museum had never been to an art museum. For this study, children were asked to serve as the leader

during a tour with the adult, acting as the guide to the art museum. Jeffers found, from their interpretations of the works of art and their comments in general, that children construct meanings about art that they then use to interpret the world around them.

In a similar study by Jeffers (2003) that uses the same format described above, the children completed questionnaires two months after their visits that described the richness of their experiences. Through reflective journal entries, Jeffers found that the preservice teachers also had positive experiences in their interactions with students and considered the students to be "co-learners" (p. 23).

Although Jeffers's studies are more reflective accounts of experiences than explanations of empirical studies, they do emphasize the need for choice in the museum and demonstrate the impact museums can have on both novice visitors and visitors with more experience in museums. Jeffers (2003) also emphasizes the importance of the university art museum when she writes, "Once unknown or under-utilized, the university art gallery can become a force, a vibrant connection between school and community, vigorously linking members of the human community through art and dialogue" (p. 24). Indeed, the university art museum should play an integral role in the education of its students, and we need to understand how it does and can impact students both academically and personally.

These studies show us the importance of allowing viewers the freedom to choose works of art based on their interests and need to create connections with works. Museums can help to facilitate these experiences by providing an environment of comfort and support. In structured activities, like my study, there is a need for flexibility to allow visitors a chance to consider works of art that speak to them and to which they feel an

emotional connection. By allowing the non-art majors the space to connect with works of art and space to respond to works, it is hoped that these students became more confident in the museum and hopefully will keep coming back.

Falk and Dierking (1999) discuss the crucial role of free-choice learning for young adults because for many of them, this point in their lives is the first time they break from their parents. It is also the first time they can choose how to fill their free time, and as Falk and Dierking (2000) point out, sometimes there is a lot of it. By providing opportunities for college students to come to a university museum that is accessible and, in many cases, free to them, and to offer them ways in which they can interact with works of art, can help them to understand the role of the museum in their lives.

*University Students and the Role of the University Art Museum*

Willumson (2000) writes, "The university museum must…reassert its role in the educational experience of the university student….Each university museum must re-examine its charter and redefine itself to embrace an intellectual approach that will move it beyond the scope of a single department's pedagogy. Its programming must cross disciplines and embed the museum within contemporary academic conversations" (p. 18). Unfortunately, there is a lack of literature on the role of the university art museum in the university or on the experiences of university students in their museum. Villeneuve, Martin-Hamon, and Mitchell (2006) point out that most of it discusses either the university museum's position to serve the university or programs involving preservice teachers. My research revealed similar studies on teacher preparation (Danko-McGhee, 2004; Henry, 2004; Jeffers, 2003). Although work with K-12 educators and future

educators is important in creating opportunities for children to come to museums (Henry 2004, 2010), work with other students could greatly inform the field.

Other studies focus on university students' work with curators and collections management. Schmiesing and Hollis (2002), Visser Falke (2007), and King and Marstine (2006) all worked with university students in this capacity. Blanco (2010), who discusses the three previously mentioned studies, also describes his work with university students in planning and designing two exhibitions on fashion for a course focusing on museum issues with historic clothing and textiles. One of these exhibitions was featured at the museum in which my study takes place. In addition to collections and curatorial issues and exhibition design, Blanco's students also created interpretive materials to reach different audiences visiting this exhibition, including audiences with visual impairments.

Villeneuve et al. (2006) describe the University of Kansas' Spencer Museum of Art's successful efforts to create programming and opportunities for professors and students to engage with works at the museum. The Education Department at the Spencer Museum designed opportunities for faculty from a diverse range of disciplines to learn about their collection. They then worked with interested professors to design assignments, tours, and exhibitions. The popularity of these initiatives have actually strained the staff of the Education Department; the Spencer Museum is now constantly in demand by its university population. However, while the authors discuss their role at the university in terms of their work with faculty, they do not discuss the experiences of students in the museum or include the impact of these programs on the students at the university, as my study will address.

The programs at the Spencer Museum were started through support from a grant by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which has also funded seventeen other university museums' programming to reach their student populations (Goethals & Fabing, 2007). As Goethals and Fabing discuss in the final report of this grant, for many of the students who benefited from this funding, these opportunities were the first time they had interacted closely with objects in a museum, and for some, it was the first time they had been to a museum. This report found that students who participated in the classes and internships that resulted from this funding were challenged and inspired by the museums. Many of them continued to use the museums in their research and saw their work from new perspectives. As the programs that have resulted from this effort continue and evolve, more literature and studies on this topic hopefully will emerge.

There are no studies on peer learning of university students in museum settings, and it is this gap that I wish to address with this study. Although literature on university students' experiences in museums, particularly their university museum, is extremely limited, understanding the experiences of visitors in museums has become a critical focus in the literature of museum education; the review that follows will discuss this research in terms of inquiry and dialogue, the role of knowledge, interactions with objects, visitors and contemporary art, time and reflection, and the inclusion of interactive elements in the museum experience.

*Understanding the Museum Experience through Inquiry and Dialogue*

Inquiry allows novice visitors opportunities to ask questions of works of art and to participate in the meaning-making process (Keller, Erickson, & Villeneuve, 2004).

Villeneuve and Love (2007) describe a question-based approach that provides a framework educators can use with visitors in interactions with works of art. Through inquiry, audiences are part of the interpretation process, and everyone can add their own voices to this dialogue. Villeneuve and Love argue that this dialogue is more meaningful when it is student-generated. At the core of this process is the empowerment of the viewers because they create their own meanings through the interplay of questions and answers and have control of the direction of the questioning. Just as it is important to allow visitors the opportunity to choose the works of art with which they interact in the museum, giving them the freedom to ask questions of the work and to participate in the interpretation of art empowers these visitors to be responsible for their own learning.

Villeneuve and Love's format involves six types of questions that are based on description, context, interpretation, finding relationships to other works of art, personal meanings, and interdisciplinary connections. These questions can be asked in any order; they are not sequential. As visitors participate in this inquiry, they build meaning through their interactions with works of art. Villeneuve and Love provide entry points to interacting with works of art in which visitors without a lot of experience in museums can utilize.

Another example in which understanding is built through inquiry is in the work of Housen and Yenawine. Housen's (1992, 2007) "Stages of Aesthetic Development" uses sequenced stages to describe levels of skills in looking at and talking about art. In the first stage, viewers make lists and tell stories through concrete observations. The second stage involves connecting what they see to what they know about their world. In the third stage, art is contextualized to understand the art historical relevance of the work. At the

fourth stage, viewers interact with the work of art through an interpretive encounter by studying it very closely to understand meaning in the work. Finally, in the fifth stage, viewers understand a work of art to be an individual entity that communicates with the viewer. The viewer in this stage can keep returning to the same work, what Housen calls "an old friend," and be surprised by new discoveries and meanings in the work (p. 175).

These stages describe the development of the viewer, but Housen also offers suggestions on how they relate to practice, specifically through Housen and Yenawine's (2001) Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) that target audiences in stages one and two. In VTS, the main question is "What is going on in this picture?" to keep the focus on interacting with the work of art (Housen, 2007, p. 176; Housen & Yenawine, 2001, p. 2). Follow-up questions are "What do you see that makes you say that?" and "What more can we find" (Housen, 2007, p. 176; Housen & Yenawine, 2001, p. 2-3). In this model, students are encouraged to explore the work of art, share their ideas, and come to their own understanding with the work. They engage in their own interpretive processes as a group; the educator only facilitates the discussion and does not provide information.

Housen's stages are helpful in considering how viewers develop their understanding and when it is most effective to bring in more factual information for the viewer. Museum educators should be aware of how viewers evolve and build on their visual understanding, and these stages can be useful in creating pedagogical scaffolds (Vygotsky, 1978) in museum education. Starting with description, instead of beginning anywhere in the process as in the model of Villeneuve and Love (2007), provides a foundation on which meaning can be built and serves as a basis for interpretation. It also provides an entry that is less intimidating to first-time and novice visitors because they

are using what they see to make meaning. Benefits of VTS include examining a work of art as a group through simple, predictable questions and using a rich description of the work as a foundation for interpretation.

However, as Hubard (2007c) argues, there are times when contextual information can help visitors build upon their knowledge and make connections with their lives. This contextual information is not a part of the VTS model. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011b) also voice their concerns with the VTS format, writing, "we must question any method that leaves the gallery teacher with such limited means for guiding a conversation that strays far afield and above all, without any responsibility for the outcome" (p. 104). Indeed, the role of contextual information was emphasized in student docent training in the information provided by the curators as well as when and how to incorporate it into dialogue.

In a quantitative study that uses a non-equivalent control group, quasi-experimental design, Stone (1997) compares the effectiveness of two types of docent-led tours: lecture and inquiry. Working with 95 undergraduate elementary education students with little background in art, Stone divided the students into three groups: a group on a tour using lecture, a group on a tour that incorporated inquiry, and a control group. Students in the lecture-based tour were not given an opportunity to ask questions until after the docent finished, but students in the inquiry group could ask questions and share ideas throughout the tour. Each student took a test before and after the tours, and the control group took the tests without the tour. Stone found that students on inquiry-based tours benefited from the learning, application, and synthesis that occur through discussion, and this resulted in long-term retention of information. The author

recommends inquiry-based tours for novice visitors, but she suggests lecture tours for more experienced audiences who have the ability to incorporate the information into their experiences. Stone's study is interesting to my research in the fact that she studies the learning of a novice audience in two different tour formats. However, not enough information is provided about the students participating in this study, the tour itself, and the tests she uses to measure learning to truly understand the validity of this research.

Villeneuve and Love (2007) define inquiry as "generating and answering pertinent questions in a dialogic manner" (p. 194), thus stressing the integral role of dialogue in the process of questioning and answering. Yet Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011b) caution against a question-format for gallery teaching, writing, "we have lost our way. Despite the taxonomies and the strategies and the good intentions, as we watch teaching in galleries of our museums we find that some of the *worst* teaching results from the practice of asking questions" (p. 105, italics in original quote). The authors suggest that we need to go back to our "ultimate objective" in gallery teaching that is "a certain kind of experience that draws visitors and teacher into a deep and satisfying understanding of artworks" through "dialogical engagement" (p. 105). The educator should not lead the discussion through questions but allow visitors the space to ask their own questions and guide their own experience with the work of art.

Although we most often think of dialogue as an action between ourselves and another person, McKay and Monteverde (2003) describe three types of dialogue that occur when viewing a work of art. In the first type of dialogue, viewers discuss their observations, context, and memories with each other as they relate to the work. Second is an inner dialogue as we work through what we see to make sense of the work. Finally,

there is a third type of dialogue that takes place between the viewer and the work of art. McKay and Monteverde emphasize dialogue in which interactions between a work of art and the viewer can generate the human connection that visitors, both novice and experienced, look for in a work of art. Differentiating these types of dialogue helps us to understand that there are different ways in which visitors interact with works of art, and novice visitors should be guided in all three forms of dialogue to truly understand the different ways we can engage with art.

Hubard (2010) also compares different forms of dialogue, predetermined, interpretive, and open dialogue, but focuses on interactions between educators and students. The author describes predetermined dialogue as based on objectivism in which there are right and wrong answers. Hubard distinguishes interpretive dialogue from predetermined dialogue in that there is no predicted or correct outcome to the conversation. Interpretive dialogue is not meant to culminate with predetermined knowledge. According to Hubbard, there is a place for predetermined dialogue in talking about works of art when the teacher or docent has a specified objective. Predetermined dialogue is more easily assessed because at the end of the conversation, the correct answer is either found or not.

According to Hubard, interpretive dialogue should be used when there can be multiple meanings and interpretation can be constructed through interaction; there are no right and wrong answers. This type of dialogue can be either thematic or open. In thematic dialogue, an aspect, or theme, within a work of art is examined. For instance, one could discuss a particular character or relationship in the work or a larger issue reflected in the art. These themes can be related to curricula in schools or unify the works

discussed on a tour. Open dialogue allows students the opportunity to wholly explore a work of art. Multiple layers of meaning can be revealed as students discuss all aspects of an object to truly get to know the work. According to Hubard, this type of dialogue is unpredictable and can lead to any number of interesting discussions depending on the connections made in the dialogue itself.

Hubard writes that predetermined dialogue can build towards interpretative dialogue by giving viewers concrete information on which they can base their interpretations. This format is important to my work because it can help first-time and novice visitors feel comfortable discussing works of art. In this format, everyone will have some information about the work of art, but there also are openings for participants to bring in their own experiences and understanding to construct meaning.

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005, 2007, 2011a, 2011b) argue for an interpretive dialogic approach to gallery teaching and describe encounters with works of art, discussing the unique and individual experiences that visitors can have with works of art. The role of the educator in this type of interpretive dialogue is to facilitate the discussion by summarizing points made by the group, asking open questions, and providing research and background in places where it is relevant and to stimulate further discussion.

In Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007), the authors propose, "dialogue and conversation are the foundation of understanding and interpretation" (p. 153). Meaning is created from these interactions between visitors, gallery teachers, and works of art. We construct our knowledge within a framework of our tradition, the "historicity of knowledge," (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007, p. 154) that guides our interpretation and understanding of a work of art. These traditions, a part of culture, can lead us to places of discovery in works

of art if we do not allow them to overpower our understanding. Thus, the role of art history and criticism is to guide our meaning without telling us what to know about a work of art. In order to truly understand a work, we must engage in a dialogue that will help us to construct our own meaning.

Burnham and Kai-Kee also stress that it is not only the words that are spoken in dialogue, but also the silences that can transform viewers and leave them with a new perspective on the world. Burnham (2011a) writes about her own "private contemplation" with works of art and that "in rare circumstances, a teacher's solitary contemplation, research, and gallery teaching may converge in such a way that she feels forever changed" (p. 68).

It is perhaps in these silences that the inner dialogue and dialogue directly between the viewer and the work of art, as described by McKay and Monteverde, can occur. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005, 2007, 2011b) argue that we must find a model for gallery teaching that leaves room for these experiences but will fit into the needs and responsibilities of the educator. For first-time and novice visitors, this type of dialogue that incorporates personal meaning, interpretation, history, and silence is an integral part of their experiences in museums and must be included into the tours by the student docents. If museum educators can facilitate the type of understanding that results from these interactions, these visitors will want to return to discover more about the works of art with which they engaged.

The powerful role of dialogue in the museum experience is described in Stainton (2002), who studied the conversations of visitors and their responses to curatorial intent in an exhibition of African art and uses this dialogue to illustrate learning. She worked

with visitors who had either a high level of experience in art, museums, or Africa, but not necessarily all three. Because the visitors were experts in only one area, they had different levels of experience looking at art and visiting museums, including novice visitors. Visitors toured the exhibition at their own pace with two researchers following them to record their activities. Pre- and post-tour interviews were recorded.

Stainton found that all of the visitors' post-interviews contained comments that related to the objects, and for most visitors, the level of engagement with the exhibition was high. Visitors, including novices, used information provided in the exhibitions to learn more about the objects, noticed aesthetic elements in the art, and made connections between the works and with other works of art with which they were familiar. They demonstrated an awareness of curatorial decisions and were in dialogue with the museum itself through their comments on the setting of the museum. Finally, these visitors made connections between the ideas in the exhibition and their own lives through rich responses. Stainton also addresses the connections that African American visitors made to the exhibition in comparisons to their own heritage. Some of these visitors appreciated the opportunity to discuss the African works on a more neutral ground than in a familial context in which some family members found it too painful to discuss ties to Africa.

Stainton's study has similarities to my research. Like Stainton, I used the conversations in the galleries to understand the experiences of the student docents and non-art majors, but I did this through audio and video recordings rather than by following each group to reduce the level of discomfort or self-consciousness of the visitors. Stainton's inclusion of minorities is important because it adds another layer of experiences that people have with works of art through their heritages and traditions.

Because the collection of works of art that were used in my study was culturally diverse, this aspect of the museum experience is important to include. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, I was unable to get the diverse group of participants for which I hoped. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) argues that a multicultural approach is critical in understanding the museum experience especially at this point in history when contested artifacts are "one of the major tensions in museums today" (p. 41).

Leinhardt and Knutson's book *Listening in on Museum Conversations* (2004) offers qualitative and quantitative research to understand how visitors interact with each other and works of art in the galleries of museums by recording the discussions of small groups of two or more people in different types of exhibitions. The members of these groups varied and included different ages and a wide range of relationships from families to organized groups. The authors used the recordings to examine how groups in the galleries interacted with each other and how exhibitions, identity, conversation, and learning environments were reflected in their discussions. The conclusion of the study is that individuals build on each other's knowledge when interacting as groups in museums and "combined knowledge leads to more extensive kinds of discussion and elaboration" (p. 159). This finding reflects Gadamer's (1975/ 2006) notion of play in which the players build on each other's understanding to create new meaning. Leinhardt and Knutson argue that the act of talking is a tool for socially-constructed thinking, and goals are formed and developed through these interactions. The groups are engaged through talk, and they can remember and learn from these experiences.

The studies by Stainton (2002) and Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) demonstrate the need to consider conversation and responses to works of art in the galleries in front of

the works. Heath and vom Lehn (2004) argue that there are only a few studies that focus on actual dialogue in the galleries and that "the interplay of talk with the examination of the exhibit, and the visual conduct and orientation of the participants – the stuff of experiencing objects in museums and galleries – remains sadly neglected (p. 45). Heath and vom Lehn present their studies of visitors using both audio excerpts and visual stills to consider how visitors respond verbally and through embodied responses to works of art. They found that the talk and body language of visitors help visitors engage with the work of art and engage others in their understanding of the works. The object becomes enlivened through this discussion and an active part of the experience. According to Heath and vom Lehn, "The object retains an element of surprise, of curiosity, by virtue of the ways in which one participant configures how it is seen and experienced by another…In other words, through their interaction with others, participants shape the ways in which they 'collaboratively' experience the various objects and artefacts" (p. 62).

The authors argue for more research that includes both dialogue and non-verbal behavior in museums in order to gain a more accurate understanding of how visitors experience museums and interact with both the objects and each other. My study is meant to contribute to resolving the lacuna in the literature.

*The Role of Knowledge in Dialogue*

In museum teaching, understanding when and how to incorporate context into dialogue can be difficult. Barrett (2007) points out that there is a fear that knowledge will kill the appreciation of a work of art. However, he stresses that we need contextual information to understand works of different times and cultures (Barrett, 2003).

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) question the assertion that educators must move completely from the object to the viewer, an argument featured most prominently in writings on Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) in works such as Rice and Yenawine (2002). Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005) describe the role of the gallery teacher as an expert on both the collection and the audience. They write, "We must always be able to provide accurate and pertinent art-historical and other contextual information. But we must think of such knowledge and such techniques not as ends in themselves, but as tools to be used for the larger purpose of enabling each visitor to have a deep and distinctive experience of specific artworks" (p. 67). By respecting "equally both audience and object," Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) see the role of museum education as "a guided, shared act of interpretation" (p. 152).

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005, 2007) and Burnham (2011b) use knowledge to guide the dialogue but also respect the knowledge and experiences that visitors bring to this dialogue. They see themselves as the facilitators of this interaction. According to the authors, "Our manner must assure visitors that we are knowledgeable about the artworks in our collections and skillful in bringing people and artworks together in meaningful ways" (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p. 68). The experience is constructed from the meaning generated through dialogue, and the contextual knowledge is a part of this experience as a conduit to a deeper understanding. In describing a dialogue with a group viewing a seventeenth-century tapestry, Burnham (2011b) writes,

> The research I undertook about each tapestry informed my own understanding, and allowed me to construct the conceptual scaffolding for facts and possible ways to think about the works. When I opened the dialogue about each tapestry,

however, I allowed the participants' curiosity to guide the way. I held in reserve

the information I had gathered and the opinions I had formulated about the work.

Had I not done so, I would have preempted the individual experiences of the

tapestry that emerged in the course of the group's dialogue. (p. 122)

Thus, knowledge enters where there are invitations or openings for it; it does not

overpower or dictate the course of the dialogue.

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011a) distinguish between conversation, discussion and

dialogue. They describe conversation as "casual" and "free and improvised." In gallery

teaching as conversation, "the teacher's priority is to create an atmosphere in which

everyone is comfortable speaking and exchanges are friendly" (p. 81). In discussions,

"students learn how to apply principles of a discipline to a particular set of facts, or learn

how to analyze an object, or situation, from different points of view" (p. 83). For

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011a), dialogue converges conversation and discussion in

gallery teaching. It "shares the open, improvisatory quality of conversation, but it is

imbued from the outset with a stronger sense of purpose and is more tightly focused on

the artworks" (p. 86). Indeed, dialogue in the galleries should make visitors feel welcome

and able to contribute, but it should also be structured to help us learn more about the

work of art through focus and information.

Mayer (2007b) writes that educators in the galleries must prepare with

information and possible questions, but ultimately, "all that preparation should emerge in

response to visitors and their mounting curiosity" (p. 192). She considers "true

conversation" (p. 190) to be a reciprocal relationship between educators and visitors, and

conversation should "flow" (p. 193) out of these interactions. True conversation is very

similar to Burnham and Kai-Kee's definition of dialogue, and it also mirrors the concept of authentic dialogue found in the work of Gadamer and Buber.

Hubard (2007) acknowledges the importance of timing in bringing in relevant information at certain points in a dialogue with visitors. If contextual information is presented too early, viewers feel as though their interpretations are pointless and do not offer to share them, and if it is added at the end, it seems as though after a long discussion about the work, the educator is telling the visitors the correct answers. In other words, if the viewers see the educator as the person holding the information, they will be less likely to explore the works with them. Burnham (1994) believes that the key to presenting information is to offer it "gently and sensitively and at the right moment" because it then "increases understanding and allows the discussion to move forward" (p. 524). This concept relates to Longhenry (2007) who found that visitors want to learn in museums, but they want to learn on their own terms rather than being told what they should or need to know. For student docents, understanding when to bring in contextual information could be challenging or feel awkward during these conversations, and it was important in the docent education sessions for them to learn to gently include it in the dialogue when they felt like there are openings for these facts.

Henry (2010) writes, "Understanding works of art from cultures other than our own often requires the viewer to have access to basic contextual information" (p. 69). Barrett (2003) discusses how historical context informs the viewer of the original meaning of the work and shapes how we interpret the work of art today. In terms of the collection of the museum in which this study takes place, which includes works from a diverse range of cultures and time periods, information about works of art and the artist is

sometimes needed to better understand the background of the work of art in its original context. This concept is true for works that have been removed from their original function, such as religious objects that were part of a ritual, but also for works that are simply new to us.

When including contextual information in a dialogue about a work of art, educators must remember that it is to benefit the visitor. Burnham (1994) writes, "The student's response and experience come first, before one's own, before the museum's, before the history of art" (p. 524). As discussed above, museums are "free-choice learning environments," and as such, visitors can control what they do in them (Falk & Dierking, 2000, 2002). Falk and Dierking (2000) stress the need for the visitors to feel as though they are in charge of their experiences and the outcomes of their visits. Because the needs and expectations of visitors vary (Falk, 2009), it is especially important to offer multiple types of opportunities to interact with works of art that help visitors have positive experiences.

Giving the viewer the opportunity to choose the works of art they want to see and what they want to discuss, to construct meaning, and to build upon knowledge with a work of art empowers that viewer (Greene, 2001; Henry, 2010; Hubard, 2007c). Not only does each person have the opportunity to share his or her thoughts on what they see, think, and feel about the work of art, but there is also room to explore parts of the work of art that are most interesting to these individuals. Rather than being told what they should know about, visitors are asked to bring in their own meaning and understanding to the works of art.

In working with student docents, I found that it is important to help them find opportunities to incorporate contextual information into the dialogue but to do so in a way that engages the viewer as they construct meaning with the work of art. It is sometimes difficult to find a balance between meaning making and context. By practicing dialogic interactions with works of art with student docents and providing opportunities for them to work together, they became more comfortable with finding these spaces where contextual information will enhance the dialogue and not shut it down.

The inclusion of historical and cultural information can help students make connections between what they are learning in school and what they see in a work of art. By including the historical and cultural context of works of art into the discussions with visitors, these students have the opportunity to further their understanding between themselves and others, and they can also create connections between what they are learning and what they already know. This knowledge will continue to evolve after visitors leave the museum and learn new things that can be related to works in the museum (Falk & Dierking, 2000). In the case of university students, this contextual information is especially important because these students are continually taking new courses and learning new information, and as they do this, they can see and understand works of art in new ways (Villeneuve, Martin-Hamon, & Mitchell, 2006). This study found that students often referenced classes and connected what they saw in the galleries to their interests and their majors, as discussed further in Chapter 5.

*The Role of Objects*

Although the object may no longer be considered the only element of the museum experience, it is still a crucial component. Rowe (2002) uses Lotman's (1988) concept of the "functional duality of texts" to describe the complex nature of objects in learning because an object is "like a text, the meaning of which we 'read' or 'construct' in our interactions with it" (p. 30). Rowe argues that visitors must be taught to read or decode objects, and museums must help visitors learn this skill by providing contextual information and constructing exhibitions that are intellectually accessible to the viewer. At the same time, this object is also a tool from which viewers construct meaning, and "the driving mechanism of generating meaning is the potential for a given object/text to support multiple interpretations and activities" (p. 31).

Indeed, the collection of the museum is an integral part of this experience as we enter into dialogue with art in museums. In order to understand the experiences of visitors, it is important to understand their relationships with objects. Rowe (2002) discusses the roles of objects in the museum as not only transmitting information, but also generating meaning, implying a reciprocal relationship between the viewer and the object. Shuh (1999) points out that objects are not as specific to the age of the viewer as written materials are, and they are accessible to visitors of varying levels of age and experience, although visitors of different ages will see and respond to objects in different ways. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) also add the interplay of the work of art in dialogue with the object and include a quote from a student to describe this reciprocal relationship: "At first I thought we were looking at the work of art. Then I realized the work of art was looking at us" (p. 154).

Beane and Pope (2002) discuss how objects in museums, and the museum as an object itself, can be used in "leveling the playing field" (p. 325) among students from diverse backgrounds who have different skills. Working with adolescents from underserved populations in a science museum, the authors developed a program that provided work experiences for these students. These adolescents had the opportunity to teach younger children about objects in the museum and, through this program, developed confidence in teaching and working with the children and the objects. By working with experts (the museum staff) and novices (the children they taught), the students were able to increase their understanding about the objects while at the same time interpreting their knowledge to help younger children. This finding is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development in that students' were able to learn both from the experts and also translate the information for learners with less experience than themselves.

The relationship between the object and the viewer is the focus of Hubard's (2008) case study in which she considers the construction of the aesthetic object to be the interaction of the work of art with the viewer. In an action research study of five high school students with limited artistic experience, Hubard, who is a participant-observer, uses the theoretical framework of Iser (1980) to understand the balanced dialogue between the spectator and the work of art in the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum. Hubard argues that the aesthetic object is created from the interaction between the product and the viewers rather than simply the work of art. In other words, the aesthetic object is not only a stone sculpture shaped by Noguchi, but also the experience of the viewers. The meaning of the work builds upon itself as the experience evolves, so that it is always

changing as the viewers' experiences with it change. As novice viewers interact with the works, they come to see them differently, and it will hopefully make them want to return to the museum to revisit these works and participate with them further.

Visitors also understand the special qualities of interacting with original works of art (Henry, 2010). They understand that a work is authentic and a part of history. In another study by Hubard (2007b), who is again a participant-observer in the study, the critical responses of twenty-four self-selected ninth-grade students with little art experience to an image of a work of art, *A Goldsmith in his Shop, Possibly St. Eligius* (c. 1449) by the Dutch painter Petrus Christus, is investigated. These students participated in interviews to describe their experiences, observations, and preferences. The students were then divided into four groups: one group saw the image on a computer, one group saw it on a postcard, and a third group saw it in a museum. The fourth group saw it three times, one time each way. All groups were asked to describe the work through the objects, the narrative it implied, and the style. The group working with the original work added size, details, and complexity of the narrative to the discussion more than the groups working with other formats did. In the fourth group, all of the students preferred the original work to the other two formats. They could see more in the original painting and felt like they had access to something special in having the opportunity to see the authentic work.

Experiencing a work of art in person not only aids in their understandings of it, but it also adds to the authenticity of their experiences. In a related study using conversational interviews, Hubard (2006) worked with students who revisited this same painting multiple times and describes how these experiences built over time as students

made stronger connections to works of art and saw new things in each interaction with this painting.

These two studies are important to my research because they show us that novice visitors do understand the differences between original works of art and reproductions, that understanding helps them to see the museum as a special place with intrinsic value, and that multiple interactions with works of art creates deeper understanding. Although repeated opportunities to view the same works of art is beyond the scope of my study in terms of novice visitors, it will hopefully be an outcome if they return to the museum.

Hooper-Greenhill (2000) writes, "Objects enable reflection, and speculation" (p. 108). They carry meaning and make abstract ideas tangible. By providing opportunities for reflection with works of art, museums can help facilitate dialogue between the viewer and the object (McKay & Monteverde, 2003). Providing opportunities for silence and reflection, as described by Burnham (2011a) and Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007), even in tours in museums, can allow visitors time to truly create an emotional and human connection with a work of art.

University students, constantly inundated with technology and communication, are part of a generation known as "Generation Y" (Wilkening & Chung, 2009, p. 88) that, contrary to what we might think, often prefers the quiet space of a museum. In studies of different age groups in museums, Wilkening and Chung (2009) found that preferences for electronic media in museums rose with age. Adults over seventy were two times likely to prefer video and other electronic media and two and a half times more likely to prefer audio tours than people under 30. The authors explain that "sometimes young adults, who are plugged in for so much of their lives, need a break from technology and museums

provide that break" (p. 91). As discussed above, there must be a balance between information and space for museum visitors in order to allow them opportunities to interact with objects in museums.

*Visitors and Contemporary Art*

For any group of novice or first-time visitors coming to an art museum, certain works of art are going to immediately be more accessible than others because they are identifiable by their subject matter and relationship to the visitors' own lives. Some works are simply more "difficult" to initially connect with (Vallance, 1995). For visitors with less experience looking at works of art, contemporary art that can often be abstract or incorporate unusual materials and subject matter may be especially intimidating. This idea was important to consider when analyzing data from the students' interactions in the museum because some of the work is challenging in both subject matter and style. Vallance writes that contemporary art that visitors consider "difficult" represents "a fear of the unknown, a fear of feeling stupid, a suspicion that someone knows something they don't know, a suspicion that they are out of some loop of public discourse that some insidious 'in crowd' is clearly in" (p. 6). Some people even feel as though the art world is "putting them on" when it presents contemporary art (Barrett, 2008, p. 11). Certainly, with such feelings, visitors may not choose to return to this type of experience.

Kanatani (1998) points out that although contemporary art comes from the culture in which we live, it is often the most difficult to understand. Vallance (1995) suggests that this difficulty rests in the fact that contemporary artists are often pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable or acknowledged in contemporary society. Kanatani, a

museum educator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), found that using an open inquiry format to talk about contemporary art with students gave them the opportunity to make connections between the works and their own lives. The visitors had the opportunity to have multiple interactions with works of art and to discuss how the works related to their experiences. These interactions gave them accessible points with which they could better understand the meaning and motivations behind contemporary art.

Illeris (2005, 2008, 2009, 2010) also works with contemporary art and young adults, who she identifies as people around eleven to thirteen to the age when they are independent adults. She finds that this age group prefers interactive experiences with works of art rather than being "passive viewers" (2010, p. 207). According to Illeris, young people do not want to spend time on learning processes in which they do not feel completely engaged, but they are intrinsically motivated when they are personally involved in the activity. Illeris (2010) argues that while young people can become immediately interested in works of art through personal connections, educators should challenge them to engage in more social interactions with contemporary art that expose them to "the other" through "performative visual events" which "emphasizes the theatrical, the play and the metacommunicative function that might help the young people distance themselves from their personal experiences and engage in positive forms of otherness" (p. 214). Illeris (2007) sees the role of performance as necessary to change the traditional model of art museum education in which the educator teaches, the students act as an audience, the work of art is the object, the exhibition provides a subject, and the building serves as the environment.

Although the literature above focuses on children and young adults, these techniques could work with any age group. Contemporary art becomes more accessible as visitors make personal connections with it. Émond (2010) studied visitors who come to the museum frequently and finds that experienced visitors were able to connect equally to traditional and contemporary art. Similarly, Mastandrea, Bartoli, and Bove (2007) studied over 500 Italian visitors at the Museo Borghese in Rome and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection of Venice. They found that visitors at the Guggenheim viewing contemporary art, as opposed to the Museo Borghese that houses Renaissance and Baroque art, were more experienced in visiting museums and looking at art. Although these studies show us that people who are experienced in visiting museums are more comfortable with contemporary art, we need to help novice and first-time visitors with these experiences.

For the participants in my study, the student docents had more experience looking at and talking about art than their peers, and it was important that the non-art majors have equal time to speak about and interact with works of art. Allowing students who are non-art majors to offer their own interpretations about the works through their dialogues and through questions with the student docents empowered them in this setting. These visitors had opportunities to construct their own experiences (Henry, 2010), and hopefully realized they have the tools to return to the museum on their own or with other peers to interact with works of art.

*The Role of Time and Reflection in Museum Experiences*

Henry (1992, 1995) shows us the richness of students' memories long after a field trip. Henry conducted a pragmatic study, using quantitative and qualitative methods, on

middle school students' recollections of a visit to a museum. This study was based on a field trip of approximately a hundred middle school students. The study was designed to discover what students remembered during their trip to the museum.

Fifty-one of these students were randomly selected and asked to recall their experiences at the museum eighteen months after their visit into a tape recorder. Henry concludes that there is a long-term effect for a single visit to an art museum; students remembered the trip a year and a half later and included vivid details from the visit and specific works of art that they could describe from memory. This idea is reflected in Falk (2009), who writes, "One of the most striking things I have discovered in more than thirty years of research on museum visitors is how persistent are the memories of the museum visitor experience" (p. 133).

Costantino (2007, 2008) also constructs two studies that incorporate visits to museums, hands-on activities, and reflection. Both of these studies were based on a larger, multiple case study in 2005. In the 2007 phenomenological qualitative study, Costantino, a participant-observer in this naturalistic instrumental case study, uses observation, writings and drawings of students after their museum visit, and interviews to understand the impact of an organized field trip to an art museum designed by an art teacher for fifth- and sixth-grade students. This study focuses on the students' drawings from memory and their art in sketchbooks, and content in their visual representations were supported by reflective writing and interviews. Through their drawings and responses, Costantino was able to better understand the large impact of the museum trip on student learning and their imaginations.

Costantino (2007) also looked at how the art teacher's approach to visiting the museum reflected his teaching philosophy through apprenticeship, modeling how artists use visual dialogue, verbal dialogue, and written reflections about works of art; the teacher can further students' understanding with works of art by helping students to construct meaning and make connection between the works and their worlds.

In Costantino's 2008 study investigating the art teacher's role in students' experiences in an art museum for a visit to a specific exhibition of figural sculptures, is emphasized. Costantino used an open-ended writing prompt, a worksheet given to the students during the field trip that was designed by the teacher, and art created by the students that related to the field trip as part of her data collection that also included interviews with students and teachers involved in the field trip. Costantino concludes that evidence of student learning was most recognizable in the interviews and writing process because students had had time to reflect on the trip. Costantino's studies, as well as the other studies discussed above, inform my work in that I included time and opportunities for reflection between the museum visit and subsequent interview to demonstrate the impact of the museum experience on the student docents and novice visitors.

The role of time and reflection also are components of a summary of the program *Art Around the Corner*. In this study, Luke, Adams, and Falk (1998) study the long-term effects of the program on its participants. *Art Around the Corner*, as described by Falk and Dierking (2000) and Adams, Falk, and Dierking (2003), was designed by the National Gallery of Art and worked with fifth- and sixth-grade students from three inner-city schools. Students visited the museum for six sessions that included sequenced lessons by the docents, and at the end of the program, students became "Docents for a

Day" to give tours to family and friends. The goals for this program included helping students to develop a positive attitude about art, form a love for art, and have the ability to talk about art in front of an audience.

To understand the impact of this program, researchers created a qualitative, phenomenological study that compared the responses of fifteen students who were graduates of the program with fifteen students who did not participate in the program; these students were matched demographically. The researchers used open-ended questions that related to the students' feelings about art and art museums, and they showed the students reproductions of works of art that they were asked to discuss. The alumni of the program were able to talk about works through richer descriptions, and they had developed an interest, and even a love, of art. A related quantitative study supports these findings. Again, graduates of the program gave lengthier descriptions about the works of art and supported their interpretations with evidence. Both components of this study demonstrated the potential long-term effects of learning how to look at and talk about art.

The incorporation of reflection and memory in these studies shows us that learning from visits to museums will continue over time as we make connections between objects in the museum and our lives. We build on these experiences long after our time in the museum (Anderson, Storksdieck, & Spock, 2007). This concept is supported by Falk and Dierking (2000) who argue that learning in the museum continues indefinitely as we reflect on our experiences and make connections between what we saw in the museum and the outside world. We can continue to learn from the museum experience long after our visit as we make connections between the objects with which we interact in the

museum and our own lives. We remember these experiences and continue to learn from them.

Thus, the research included above illustrates the importance of including long-term studies with visitors in order to understand the impact of a museum experience. As university students continue to take new classes, have new personal experiences, and grow intellectually in an academic environment, it is important to consider the impact that museum experiences could have on them. In the design of my study, time for reflection between the museum visit and post-visit interview, conducted at least a week after the visit, was included for students to be able to make stronger connections between their experiences in the museum and their lives.

*The Inclusion of Interactive Elements in the Museum Experience*

Hooper-Greenhill (2007) considers learning through experience to be crucial to museums. She describes learning through experience as "learning through 'performance'" in that audiences are "active" and use "their emotions and imagination to participate and engage with experiences as they encounter them" (p. 37). Through a series of studies in England measuring learning in museums with a focus on school groups, Hooper-Greenhill (2007) offers the concept of the "post-museum" that moves beyond "learning by looking" to an experience that is "enactive and embodied" (p. 189). According to Hooper-Greenhill, "The embodied character of learning in museums which results from immersion in physical experiences is essential to the development of knowledge and understanding" (p. 172).

In a study of children's learning in an interactive studio space in a museum, Adams, Falk, and Dierking (2003) found that students in school groups could remember more about the permanent collection of the museum and learned how to look closely and think conceptually when they participated in the activities. Families in these galleries created connections between the works of art and their lives and participated in "social learning…as visitors noted that the experience was 'memory-making'" (p. 29).

In Costantino (2007, 2008), studio and writing lessons were incorporated into the museum experience. Costantino (2007) describes and includes drawings that illustrate the visual responses of students through their sketches in the museum. She writes, "These drawings provide a visual representation of how students perceived certain paintings – what engaged them, what they thought was important about the paintings and how they understood them. In this sense, they provide insight into students' visual meaning making of works of art" (p. 22). For my study, this research with children is important because it demonstrates that when we provide multiple outlets for student response, we may gain a deeper understanding into what they remembered and connected to in an art museum.

Interactive elements are not only restricted to experiences with younger students. Hubard (2007a) describes different types of embodied responses in museums through lessons with students ranging from fourth-grade to graduate school. These activities include responses of poetry, "becoming the work" by representing what we see in the work with our bodies, creating a musical soundtrack, sketching details of a work of art, and making paper sculptures. Hubard argues that these responses are important components of truly engaging with works of art.

Black and Hein (2003) incorporated different activities into single museum experiences that revealed different aspects of one trip to the museum. The authors found that the experiences about which the students wrote and the experiences they drew were sometimes contradictory, revealing different parts of a single experience. By allowing time to reflect on the visit and different outlets in which they could express these reflections, the researchers were able to gain a deeper and richer understanding of the experiences of the students. They write that in the drawings, students "*relive* the experience, and visually respond to how it *is* to be in the museum, often focusing on a single object" (p.131, italics in the original). Black and Hein compare these responses to reflective writing that they describe as "a primarily intellectual activity, a re-examination of action that does not necessarily include a strong emotional response" (p. 131).

In another study in which students were physically interacting with works of art, Illeris (2008, 2009) designed a qualitative case study through a workshop for Danish high school students. Illeris observed these students, but unlike many of the other studies included here, she was not a participant. Students were given a short introduction to different ways of approaching works of art using a few sculptures by a contemporary artist, and then given recorders and asked to give voice to one of the sculptures through narrative. Illeris found that students established relationships with the works of art by entering a dialogue with the sculpture. Thus, the work of art becomes a "friend" rather than an "other" as the student engages with it. Illeris suggests that designing museum settings and interactive opportunities that aim to meet visitors' motivation and desire to learn invites people to shape their own learning experiences. Each visitor takes

responsibility of what he or she sees, feels, and thinks when presented with the opportunity to engage with art.

Illeris (2009) also describes a study in which she observed a workshop of high school students who interacted with a Rococo portrait of a Danish king. The students spent time discussing works of art before creating their own portraits based on ideas generated from their dialogue. She argues that by giving students opportunities to view works of art through a lens of friendship, which she calls "the friendly eye" (p. 17), allows them to form a connection with the work of art. In both of these case studies, the students enter into a dialogue with the work of art through either voice or visual forms of communication.

Although my study focuses on dialogue, this research on physical interactions with works of art described in the studies above is important to remember because it offers visitors, especially novice visitors, multiple access points through which they can identify and respond to works. Although first-time and novice visitors might not feel as though they can talk about a work of art without the correct terminology, they could feel comfortable interacting with works of art through another form of communication. By providing pencils and unlined paper for both non-art majors and student docents to sketch or write, opportunities for physical impressions of what they see in the works, and simply giving the students space to interact with the works of art on their own terms, students can have opportunities for richer experiences with the works of art. Indeed, physical interaction with works of art and responses to works was captured in the video, and examples are included in the data analysis presented in Chapters 4 to 7.

*Visitors with Special Needs*

Embodied response can be especially useful in working with audiences who have special needs. The inclusion of visitors with special needs in this review of literature is important because it emphasizes the diverse range of needs that will be factors in the experiences of museum audiences. Also, the study was open to students from different backgrounds and students with disabilities, and student docents received training in working with these audiences. Based on the United States Census in 2000 (2010 is not yet available), we know that one in six people are considered disabled in America (University of California, San Francisco Disability Statistics Center, n.d.). Museums can be especially intimidating for these audiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; McGinnis, 2007). Disabilities can include mobility, visual, auditory, and learning (Salmen, 1998). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment (ADA Title 42, Chapter 126, Section 12102, 1990). Davidson, Heald, and Hein (1999) point out that for these audiences, some of whom have multiple disabilities, there is no distinct line between disabilities or even visitors with and without disabilities. Rather, museum audiences "represent a continuum" (p. 224). Hargreaves (1997) also stresses that museums must remember that audiences with disabilities are diverse and that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to meet their needs.

Because museums are public institutions, they must follow the regulations put in place by the ADA, a series of legislative acts implemented to ensure equal accessibility to employment, government programs and services, privately owned places of public

accommodation, transportation, and communication (Salmen, 1998). However, in order for museums to truly meet the needs of visitors, we must not only include, but also go beyond ADA requirements to truly incorporate the experiences of these visitors into the design and function of the museum.

Talboys (2005) emphasizes the point that the museum must be as open and accessible as possible, because each visitor will have different needs in the museum. McGinnis (2007), Lesser (2001), and Salmen (1998) recommend universal design to integrate multiple ways to access exhibitions and programming through a flexible range of activities that incorporates multiple perspectives. The purpose of universal design is "to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost" (Center for Universal Design, 2008).

Universal design benefits all visitors. Through a variety of access points to the exhibitions, we can create programs and materials that speak to the needs of visitors who learn best in different ways. This concept is supported by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) who write that "[p]eople approach art with different skills" (p. 113). Hooper-Greenhill (1999a) believes these multiple ways of learning are missing specifically from art museums to meet the needs of all visitors. She writes, "Most art museums limit the mode of learning to looking and reading, a physically passive yet intellectually demanding form of learning. People who are more comfortable learning in more active and concrete modes are disadvantaged" (p. 263). Hooper-Greenhill (1999a) recommends a variety of learning opportunities to reach different types of learners in the museum. As Davidson et al. (1999) argue, for the museum visitor who cannot read an exhibition label

because of a visual impairment, limited reading skills, or limited skills in English, the outcome is the same; they cannot read the label. Different modes of learning give these visitors different ways to access the work of art. Designing and programming to promote accessibility benefits all visitors, and this programming does not need to be restricted to only those with a specific disability but can be available for anyone interested in multiple types of experiences (Davidson et al., 1999; McGinnis, 2007).

Student docents participating in this study were aware of and comfortable working with different types of devices and options for a diverse range of visitors. During past exhibitions at the museum in which this study takes place, we have worked with groups that include people with visual impairments to provide objects and materials they can touch and have worked with ASL interpreters. During children's tours, we incorporate hands-on components that include painted surfaces for children to feel the texture of paint and materials that relate to works in the exhibition. Our sculpture garden contains sculptures that visitors can touch and with which they can interact. Audiences with hearing loss can request an interpreter in advance, and we have auditory devices available in the auditorium for lectures and events. Information is included on wall text and written books and pamphlets in the galleries. Docents can also use an amplification system in instances where visitors have limited hearing. Finally, staff members who design and construct exhibition spaces sometimes go through the galleries in wheelchairs to be sure that the space is open and that works of art and related text are visible from their perspective.

It is important to incorporate the input of people with disabilities into the design of the program from the beginning (Bird & Mathis, 2003; McGinnis, 1999, 2007). As *The*

*Accessible Museum* (1992) emphasizes, training staff, docents, and volunteers in working with groups with special needs is important. From the start of the student docent program, students were asked to consider how the methods and practices they use could be incorporated to serve visitors with disabilities. Guest speakers from the university's ADA office presented a program on universal design and accessibility to student docents before the reopening of the museum in January of 2011.

McGinnis (2007) recommends taking an approach to audiences that resembles a multicultural viewpoint. McGinnis writes that we need to "embrace disability as diversity and celebrate difference rather than trying to cover it up. The experience of disability among our visitors and the artist represented in our collection adds richness to the museum equation" (p. 140). Going beyond asking visitors with disabilities for input on accessibility issues by including their voices into programming and tours will benefit all visitors and staff by adding new perspectives to the museum.

We are constantly learning new aspects of visitors' experiences in museums. By considering the needs of first-time and novice visitors, we can create an environment and an educational program that incorporates this audience. Of course, like all visitors, these needs will not be the same for everyone. Falk (2009) writes about the importance of creating multiple opportunities for engagement in the museum that will reach a diverse audience who can connect their life experiences to the works of art. When considering the diversity of a university population in terms of cultures, backgrounds, experiences, and interests, the importance of a variety of programming and materials that meet these needs becomes especially evident.

The literature discussed in this review emphasizes the importance of allowing different points of entry into the work of art. Dialogue will give students opportunities not only to understand what the work of art is communicating, but also to consider their responses to the works and connections to their lives. Although student docents and non-art majors used dialogue as their main form of communication, allowing space in the tours for responses that could include physical movement, humor, other forms of expression, moments of silence with works of art, and time for reflection, led to deeper personal connections between the viewers and the art.

More research needs to be done that examines the needs of college students, particularly in relationship to their university museums. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2005) write,

> Museums are places of possibility. But possibilities are only made real when educators skillfully use the broad knowledge and understanding they have of objects throughout their museums to inspire and encourage people to dream a little with them, and to make them their own. What we teach is not just "how" to look, or what to look for, but in the end, the possibilities of what art may be. (pp. 75-76)

It is the role of the museum educator at a university museum to help students create these personal connections with works of art and understand the intrinsic value of the museum. By studying the experiences of university students, museums can provide multiple opportunities for students to learn, have space to interact and reflect with works of art, and create these connections to their own lives.

**Chapter 3**

**Methodology**

*Research Design*

In this qualitative case study, I was able to learn about the students' experiences in their university art museum through dialogue and peer learning. It is a case study because I am focusing on a particular situation to "reach an understanding within a complex context" (Mertens, 2005, p. 237). Yin (2009) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). Because I am interested specifically in university students' experiences in the university art museum setting, a case study helped me better understand not only this phenomenon, but also the phenomenon in this particular place and time.

I used a constructivist paradigm, working with the understanding that, when we encounter a new experience or learning opportunity, we use our knowledge and past experiences to make meaning. The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology I employ also reflects this interest in personal experience and meaning making by helping me to understand the perspectives of the students and their perceptions of the university art museum. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach to this study was used in order to understand not only the experiences of the students in the museum, but also how both my own and their histories and understanding shape how we perceive these experiences.

Creswell (1998) writes that a phenomenological study "describes the meaning of *lived experiences* for several individuals about a concept or *the phenomenon*" (p. 51, italics in original quote).

In phenomenology, the data collection and analysis focus on open, flexible methods that allow for the phenomenon to be revealed on its own terms without fitting into preconceived structures or categories. Van Manen (1990) points out that the methodology of phenomenology is systematic in that it uses particular modes of obtaining and analyzing data. Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nyström (2008) suggest observation and interviewing using open dialogue as two types of data collection that align with phenomenological research.

There are intersections between phenomenology and hermeneutics that are important components of my study. Both van Manen's *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1990) and *Reflective Lifeworld Research* by Dahlberg et al. (2008) incorporate concepts of hermeneutics into their phenomenological methodologies. In both of these texts, the authors integrate the phenomenology of Husserl (2001), Merleau-Ponty (1995), Sartre (1998), and Heidegger (1998) with the hermeneutics of Gadamer. While phenomenology seeks to describe experiences, hermeneutics is based on the interpretation of these experiences. There are some contradictions in working with both phenomenology and hermeneutics, because although they draw from the same tradition, they are not the same. In hermeneutics, bracketing and bridling are not entirely possible because our histories, traditions, and prejudices are a part of how we approach our understanding of the world as we make meaning through these encounters.

Van Manen's (1990) definition of hermeneutic phenomenology reconciles these two philosophies. He writes:

> Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a *descriptive* (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an *interpretive* (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. The implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) "facts" of lived experiences are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. (p. 180-181, italics in the original text)

Thus, by understanding and acknowledging the role of hermeneutics in a phenomenological methodology, we can see how our experiences fit into our understanding of the descriptions of phenomenology without denying their existence.

This relationship between phenomenology and hermeneutics is especially important when considering the role of the works of art in the experiences of the students who not only interacted with each other, but also with the works in the galleries. Because I am interested in both of these types of interactions, I included data collection methods that incorporated both student responses to the experiences and to the works of art. As a researcher, my knowledge of the works of art with which the students interacted and my understanding of aesthetic experiences and authentic dialogue in the galleries was acknowledged as I trained the student docents and interviewed the pairs of students after their time at the museum. At the same time, these students had their own backgrounds, cultures, and histories, and I remained open to understand their experiences.

*Setting and Participants*

The museum at which this study took place reopened with a new permanent collection wing in January 2011. Student docents were asked to focus their visit on this section of the museum because it remains relatively static and docent training concentrated on this area, but I told them they could visit the temporary exhibitions on the other side of the museum if they had time. Only one pair briefly visited a temporary exhibition on works of art by African American artists, and the others stayed in the permanent collection wing during their entire visit.

The layout of the galleries in this wing is arranged with the type of art, region, and chronology in mind. Appendix D contains a detail of the museum's map that includes the themes of each gallery. Most of the visitors begin on the left side of the wing, with European art from medieval to Baroque (gallery 12). Walking through that gallery, they then go to modern European works that are arranged using the academic genre hierarchy that includes history painting, portraiture, landscape, and still life, with the added section of abstract art included as well (gallery 13). The majority of the works in the collection are American, and the six remaining galleries on the left side of the wing highlight American art in the collection, with a small amount of decorative arts woven into them. These galleries are arranged chronologically, beginning with colonial American works, and ending with post-modern art. It also includes a section on self-taught art, which the museum refers to as folk art (galleries 15, 16, 18, 21, & 22).

Between the left and right galleries is a corridor that contains a few pedestals with sculpture and objects, and four cases embedded into the wall that house small sculpture, *animalier* bronzes, china, and silver. Visitors usually walk through the left side of the

galleries, and then at the back of the wing, they weave through the right side to return to the entrance. On the right side in the back, there is a gallery dedicated to works on paper that rotates by theme every three months to protect the physically delicate nature of the objects (gallery 20). Next, there is a gallery devoted to refined decorative arts (gallery 19), and next to it, a gallery of vernacular decorative arts (gallery 17). Next to the decorative arts are two galleries dedicated to works and archival materials that contextualize the museum's collection (galleries 14 & 11), and often, these exhibitions relate to the museum's study centers that house archives. These study centers, located on the third floor of the museum with the administrative offices, are part of the new renovations of the museum and were designed for scholarly research.

All of the student pairs stayed mostly on the left side of the galleries and focused on European and American works. One pair went into the works on paper gallery briefly. Although they interacted with objects of decorative arts within these galleries, the pairs of students either did not have time or did not choose to go to the decorative arts galleries. This avoidance of decorative arts may have been because the decorative arts galleries were located after the path most docents take through the European and then American art galleries. The student docents also may have been trying to meet the expectations or interests of their museum partners.

Student docents were asked to volunteer for this study in a letter given to them at one of the sessions in January (Appendix E). They were asked to bring a non-art major to the museum and spend time talking about works in the permanent collection together. I allowed student docents to choose their partners for this study to ensure that they were comfortable in the galleries and to raise their level of interest in participating. Although I

assumed the non-art majors would have less experience in art museums, a couple of them

had visited museums a great deal before this study. Table 1 provides information about

these students as they described themselves in a brief survey (Appendix F). The students'

complete responses can be found in Appendix G.

**Table 1. Profile of Participants**

| Name | Class Standing | Major(s) | Number of Times Visited an Art Museum | Number of Times Visited the Georgia Museum of Art |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair #1 | | | | |
| Lisa (SD) | Graduate | Historic/ Cultural Aspects of Dress | Many Times | Multiple Times |
| Jen (MP) | Graduate | Historic and Cultural Dress-Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors | At least 20? (lots) | This was my first time. Was not open when I moved here. |
| Pair #2 | | | | |
| Marie (SD) | Other | Art History | 50+ | 20-30+ |
| Kyle (MP) | 5$^{th}$-year | Environmental Engineering | Between 50 and 100 | Dozens of times |
| Pair #3 | | | | |
| Liz (SD) | Graduate | Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors-Historic Costume and Culture | 75 | 20 |
| Summer (MP) | Graduate | Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors-Historic Costumes | 5 | 1 (this is my 2$^{nd}$ time) |
| Pair #4 | | | | |
| Brenda (SD) | 4$^{th}$-year | Art History/ | 100 | 50 |

|  |  | Classical Culture |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carrie (MP) | 4th-year | Environmental Health Science | 1 | 0 |
| **Pair #5** |  |  |  |  |
| Maddy (SD) | 4th-year | Art History | Too many to even try to count. In the hundreds. | Again, too many times to count. |
| Peter (MP) | 4th-year | English | 18 | 0 |
| **Pair #6** |  |  |  |  |
| Marla (SD) | 4th-year | Art History and Studio Art | Over 50 | Over 50 |
| Kate (MP) | 4th-year | Spanish | 3-4 | 1 maybe (6-7 y[ears] ago) |
| **Pair #7** |  |  |  |  |
| Alice (SD) | 5th-year | Art/ Art History | Many times | Many times |
| Martin (MP) | Graduate | Social Studies Education | 5 | 1 |

Seven students, listed here as pseudonyms, participated: Lisa, Marie, Liz, Brenda, Maddy, Marla, and Alice. Each of these student docents brought a museum partner, who was a student at the university and also a non-art major, with them: Jen, Kyle, Summer, Carrie, Peter, Kate, and Martin. It should be noted that of the seven student docents, four (Brenda, Maddy, Marla, and Alice) had also served as interns in the Education Department under my supervision. These four students had all developed materials and worked with programs in my department and knew the collection well before starting the student docent program. One of these former interns (Alice) also had given tours at the museum before it closed for renovation. In the following discussion, the student docents are identified by (SD) after their names, and their museum partners can be recognized by

(MP) after their names to remind the reader of each participant in the dialogic exchanges and subsequent discussion.

*Data Collection*

Van Manen (2008) believes that the role of the researcher as participant-observer is best for phenomenological studies. Although I worked with students in the student docent program at the museum, for this study, I think my participation would have hindered the dialogue. I was worried that my role would be viewed by the participants as an authority figure because I was both the supervisor of the student docent program and an employee of the museum. I think my presence could have added stress to the museum environment for both sets of students. Observing the interactions that were taking place in the galleries without participating in them through audio and video recordings allowed me to remove that pressure from the situation.

During the tours, student docents carried small, digital recorders with them in the galleries to record the conversations with their peers. The student docents held these recorders in their hands in order to capture their conversations with their museum partners. Small video cameras set up in the galleries were used to capture the interactions between the students with each other and the works of art. These cameras were mounted on tripods in six of the galleries to help me understand where the students were looking during their discussion and to gather non-verbal information from the students' dialogue. I changed the galleries in which the cameras were set up for each pair of students partly after noticing the galleries in which the students visited and also to be able to see more of the works with which the students interacted. However, in almost all of the cases, only

three or less cameras caught footage of the students because galleries in which the

students chose did not always have the cameras in them, and I had problems with

cameras shutting off or pointing in the wrong direction.

Student docents were asked to go through the galleries and talk about works with

their partner. I did not specify how many works they should discuss or where they should

begin. They could include times for silent interactions with works to allow themselves

and partners space to have private dialogues with art (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007; McKay

& Monteverde, 2003). Students could choose to use the wall labels, provided by the

curators, the "Family Dialogue Labels" written by the Education Department located with

the wall labels next to some of the works, gallery guides, and information they know

about the work, the artist, and its history as contextual information in their conversations.

The student docents had opportunities to learn about a variety of works that

incorporate different styles, cultures, and materials, and range from narrative to abstract

to decorative arts in the collection, and they could include any of these objects in their

tours. In order to better understand the experience, I incorporated open interviews, audio

and video recordings of these interviews, and audio and video recordings of the students'

time in the galleries to better capture verbal and non-verbal data.

The video cameras were set up in order to remove the need for a researcher to

follow and record the participants' dialogue and behavior. I could have asked research

assistants to shadow groups in the galleries, but I feared that it would disrupt the

conversations more than video, and I wanted to see the students interacting with the

works myself. Video recording is preferable in phenomenology because facial

expressions, body language, and gesture are recorded in addition to dialogue. However,

even a recording transforms the experiences as it changes it into another medium (van Manen, 1990). Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) point out the artificial nature of recording conversations in museums because people will feel more compelled to talk when they know they are being recorded, and the recording only captures that time in the galleries and not the related conversation that happens before and after the visit.

Schnettler and Raab (2008) emphasize the importance of video-collected data in qualitative research and discuss how, as equipment becomes less expensive and more accessible, its growing popularity presents opportunities and challenges to the field. Researchers, including those working in museums with studies such as those described in Heath and Vom Lehn (2004), are finding that video allows the data collector to step back from the real-life event being studied to leave the situation less distorted and more natural. We can also understand the events being recorded in sequential order and by-the-moment, rather than reconstructing it through notes and interviews.

Schnettler and Raab (2008) also point out the difficulties in collecting data through video. First, the researcher can end up with an overwhelming amount of data in a very short time when transcribing both the audio and video components of a recording. Secondly, the quality of the video can cause challenges if sounds or images are not recorded as expected. It is for these reasons that student docents were asked to carry a small digital recorder with them in the galleries in addition to the video cameras in case the microphones of the cameras were not able to capture all of the dialogue. In fact, contrary to my expectations, the audio recorders caught most of the data, and the video could only be used as supplemental data. However, I am still glad I used the video

component because I was able to see how the students physically interacted with works in a way that I would not have understood through the audio.

The audio was transcribed by a local professional transcription service. However, I listened to all of the audio while reading the transcriptions in order to get close to my data and fill in places in which the transcriptionist could not hear or understand what was being said by the participants. Because I know the works of art discussed and the museum itself, I was able to understand and even hear much more of what they were saying. It should be noted that the transcription itself as text changes the nature of the data as it removes the reader further from the original audio and video as the auditory and visual components of the study are translated into language.

In addition to these recordings, I used a brief questionnaire to obtain background and demographic information on the participants. It is included here in Appendix F. Tables of relevant information drawn from the questionnaire are included as Tables 1-7 in the text of the following chapters, but its full results can be found in Appendix G. I also used Falk and Dierking's Personal Meaning Mapping (PMM) (Adams, Falk, and Dierking, 2003), a form of concept mapping also used in the study of "Art Around the Corner," in order to obtain direct impressions of the visit and reflections that could be discussed during the interview. PMM is a type of concept mapping that "is designed to measure how a specified learning experience uniquely affects each individual's understanding or meaning-making process" (p. 22). PMMs allow visitors with different knowledge and backgrounds to come into the experience, and rather than producing correct answers to demonstrate learning, give them the opportunity to express their experiences and understanding through text and images.

In collecting data with PMM, individuals are asked to use blank sheets of paper to write words and phrases and even draw images that relate to a specific concept (Appendix H). This specific concept is considered the prompt, and it is written at the center of the page. The prompts I used were "Student Docent" for the student docents (Appendix I1) and "Art Museum" for non-art majors (Appendix I2). Participants of PMM are given as much time as they need for this process, and after they finish, the data collector takes time to discuss and ask questions about the PMM to clarify and elaborate on the visitors' ideas.

After the completion of the activity, individuals repeat this process using another color of ink to indicate areas where their perceptions have changed. After a period of time, participants revisit their PMMs and are invited to add more information in another color to show long-term changes in their perceptions or attitudes on this topic. More colors and steps could be included after each of our conversations about the PMMs to reflect additional information added as the students worked on their PMMs, but after working with the first pair of students, I chose to forego these steps because they seemed awkward and disrupted the flow of the interactions.

In my study, I gave students time to complete their PMMs before their tours. As Falk, Bronnenkant, Vernon, and Heimlich (2009) discuss, I used this information to get an overview of visitors' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs before the students participated in the activity as a base. This process also illustrated the changes that occurred after the activity because I asked them to revise their work immediately after their time in the museum. Although the students worked in pairs and were together for this process, they each had their own PMM and worked individually on them.

After at least a week, I asked the pairs of students to come back to the museum. At that time each student had another opportunity to make changes to his or her PMM after having time to reflect on their experiences. Falk and Dierking (2000) stress the role of time in museum experiences as we make connections between what we see in the museum and what we experience in our lives. Adams, Falk, and Dierking (2003) argue that in order to better understand the true impact of the museum on individuals, long-term use of PMM is needed. After students finished their PMMs, I interviewed the pairs of students together and asked them questions based on their PMM responses. If any PMM had reflected negative experiences, students would have been interviewed separately, but that was not the case.

The interview was used for, as van Manen (1990) describes, "exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" (p. 66). Dahlberg et al. (2008) discuss the role of dialogue in the interview process. In an open interview, both the interviewee and the interviewer are invested in the subject. However, unlike authentic dialogue, in an open interview the focus is on the interviewee's responses, while the interviewer has the responsibility and control over accessing and propelling this dialogue.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) see qualitative interviews as a continuum between structured, preconceived questions or an interview guide, and unstructured, open-ended techniques. In more unstructured interviews, the interviewee has more control over the direction of the discussion. Dahlberg et al. (2008) recommend a balance between a structured and unstructured interview that allows the researcher "to cultivate a productive dialogue that addresses the phenomenon as deeply and thoroughly as possible" (p. 187).

Thus, a question and answer format will not allow openings through which authentic responses can develop and be addressed. Instead, the interviewer must ask broad questions and include spaces that allow the subject to choose and elaborate on the information they would like to offer.

A general question guide was developed that included topics I wanted to cover in the interview based on the research questions for this study. It is included here as Appendix J. Van Manen (1990) cautions against allowing the open dialogue to be so unstructured that it lacks direction and form. He stresses the importance of focusing on the research questions in which the interviewer is interested. Dahlberg et al. (2008) also stress the need to focus the discussion on learning about the phenomenon being discussed rather than the individual experiences of each interviewee.

Like Gadamer's (1975/ 2006, 1986) concept of play, the subject of the interview is not on the individual players, but rather, it is the play itself. As Dahlberg et al. (2008) describe, "The interview can move here and there, back and forth, but all the while guided by the rules of the game" (p. 185). It is the role of the person interviewing to direct the attention to the subject being discussed and to the specific experiences involved in the phenomenon rather than generalizations. I began the interviews with specific questions but was open to changes as they progressed. I also did not listen to the audio in the galleries prior to the interview and communicated this fact to each set of participants as I began the interviews. I did not want my perception of their museum visits to influence or direct the questions and dialogue in the interviews, and I thought it might be uncomfortable for the students to talk about their time in the galleries with the knowledge that I already listened to their conversations.

Through a combination of the PMM, audio and video recording, and interviews, I

was able to have a better understanding of the students' experiences in the museum and

how dialogue with their peers relates to and influences the outcomes of these experiences.

I chose to use the PMM over White's (1998, 2009) aesthetigram that illustrates viewers'

experiences with works of art. Aesthetigrams are diagrams that students create to help

them respond to specific works of art as they reflect on themselves as the viewer, the

work of art as the object, and the context in which they are viewing the work. These tools

are used in dialogues and critiques after the students' experiences with the work.

However, because I am more interested in the overall experiences of the students in the

museum and changes in the students' understanding after their interactions in the

museum rather than their interactions with specific works of art, the PMM was a better

tool for this study. By asking students to complete the PMM before and after the tours, I

was able to see the changes in the students' learning and perceptions. White also

discusses the role of the aesthetigram as an outline for a critique, and I am more

interested in understanding the experiential outcomes of these museum visits through

interpretation than in formal art criticism in my study.

Sandell's (2006, 2009) Form + Theme + Context (FTC) Palette is another tool I

could have used with students to consider how they understand works of art in the

museum. Sandell (2009) describes FTC as "a way of looking at art and how we teach"

and explains that it "can serve as a tool to create engagement and understanding of art

and other subjects" (p. 290). When using an FTC Palette, students fit information into

different categories under the three headings of form, theme, and context. For instance,

under the heading of theme are the categories: big idea, subject matter, point of view,

visual sources, art historical references, other art connections, and other subject areas. As students use the FTC Palette with the work of art, they consider the work from different perspectives and relate the work to broader concepts and larger contexts. However, this chart again does not help me to understand the students' experiences, but instead focuses on the individual student's ability to understand and interpret works of art.

The tools that I used in this study reflect the importance of understanding the museum experience from the viewpoint of the university students. By allowing them the freedom to express their thoughts on a sheet of paper through the PMM, they were able to include the components of the museum experience that were most meaningful to them. I tried to conduct the interviews to be equally open to allow opportunities for the students to share their thoughts and ideas about their time in the museum and their interactions with each other and the works of art.

*Data Analysis Methods*

Data analysis involved initially treating every component of the data equally (Moustakas, 1994). The transcripts and the PMM were analyzed using what Dahlberg et al. (2008) call "the whole – the parts – the whole" (p. 236) that is based on the hermeneutic circle in which we understand the whole by studying the parts, while at the same time, we can only understand the parts by comprehending the whole. In this type of analysis, the researcher becomes familiar with the body of research data collected and is open to the information contained in the data. By having a sense of the whole data, the researcher becomes more familiar with the content, and the researcher does not need to rely on his or her preconceived notions about the subject. To first understand the whole, I

listened to the audio of the gallery dialogue and interviews while reading the transcripts and filling in the parts which the transcriber could not hear or understand. I created a list of possible themes or categories into which I thought portions of the dialogue would fit.

After I had a general understanding of the data, pieces emerged that seemed to have specific relationships to each other. The information was broken into parts in order to make "clusters of meaning" that are described as "a temporary pattern of meanings that helps the researcher to see the essential meanings and structures that describe and explicate the phenomenon" (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 244). To identify parts, I used colored pencils to color code the transcripts into segments that would fit into possible categories. Finding these structures helped me to once again look at the data as a whole as I organized the data into themes.

Van Manen (1990) describes these clusters as "the experiential structures that make up [an] experience" (p. 79). He offers three ways to isolate themes in data. As researchers, we can look at the whole data and find the phrases that express the meaning or main idea of the text and use these phrases to represent the whole. We can also find statements in the text that are essential or reveal something about the phenomenon and highlight those statements. Finally, we can look at each line of text and ask what has been revealed about the phenomenon. For my study, I highlighted phrases that specifically addressed the themes I discovered in the text and then clustered them to represent the data as a whole. Although this type of data analysis shares similarities with grounded theory, I will not be using its precise structure in this study, because I did not design the study to necessarily develop a new theory as its outcome.

It is important to find themes or clusters that are essential and not incidental in order to understand which parts are unique to the phenomenon and to recognize these themes to understand how they represent the essence of the phenomenon. After the data was clustered into segments of meaning, the information was once again considered in its entirety. The clusters were considered in relationships with each other to look for patterns that describe the essence of the phenomenon. This concept, a central component of the work of Husserl (1998) and Merleau-Ponty (1995), is fundamental to phenomenology in that we are studying the essence of experience (Dahlberg et al., 2008; van Manen, 1990). Dahlberg, et al. (2008) describe an essence as "a phenomenon's style, its way of being, and thus the essence cannot be separated from the phenomenon that it is the essence of" (p. 247).

This concept is especially important in understanding the transferability between this case study and other situations because, as van Manen points out,

> The essence of the a phenomenon is a universal which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon…[P]henomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures…of lived experience." (p. 10)

Thus, by breaking data down into parts and then considering how their relationships describe the phenomenon being studied, in this case the specific experiences of the university art museum for its students, we can better understand these experiences beyond the structure of the study.

*Standards for Quality of Data*

Yin (2009) writes that because a case study "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points," the case study "relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" and "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 18). By including multiple ways of collecting data into the design of the study, I hoped to gain a fuller understanding of the impact of the museum experience, and this information would be understood in terms of the theories guiding my study. I triangulated data using the PMM, audio and video recordings, and interviews to strengthen validity by looking for consistency and discrepancies in the data.

After coding the audio of the conversations in the galleries, I asked two educational researchers to review my categories by providing them with two of the transcripts from the gallery visits that I had coded. Peer debriefing, a critical conversation with peers, ensures that the themes are emerging from the data and not from my own biases or interests (Mertens, 2005). The researchers agreed with my categories, and one of them provided insight into a theme that I had not previously considered. This theme is discussed in Chapter 6. Additionally, my dissertation committee also served in this role as they read my methodology and analysis and provided questions and feedback.

Participants also had the opportunity to review the summation of their experiences to ensure that they were portrayed accurately. I emailed them Chapters 4-8 with the portions relating to them highlighted. The students had the opportunity to clarify statements and edit responses to better reflect their meaning. According to Mertens

(2005), member checking "is the most important criterion in establishing credibility" (p. 255). By asking participants if the information that I had written about them reflected their thoughts and experiences, I was able to ensure that I am truly representing my subjects in this study.

*Transferability*

As a case study, this research focuses on a specific group of students at a single university art museum. According to Mertens (2005), it is the responsibility of the reader to determine the degree of transferability between the study and other research, but the researcher must provide enough information for the reader to understand the similarities and differences between the studies. By providing detailed information about the students participating in the study, the museum in which the study will take place, and the study itself, readers can better understand the degree of transferability of this study.

*IRB*

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted to the Office of the Vice President of Research at the University of Georgia that offers specific details of this study. Students were given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity and all information is held on a password-protected computer. Pseudonyms are common in case studies, and there are many reasons to use them. I chose to give the students pseudonyms because participants are generally more open about their experiences if they are not worried about the judgments or expectations of peers at their institutions (Kvale, 1996).

Records will be kept for possible follow-up interviews for ten years, but recordings will be destroyed after the final submission of this publication.

For this study, student docents received two tour credits toward the ten they needed for completion of the program during that semester. Non-art majors received gift cards of ten dollars at a local coffee shop.

*Subjectivity Statement*

Phenomenology focuses on describing the phenomenon that we allow to be revealed to us as researchers by being open and careful in our understanding. In phenomenology, the researcher must always have an awareness of himself or herself as a component to the study. Because we may bring our own similar experiences and opinions to our study, we must acknowledge our prejudices but not allow them to inhibit our understanding as we proceed with our research.

Dahlberg, et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of the researcher's self-reflection and awareness during the study because we must understand how our own understandings and traditions influence how we look at the world in general, and specifically, our research topic. In order to better understand the experiences of others and be as objective as possible, we must distance ourselves, or what Merleau-Ponty (1995) refers to as "to slacken the threads of intentionality" (p. xiii). Reflecting on my own subjectivity in the research helped me to understand how my experiences with this topic and prejudices about museums could influence my interpretations of this study.

My interest in working with university students stems from my background as an art student. I always enjoyed going to art museums when I was younger, and even as

early as elementary school, we would spend my birthday at the Philadelphia Museum of Art at my request. My mom and both of my grandmothers painted, and I took art classes outside of the public school from the time I was in second grade through high school. As an undergraduate studio art major at a state school located an hour outside of Philadelphia, near where I grew up, I had many opportunities to visit galleries and museums in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington DC with classes, friends, and family. I have had many engaging experiences in museums alone and with others.

I began my work at the museum in which this study takes place through a part-time paid internship while I was working on my master's degree in art history at the university. I took the position because part of my assistantship had been cut, and I needed extra money to supplement my income. Because the Education Department at this museum only consisted of two people, and my supervisor was supportive of my ideas and interests, I was able to learn about many different facets of museum education from the time I started there. I have been able to work in many different areas of art museum education, although my chief responsibilities have fallen under community and statewide outreach and school programs until recently. During my time with community programs, I expanded the attendance of monthly Family Days from around 30 people at each event to 100-200 visitors and helped to design annual fifth-grade tours at the museum during which every fifth grader in the county has a chance to come to the museum for an interactive tour through funding from a private donor. The summer program I developed won the award of "Best Educational Program" from the state's museums and galleries professional organization, and I was the recipient of the state and regional museum

educator of the year award from the National Art Education Association in 2009 and 2011 respectively.

I have worked at the museum for nine years and was recently promoted to the position of curator of education. As a part of my new position, I work with university students and faculty to create an environment at the museum that emphasizes the relationship of the museum with the university in both academics and free time. This refocus of my position is a direct reflection of the changing role of the university art museum and its need to reconnect with university students, as discussed in Chapter 1.

As discussed above, through my position at the museum, I began a student docent program in fall 2010 as a way to get university students more involved in the museum. Starting the student docent program at this time aligned with the reopening of the museum in January 2011, a time when we had an overwhelming number of tours and requests to visit the museum. Training for the student docent program, for which I am responsible, included learning about how to talk with visitors about art using dialogic approaches and learning about works in the collection and special exhibitions.

In August 2010, just before the start of the student program, I was selected to participate in the Teaching Institute in Museum Education (TIME) at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. This intensive, five-day workshop was led by Rika Burnham, head of education at The Frick Collection, and Elliot Kai-Kee, education specialist in charge of gallery teaching at the J. Paul Getty Museum; their work is represented throughout this study. The focus of the TIME workshop was dialogue in the galleries, and the methods of looking at and discussing works of art I experienced have been incorporated into the student docent education program.

My background and interest in art museums are a large part of my motivation to help other university students have positive experiences in the museum. However, my history as an art student working with the museum could also influence how I understand students' experiences in the galleries. Although there is a risk of being too close to this topic to get an objective point of view, I believe that my position as a museum educator affords me the unique perspective of a researcher who understands the impact that university art museums can have on the lives of its students. I hope to use this research to design a program in which student docents work with freshman classes at the university to not only expose these students to their museum during their first year at the university, but also to create a situation in which these students can learn directly from their peers about looking at and talking about art.

*Additional Limitations to the Study*

There are other limitations to this study that should be addressed in addition to those discussed above. The student docent program was open to all students at the university in any major and at any degree level. However, as previously mentioned, only students with art majors or from the department of textiles, merchandising, and interiors applied. Also, in 2010-11, we only had female applicants for this program, so there were no pairs of men included in this study. Three of the student docents brought men as their museum partners. In each case, the non-art major was the student docent's boyfriend, and these pairs of students may have had different experiences or types of interactions in the galleries than the pairs of students who participated and were not dating.

There is also minimal racial and ethnic diversity in terms of the student docents, in that only one student docent was of Asian decent and the others were white. Student docents were asked to invite a non-art major of any background, but the study was still very limited in terms of diversity, again with only one non-art major describing himself as Asian, and the others were white. Appendix G includes specific demographics drawn from the surveys that student docents and non-art majors completed.

Another issue in this study is the museum environment during the students' visit to the museum. Because there were video cameras set up in the galleries, we conducted the study when the museum was closed. Although the students did not have experiences in terms of other visitors, for this study, I felt it was more important to have the conversations accurately recorded. Additionally, although there are many times in which the galleries are empty and quiet during open hours, I would have had less control over the number of visitors in the galleries because classes and other groups often visit without advanced notice. Other visitors were not meant to be a factor in the student experiences, and because the student docents represented the museum, they were able to be in the galleries without security.

This choice to work with closed galleries also related to my experience attending the TIME workshop at the Art Institute of Chicago. Each morning, we began our conversations in the galleries before the museum opened to the public, and we had the galleries to ourselves for about half of the session. During the second part of the morning, visitors would begin circling around our group and listening in, and their silent participation changed the experience for me. Because I often found these visitors

distracting, I wanted to avoid this type of unintended interruption as much as possible during this study.

However, although these gallery visits were listed on the master calendar and brought up repeatedly at meetings, there were instances where other members of the staff, the custodial crew, and in one instance, a large group of students early for a tour, interrupted the students in the galleries. In the case of the group of students, we had to cut the time in the galleries a little short for the student docent and non-art major because they would not have been able to continue with so many other people in the galleries.

*Timeline*

I planned to conduct my studies with university students at the beginning of March to fit into the museum's reopening schedule and to give student docents time to feel more comfortable themselves in the museum setting. The museum is closed to the general public on Mondays and Tuesdays and on Wednesdays through Fridays until noon, and I was able to conduct these sessions during off-hours in order to try to avoid other groups visiting the museum during these times. However, I only completed about half of the museum visits before I gave birth to my son five weeks early. I finished the gallery visits and subsequent interviews later than planned, mostly while I was on maternity leave through June 2011. Because of this, four of the interviews did not take place a week after the museum visit as intended, but instead they were held approximately a month after the initial visit. Appendix G lists when each of these components of the study was conducted with each pair of students.

*Lessons Learned in Conducting This Study*

Conducting this study in a museum proved to be more difficult than I thought it would be. Although the students were allowed in the galleries without security, with the student docents serving as representatives of the museum, and the galleries were reserved for the study, there were still interruptions from other staff, cleaning personnel, and even an early tour group that interfered with the audio and disrupted the dialogue of the pairs of students, as described above. Additionally, there were places in the audio that suggested that the student docents, in particular, were aware that I was listening to the audio. In some cases, they made comments directly to me on the recordings or comments about the video cameras. They also may have chosen galleries based on whether or not a video camera was set-up in there to help me obtain more data. Thus, although I attempted to make their time in the galleries as private as possible, the students were still conscious of my presence and other staff members' intrusions in the museum.

I used six small video cameras to capture non-verbal data in the galleries and interviews. However, in the galleries, these cameras did not capture very much footage. Of the six cameras used during each visit, few cameras captured the students for even a small amount of time. The cameras sometimes shut off for no reason and could only include small parts of each gallery, so the video with the students was minimal. Although I thought the video component would be the primary source that would be supplemented with audio recordings, the audio actually provided the data used for transcription, and video was incorporated when it was available. Stills from the video are used in the following chapters as illustrations manipulated to protect the students' anonymity.

I quickly realized that the PMM format was too complicated for the study. The flow of the discussions before and after the museum visits seemed interrupted by the constant returning to the PMM. After the first group, I simplified the process by eliminating some of the steps of the PMM. Instead of revisiting the PMMs every time we talked about them, I only included three stops to the PMM during the study: before the gallery visit, after the gallery visit, and at the beginning of the interview.

Also, after the first few interviews, I realized that in order to really discuss the PMM in detail, I needed to have a photocopy of the PMM in front of me so that I was not trying to read the student's original versions upside down. If I had to do it over again, I would have started with the PMM at the beginning of the interview instead of visiting it at the end of the conversation when it seemed like a late addition rather than an important component of the study. However, I do think that the PMM contributed to my understanding of the students' experiences as it recorded how their understanding of the museum and their roles as student docents changed from these visits, and the students often added information about their experiences during the discussions of the PMMs.

*The Educational Outcomes of the Museum Experience*

Eisner (2002) distinguishes between assessment and evaluation. Assessment "refers to the appraisal of individual student performance," and evaluation "refers to the appraisal of the program" (p. 178). In my study, I used assessment to understand individual experiences, but I also used this information to evaluate the impact of the program. Gorman (2007) discusses the importance of assessment in museum education. She explains that we evaluate programming to validate, improve, and continue a

program, and to improve our relationships with other staff members by bridging

departments that do not usually work together. In museums, evaluation can also be used

to consider the program in relation to the museum's mission. From my study, I evaluated

the student docent program to validate, improve, and continue it. By working with the

interests of the curators in the preparation and implementation of this study, I have also

tried to create a program that matches the goals of the museum.

In this study of the museum experiences of university student docents and non-art

majors, I wanted to see if not only the attitudes of both sets of students changed after

visiting the museum, but also if the students gained new perspectives on viewing art

through their interactions with each other and with the works. I hoped that by offering

non-art majors the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with a peer and interact with art,

they would have positive experiences and want to return to the museum. In Falk and

Dierking's (2000) discussion of an evaluation of the National Gallery's "Art Around the

Corner," the authors found that students who participated in a program that gave them

opportunities to look at and talk about art, "expressed a genuine appreciation of and love

for works of art and demonstrated enhanced abilities to articulate their responses to art"

(p. 166). These students were also able to use the vocabulary and the skills taught in the

program years after it ended.

For student docents who have gone through six-months of the docent education

program, I hoped that these same results were evident by the time they visited the

museum for this study. For non-art majors with little or no experience in museums, I

looked for evidence of a new level of comfort in the museum and familiarity with the

museum setting. Additionally, I wanted to see an awareness of the function of the

museum and the roles works of art can take in the academic and personal lives of the students. Finally, I hoped that non-art majors would leave the museum with an understanding that they can contribute to understanding works of art and that their experiences and knowledge are part of this interpretation.

In assessing the experiences of both the student docents and the non-art majors, I considered Soren's (2007) list of "qualitative indicators of success" (p. 229) for assessing the outcomes of the museum experience. She writes that we can measure successful exhibitions and programs in visitor responses that reflect: a development of an appreciation, sensitivity, or understanding; a value of an idea, topic, person, or object; "a meaningful experience" (p. 229) related to specific objects; an insight into themselves or other; and a desire to learn more. I consider these types of outcomes to, on one level, demonstrate engagement and, on another level, have the potential to be transformative experiences.

These are the outcomes that I looked for in the assessment of the university students' experiences, but I was also open to discovering different types of experiences, because the student docents were not aware of the outcomes I was looking for in this study. Burnham (2011c) cautions that teaching towards transformative experiences misses the goals. In gallery teaching, we "must have the courage to teach without expectations in every sense" and must not teach towards "the by-products of experience rather than experience itself" (p. 148-149). She writes, "Teaching *toward the work of art* makes transformative experiences possible, but teaching toward such experiences must not be our goal" (p. 149, italics in original quote). Thus, the focus of the student docents'

work should not be creating transformative experiences but on their interactions with work of art itself.

Art museums are a space for the viewer to have an authentic experience with original works of art through dialogue in which we have a chance to interact with the other and see ourselves in this encounter. Museums are a space for us to understand our place in history and to see ourselves in the other through our interactions with art when these spaces allow us to have opportunities for this type of engagement.

Gadamer understands how powerful museum experiences can be. He writes, "...after going through a museum, we do not leave it with exactly the same feeling about life that we had when we went in. If we really have had a genuine experience of art, then the world has become both brighter and less burdensome" (*RB*, p. 26). Although what we encounter in museums may be challenging and even distressful as it impacts our emotions, experiencing a human connection through a dialogue with a work of art or another person in the museum helps us to understand ourselves and our part in humanity better. A phenomenological methodology allowed me to be open to the possibilities of the experiences of visitors in general, and in particular, the university students with whom I work. By incorporating hermeneutics into this methodology, I was able to consider how traditions and histories of both myself and these students factored into these experiences.

*Emergent Themes*

The analysis of the data focuses on types of dialogic interactions that emerged from the data collected: "The Museum and Its Collection," "Connections to Courses and

Contextual Information," "Personal Preferences and Connections," and "Meaning and Interpretation." "The Museum and Its Collection" includes the museum space and specific information about the museum and the works in the permanent collection that the student docents learned from their time at the museum. The theme "Connections to Courses and Contextual Information" includes knowledge from university classes and information from different disciplines that students connected to the works of art. "Personal Preferences and Connections" focuses on likes and dislikes and connections that relate to the personal lives of the students. Finally, "Meaning and Interpretation" includes how the students incorporated the previous themes with observation to build meaning through dialogue.
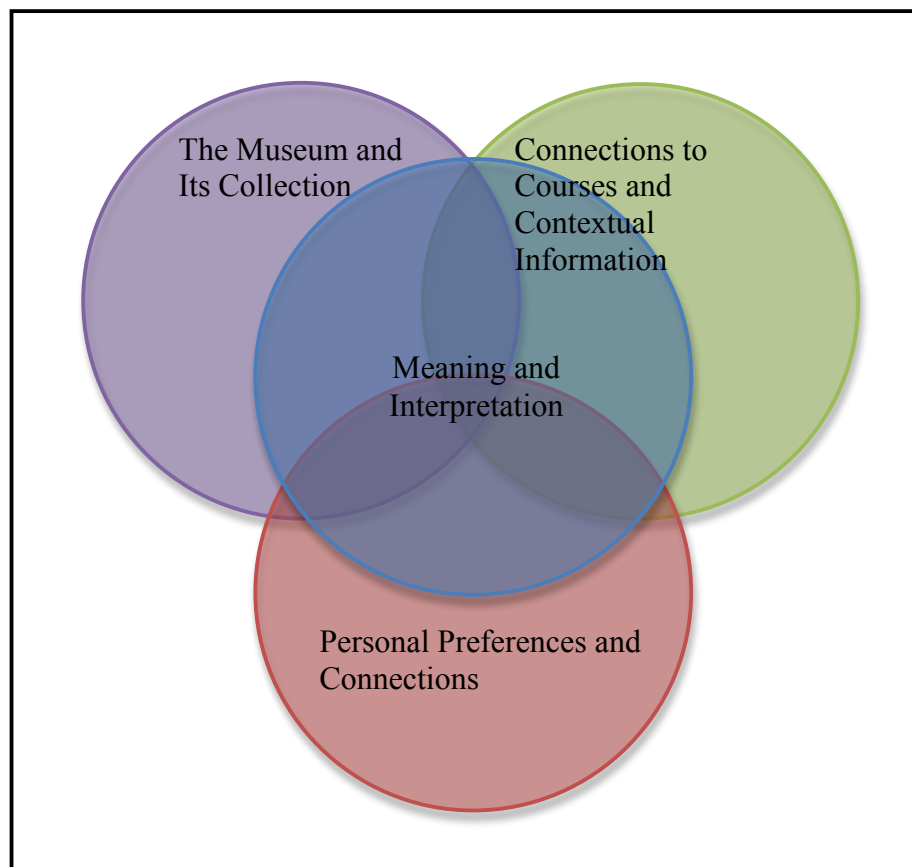
*Figure 1*. Model of Meaning and Interpretation through Dialogue

In order to better understand the relationships between the themes and how they relate to interpretation, I constructed a diagram (Figure 1) to illustrate how I envision these themes working together to construct the museum experience through dialogue. These themes were fluid and overlapped in places, and as such, they did not have completely distinct perimeters, as reflected in the diagram. This illustration is different than Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model of Learning (Appendix K), which illustrates the relationships between the personal, physical, and sociocultural contexts and the influence of time on learning, in that this diagram focuses on dialogic interpretation. The following chapters will examine these themes, their relationships to each other, and how they relate to meaning making through dialogue.

**Chapter 4**

**Emergent Theme: How the Museum and Its Collection Fit Into Dialogue**

*The Space and Atmosphere of the Museum*

Csikszentmihalyi (1995), Falk and Dierking (2000), and Longhenry (2007) write about the role of physical space in the museum experience. As Longhenry (2007) discusses, the museum space can be overwhelming for museum visitors without a lot of experience, but at the same time, they often have "a strong desire to chart their own course" (p. 185). In this way, the student docents were invaluable because they could help their museum partners organize their visit and make their own choices at the same time. In the audio, it is evident that the student docents often initiated the dialogue in the galleries by talking about the museum and its layout. In every gallery visit included in this study, this type of information was concentrated in the beginning of the session and lessened or incorporated in other categories of dialogue as the session continued. Beginning these tours with comments such as Brenda (SD)'s introduction, "These two galleries are European art, and then the rest of this half of it, this part of the museum is all permanent collection, American stuff. So this stuff is all owned by the museum for the most part" helped to introduce the museum and added structure to the beginning of the visit.

Methods to assist visitors with orientation in the galleries were included in the student docent training as a way to help visitors feel at ease in an unfamiliar space. The importance of wayfinding and orientation is stressed by Longhenry (2007) and in the

Getty study *Insights* (1991) because the visitor needs to feel in control of his or her museum experience. The student docents allowed room for the non-art majors to have choice in the direction and path taken in all of the museum visits. Although concentrated at the beginning of the gallery time, the student docents helped their museum partners make informed decisions about where to go next throughout the sessions. Interactions such as the one by Lisa (SD), a graduate student majoring in historic and cultural dress, and Jen (MP), a graduate student in the same program, below were common threads in these dialogues in the galleries.

| | |
|---|---|
| Jen (MP): | I wonder if part of the study is figuring out how in the world- |
| Lisa (SD): | How in the world you're supposed to navigate this? |
| Jen (MP): | Where are we supposed to go? |
| Lisa (SD): | No, that's part of our job. I guess you can always follow the exit signs. |
| Jen (MP): | Yeah, well, there's tons of those too. |
| Lisa (SD): | We can go, either this is our Impressionist and modernist, and then this is World War II, Depression era. |
| Jen (MP): | Let's just start this way. The Impressionist. |

Here Lisa (SD), perhaps sensing frustration, stepped in to tell Jen (MP) that her job is to help her find her way in the galleries, inserted information about the different themes in the galleries, and offered Jen (MP) a choice in the gallery to which they could go next. Most of the student docents noted that they did not have a plan, but instead, they chose to walk through the galleries casually in order to give the non-art majors opportunities to

decide the direction of the visit. Only one student docent, Brenda (SD), stated in the interview that this lack of a plan made her uncomfortable during the time in the museum.

In the design of this study, I tried to take away normal distractions that might impede on the students' conversations with each other. I was concerned that the focus would be too heavy on these interruptions, and the point of the activity, as a way to understand how dialogue builds meaning and interpretation, would be lost. Although there were some accidental intrusions, as described in Chapter 3, for the most part, the galleries were private spaces in which the students could engage in dialogue with each other and with the works of art. However, in the interviews, students still brought up factors that imposed on their experiences in museums during other visits, and it is interesting to note how powerful these intrusions were as compared to this experience. Security and crowds were the two largest complaints. Wayfinding and a lack of wall text were criticisms also noted as issues in these experiences.

Many of the student docents began giving tours during the first Student Night at the museum held during the week of the reopening in February 2011. Over 2,000 university students attended events at the museum that night. Two of the non-art majors in this study had visited that night to support their friends during their tours, which were open to all students and scheduled intermittently throughout the evening, and these students had not been back to the museum since that visit. The comparisons between the Student Night in which students flooded the galleries and lobby of the museum, and the private time in the galleries that were part of this study were dramatic.

Additionally, many students had been to larger museums for blockbuster exhibitions, student events, and during popular times of the year, such as the

Metropolitan Museum of Art around Christmas, and the large volumes of people during these visits directly impacted their experiences with works of art. Henry (2000) found similar responses when she asked art students to recall and write about positive and negative museum experiences. As Brenda (SD) said, "I think that the amount of people in a gallery or an art museum hugely impacts the experience you have. So I think that- I don't know- I don't know that there's a solution to that necessarily, but I think that that's something that should be looking into more as far as how to solve some of the problems that you can get by having zillions of people in the gallery." Her museum partner, Carrie (MP), said that her favorite part of the visit was coming on a Monday when the museum was closed to visitors. "I just, I hate crowds. I hate when there's a ton of people around, so that was really nice to be able to see it like that."

Because the student docents are considered volunteers at the museum, I obtained permission for the pairs to be in the galleries alone in order to give the students the privacy and space to talk about the works together. The absence of crowds and museum staff was noted by many of the participants as comparisons to other experiences in museums. Marie (SD), an art history undergraduate student, and Kyle (MP), a fifth-year environmental engineering major, agreed that their favorite part of the visit was, as Marie (SD) put it, "the privateness of it." They both agreed that they could have conversations about the works without worrying about the comfort level of others, and they talk about their dialogue with Elizabeth Jane Gardner's *La Confidence*, ca. 1880 (Appendix L1).

| Marie (SD): | …we were able to kind of just talk and have a dialogue and a conversation rather than- |
| --- | --- |
| Kyle (MP): | We talked about the fingernails and the- |

Marie (SD):    *La Confidence*, yeah. We were talking about fingernails and just- Yeah. I think it gave us more freedom to be almost schizophrenic, if you will, and jump around and then it allowed the conversation to be organic and fluid and just jump around, and then when you were done talking about something, even in the middle of it, just okay, we're going to go look at this now. There wasn't any pressure or anything.

Similarly, Liz (SD), a graduate student in historic costume and culture, and Summer (MP), a graduate student with the same major, connected the private time in the galleries with their conversations.

Liz (SD):    …even if I am with people at museums, very rarely do we discuss. And I don't know if that's because we're just trying to get through it, and we're trying to see everything or I don't know why that is. But I think because we had time and I didn't-

Summer (MP):    And there was no one else in there. Yeah, like we really didn't feel like we had to be quiet so as not to disrupt anyone else.

Liz (SD):    Yeah, it was nice.

Interviewer:    How was that, being in the galleries by yourselves? Originally I thought you guys would have to have security

with you, but they, actually because you're a student

docent, didn't require that, which- you have all the power.

Liz (SD):     I actually liked it. I've always said that my dreams are to go

into big museums, like the Louvre and Musee d'Orsay

when it's just me because I get annoyed with all the people

around because I can't connect and really get out of the art

what I've been getting out of it in books.

Most pairs of students considered their times in the galleries to be unique and allowed them the freedom to talk with each other. This type of space allowed for students to focus on the dialogue between each other and with the works of art.

Kate (MP), who had been to other museums before, said that she liked "that there wasn't anyone there" because "there were no guards telling you to move away, not that we were really close or anything, but it's a nice feeling like you're not being watched, even though there are cameras there." These sentiments also were expressed by Summer (MP) and Liz (SD).

Liz (SD):     …I enjoyed that there weren't visible security guards.

Sometimes I feel like, even at other museums, that they're

watching you, waiting for you to do something.

Interviewer:  They're waiting for you to touch it?

Liz (SD):     Yeah, they're waiting for you to do something bad, and it

kind of impedes the experience because you feel like, I

don't know, like it's voyeuristic kind of, like they're

watching you watch the art, and I don't know, it's kind of

weird. So, I enjoyed that. I mean, there were video

cameras, but I didn't even think about that.

These findings are supported by Henry (2000), who notes the strong impact that

negative interactions with museum staff, especially security, can have on the museum

experience. Although security was not an issue for these visits, I was concerned about the

security cameras and video cameras I set up in the galleries as a distraction. While most

groups were not bothered by the small video cameras I set up, a couple of the pairs did

tell me that they were conscious of the cameras. Alice (SD) said "the cameras were kind

of unsettling at first" because she would suddenly have "the realization I'm being

watched."

Although the cameras allowed the pairs of students to be alone in the galleries

without someone following them with a camera, they still added a voyeuristic element to

the experience beyond the tiny security cameras located near the ceilings in corners of the

galleries. Similarly, the students also sometimes were aware that I, as the coordinator of

the student docent program, was listening to their conversations, especially when they

were not sure about a fact, "Oh man, I'm blanking. Sorry, Carissa." [Alice (SD)] or

stating a preference, "Honestly, I don't like this painting. I'm sorry, Carissa." [Lisa

(SD)]. However, for the most part, the students were engaged solely with each other and

with the works of art in the galleries, and I believe that the presence of the video cameras

and knowledge of my presence was minimal.

*Student Docents as "Professional Volunteers"*

Simply allowing student docents to be in the galleries alone sent the message to the pairs of students that the role of the docent was an important one in the museum, and that docents are a part of the museum. By holding this responsibility and by taking the role of the guide in the museum, the student docents also positioned themselves as the person with experience in the museum. Establishing their roles as, what Zollinger Sweney (2007) calls "professional volunteers" (p. 83), put them in a position in which they could share knowledge and offer suggestions as representatives of the museum. This point was acknowledged by Kate (MP) who, when asked in the interview if it helped to have a friend with her, said "Yeah, a friend with knowledge. I would never go to a museum by myself."

Indeed, student docents can provide additional support to an inexperienced museum visitor by providing additional information about the works, inspiring personal connections, and helping the students find their paths through the museum without necessarily intruding on the experience. The knowledge that the student docents brought to the experience was appreciated by many of the non-art majors. Carrie (MP), a senior majoring in environmental health science, talked about understanding Jonas Lie's *Bridge and Tugs*, ca. 1911-15 (Appendix L2) better because of the input that Brenda (SD), a senior with a double major of art history and classical culture, brought to the experience.

Carrie (MP):     On a lot of stuff, like, I'd look at it, and it'd just be weird. Then she'd [Brenda (SD)] would tell me that it's just, then she'd go into a little more detail, and then- I remember there's one, the perspective was looking- it was a water

one, like an ocean and a harbor or something. It was just-

the perspective was weird. The colors were dark.

Brenda (SD):          *Bridge and Tugs*.

Carrie (MP):          Yeah. It's just like, "What is wrong with this?" and she's

like, "Oh, the perspective is just not typical art." I'm like

"Oh, well, that's what- yeah." That kind of thing.

One point that was reiterated by the pairs of students throughout the interviews was that this museum visit was a special experience because the students could spend their own time with the works of art. The private part of the visit was a favorite part for many of the students. For Summer (MP), the non-art major of the pair, all museum visits are special, but not part of her daily life. "Museums aren't like an everyday occurrence in my life. I guess for me, a museum is like a special trip, like something you don't do often, like when you get a special meal from your favorite restaurant, or when you have a special trip…" By giving students these opportunities to spend time in the galleries and to get to know the museum, we are giving them a chance to appreciate what the museum has to offer and see how it relates to them. McCarthy et al. (2004) stress the need for arts organizations to "create circumstances for rewarding arts experiences" because "the key to transforming the occasional into frequent participants is to increase their emotional, cognitive, and social engagement in the arts experience" (p. 73).

The museum needs to be understood as a place for the students. Summer (MP), who thought of the museum as a place to visit as "a special trip," also thought that "high class people" frequent museums. Liz (SD)'s response to this point reflects her role as a docent when she says, "I think a lot of people think museums are elitist institutions. And I

know a lot of people are scared to come to museums. That makes me sad because it's just

to learn." In the audio of the museum visits, the student docents seemed to be trying to

dispel this notion of the museum. They spent a lot of time focusing on the comfort-level

of their museum partners and tried to engage them in the experience.

*Setting the Stage for Dialogue and Play*

As the representatives of the museum, student docents also contributed

information that they learned from the education sessions and materials provided by the

museum's curators. All but one pair of students began at the first gallery, which contains

the earliest works in the collection, and these students started with an incomplete

altarpiece in the gallery in which the curator of European art drew the missing parts onto

the wall (Appendix L3). This work reflects debate over where its parts were originally

located based on the arrangement of the saints and the direction of their eyes in relation to

the central panel that would have depicted the Virgin and Child, and this topic was used

by the student docents often to spark conversation with the non-art major. For instance,

when Maddy (SD), an art history senior introduces the altarpiece with missing parts

drawn in pencil on the gallery wall to Peter (MP), an English major, she talks about how

its pieces are positioned.

> Maddy (SD):      They're not sure what the top of it looks like, you know, for
>
> absolutely certain. But they know the middle piece is
>
> actually in Pisa, and they're hoping that maybe they can get
>
> it on loan at some point to have a middle, which would be
>
> neat. And it looks like these were originally separated and

sort of reframed into a two panel sort of thing and Lynn, who is the European curator, was talking about this guy, St. John the Baptist, and everybody thinks he should be right here, but he thinks he should be here, sort of just based on looking how the ground slopes, like everything is supposed to lead to him and focus on the child, and so his eyes look towards them and like the ground sort of goes toward them, so he doesn't really see why everybody else thinks he should be on that side, but he said he's just going to keep them on that side because that's what he thinks.

By including this information in the beginning of the museum visit, student docents are able to explain that we do not know everything about a work of art, opening the door for dialogue.

Student docents also shared stories about other experiences with tours, especially including humorous stories about fifth-grade tours, which demonstrated their experience working with the art in the galleries to their peers.

Maddy (SD):     That's funny because I can't tell you the number of times I've walked past these and looked at these and I'm still finding new things at this point. That is one of our big ones, *Tallulah Falls*, which we should still go to some time. And it's sort of fun to do with the kids also because we sort of talk about the figures, and have you been to Tallulah Falls since it's sort of a Georgia landmark as well? It's kind of

fun to see that guy almost looking like he's going to fall off

too."

Peter (MP):          Yeah, they all look very precarious to the angle of that

rock.

This type of comment about the man who may fall off the cliff in George Cooke's

*Tallulah Falls*, 1841 (Appendix L4) also takes away some of the seriousness of the tour,

showing the museum partner that they could have fun in the galleries and bring in

silliness or funny observations. Although humor was not identified as a component of

dialogue during student docent training, I often use it in the galleries, and it was part of

the interactions with works of art that I modeled with the student docents. Drawing from

Gadamer (1975/ 2006), Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011c) argue that play is crucial to

museum education. They write, "Participants in interpretive play resist rushing to

conclusions and value the play of interpretation itself; they appreciate the process of

dialogue as much as the conclusions to which it may lead" (p. 128). In the example

above, Maddy (SD) sets up a casual dialogue that invites the participant, in this case, her

museum partner, Peter (MP), to engage in play with her.

Indeed, there was a balance between lighter comments and more serious dialogue

in the galleries in each of the audio segments the students recorded. Although play is

more about the dialogic process than humor necessarily, these lighter comments seemed

to be used by the student docents to spark interest and encourage dialogue that would

lead to deeper meaning. This play can be seen throughout the dialogues included below,

and information and observations are woven throughout these conversations.

Student docents also used materials or interactive elements, such as the altarpiece, a work of kinetic sculpture, or earth pigments located adjacent to the work in which they were used, to engage non-art majors in dialogue. Because the student docents knew about these objects in advance, they were able to point them out to their museum partners, who may have overlooked them on their own, and, as in the case of the kinetic sculpture, showed the non-art majors how they could engage with the works. These interactive materials inspired a lot of dialogue and interest. As Hubard (2007a) discusses, the work of art exists in our space, and there is "a sense of immediacy" in how a work of art is first perceived by the viewer's senses and emotions, and by the physicality of the experience (p. 47; as also discussed in Hooper-Greenhill, 1999b; Langer, 1953; Sontag, 1982).

The following excerpt by Liz (SD) and Summer (MP) demonstrates the role of the kinetic sculpture in dialogue as the pair discuss *Four Lines with Z*, 1975, by George W. Rickey, a metal work made up of rods that move with the slightest breeze.

Summer (MP):     Let's go talk about that cool thing.

Liz (SD):     What cool- oh, the sculpture.

Summer (MP):     Yeah, that one and the big painting that you always talk about.

Liz (SD):     Oh, and the block one. Okay. I like it…[blowing at it] I like that you can impact the movement. I mean, I don't know that you're supposed to, but when I was here with [curator of decorative arts], he showed it to us. And I think that's the coolest part of it. I know, but I think that's the coolest part of it.

Summer (MP):        I love it. It's kind of like those things just go around in your

office, like on a wire.

Liz (SD):           Right, I think that this would- like I would want this on my

desk, if I was a CEO and I had a big enough desk to put a

piece of sculpture on.

Summer (MP):        I would play with it though. You would too.

Liz (SD):           I would definitely play with it. I think it's awesome.

Summer (MP):        I like it.

Liz (SD):           And I like that they left it out of, like they didn't put a glass

case over it because it would defeat the whole purpose of

seeing its movement.



*Figure 2.* Liz (SD) and Summer (MP) interact with kinetic
sculpture.

In this excerpt, Liz (SD) shows us how visitors can interact with the sculpture and incorporates the museum's choice to not enclose it in plexi-glass on the pedestal into the conversation because a cover would restrict its movement (Figure 2). Without this inside knowledge, Summer (MP) may not have noticed the gentle movement of the sculpture or thought about its open placement in the gallery.

Maddy (SD) and Peter (MP) had a similar conversation about the earth pigments Howard Thomas, an artist and former professor at the university of which the museum is a part, used to make paints in the following excerpt about his work, *Little Grand Canyon Yellow*, 1964:

| Maddy (SD): | Okay, this one is so cool because this guy, Howard Thomas, he apparently was a professor here, too. I'm not sure he was a professor, maybe he just had a lot to do with UGA, I can't remember now, but anyway, to make his colors, he went around and took soil samples and he labeled them really meticulously, and then he made his pigments out of them, so he had [reading the labels] Little Grand Canyon and then you have the foundation of the new art building, which is the old one on North Campus now. |
|---|---|
| Peter (MP): | That's awesome. |
| Maddy (SD): | Frat house on Baldwin. And then even Lamar Dodd's backyard, and then he has all different oranges and yellows. |
| Peter (MP): | That's very cool. |

Maddy (SD):        Isn't it cool? I also love how meticulous with the dates and everything too.

Peter (MP):        That's awesome that you guys have the containers.

Maddy (SD):        Yeah, and so-

Peter (MP):        It adds so much to it.

Maddy (SD):        Yeah.

Again, Maddy (SD) is able to add richness to the experience with a work by pointing out additional materials used to create the painting that may have been overlooked (Figure 3). By discussing them, she adds information to the dialogue that incorporates how the work of art was made. She also shares her enthusiasm for the materials with Peter (MP), who is drawn into the experience.
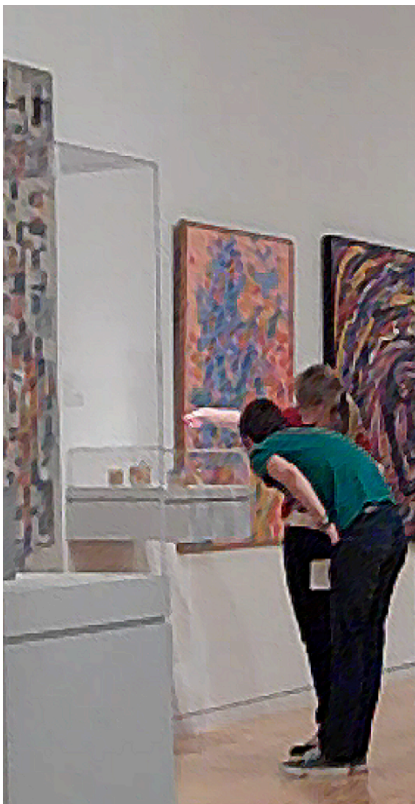


*Figure 3.* Maddy (SD) shows Peter (MP) pigments.

### Lack of Information

Throughout the audio in the galleries, the student docents wove information about the works with personal observations and connections. However, as we stress in the education sessions for student docents, they cannot know everything and saying "I don't know" is okay. When they did not know specific information, the student docents let the

visitors know that they would help them to find the information either through written text in catalogues or files or by getting in touch with one of the curators.

Sometimes, the lack of wall text made it difficult to interact with works that the student docents did not have a lot of experience talking about. For example, when Liz (SD) and Summer (MP) spent time discussing elements of John Linton Chapman's *Via Appia*, 1867 (Appendix L5), their questions could not be immediately answered.

| | |
|---|---|
| Liz (SD): | There's brick underneath the stone. |
| Summer (MP): | That's weird. On the- I wish I knew what that meant. |
| Liz (SD): | The right column. Yeah, I think there is, like there's writing on this little piece of stone too. Something about nobility… |
| Summer (MP): | Yeah, we need someone who knows Latin. |
| Liz (SD): | We need some context. |

Reflecting on this interaction during the interview, Summer (MP) mentioned that they talked about it for a long time, but they left the experience with questions.

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer (MP): | I like the painting because that's how we went to it. I was like ooh, let's look at this. |
| Liz (SD): | But there were some lingering questions. |
| Summer (MP): | But I really like that one. I liked how big it was. |
| Interviewer: | Were you guys able to help each other kind of answer some of those questions, or do you think you just, you kind of just noticed more? |
| Summer (MP): | I think we just kind of discussed the different questions and like what we thought. |

Liz (SD):                 And I think we came up with more…

Interviewer:              How did you feel about not quite, not really ending up with

                         the answers to those questions from it?

Liz (SD):                 It didn't bother me.

Summer (MP):              I mean, it bothers me a little bit because I want to know…I

                         always like to have answers.

Because the student docents visited the galleries soon after it reopened, wall text

was gradually added, and it was not available for some of the works that include wall text

now. It was noted by some of the student docents that there was not information

available, although most knew why it was not all on the walls. However, as in the

example above, the lack of contextual information in the galleries was noticed by the

pairs of students who had questions that could not be answered by the works in front of

them. In the few cases that facts could not be answered, student docents did say "I don't

know," and a few times, including Liz (SD) in this case, offered to look up the

information for them. The role of knowledge held an important place in the dialogue of

the students, as discussed in the next chapter.

As student docents interacted with their museum partners in the galleries, they

were able to incorporate information about the museum that helped shape the experience

for the pairs of students. For non-art majors, this visit to the museum broadened their

understanding of what art museums have to offer. During her interview, Carrie (MP) said,

I didn't realize how diverse the collection was. I guess because it's not something

I look at every day- the different genres of art- but it was neat. Like you had

furniture. I didn't expect to see furniture in there, but I love old furniture and

antiques, so I was like, 'That's really cool that you have antiques in there.' Just

the variety to go from these really church altarpieces to these crazy folk art things-

it was cool. They're all kind of art together.

In this case, Carrie (MP)'s definition of art broadened because of her time in the museum, and because of her interest in furniture and antique objects, she could see that the museum had more for her than she may have initially realized. The next chapter will look more closely at how knowledge and connections to university courses played a role in the museum experience for these students.

**Chapter 5**

**Emergent Theme: Incorporating Knowledge and Curricular Connections**

Throughout the educational sessions for student docents, the role of contextual information was discussed. As Hubard (2007c) stresses, if information is shared too early, it will shut down conversation. If it is brought in after an entire interpretation is built through dialogue, it may be received as "here's the real story" (p. 20), and the audience may see their discussion as a waste of time. Burnham (2011b) also talks about the role of information. She writes, "Basic principles guide our teaching, but there can never be fixed rules or rigid methods prescribing the appropriate role of information. Each of us, as gallery teachers, must find his or her own way. And each of us must be aware that each artwork and each group makes its own demands on the interplay of information and interpretation" (p. 115). In other works, it is up to each student docent to decide where and when contextual information plays a role in the dialogue, and this idea was part of their training. As discussed in the previous chapters, both the curators and educators had time with the student docents to provide them with a balance of factual and contextual information on one side, and educational theory and pedagogy on the other.

*Incorporating Knowledge from Courses and Majors*

The contextual information came from different sources, because students were not only learning about art, history, and culture at the museum, but also in their classes. Brenda (SD), who was an art history and a classical culture major, included her

knowledge and interest of history into the tour. For her, contextual knowledge is an important part of creating a connection with a work of art, as she discusses in her interview.

| Brenda (SD): | …for me, having that background knowledge about a work of art or an artist or a period makes all the difference. |
| --- | --- |
| Interviewer: | Right, yeah. Just having some more information to make it accessible, I guess. |
| Brenda (SD): | Uh huh. And I feel like I just really understand something a lot more if I have some kind of "in" to a work of art. Then I feel a lot more at ease talking about it and looking at it and thinking about it. |
| Interviewer: | Do you think that because you know something about the work already that you discover more from it from that? |
| Brenda (SD): | Uh huh. Yeah. Like a lot of works in the museum, I don't know huge details about them unless I go seek out and read an article about them or something like that. But since I know basic things about art history now, I feel like I can really examine any work that's put in front of me and have something intelligent to say about it even if I don't necessarily know the exact details about that work. |
| Interviewer: | Right, that's interesting. |
| Brenda (SD): | Yeah, I feel like I come at things from a very different place than a lot of art history people. |

| Interviewer: | Yeah, that's interesting. So, you're making connections from other areas really. |
|---|---|
| Brenda (SD): | Yeah, I come at things from a very history-oriented perspective. |

Marla (SD), an art history and studio art major with a concentration in painting, was able to talk about how the works of art were painted during her museum visit with Kate (MP), a senior majoring in Spanish. In Figures 4.1 and 4.2, Marla (SD) uses gesture to emphasize how large the work of art is in comparison to the tiny brushstrokes the artist used. "You see how large the painting is? A lot of times, artists are using these brushes



*Figures 4.1 and 4.2*. Marla (SD) demonstrates brushstrokes.

that are maybe like ten hairs on the whole brush. They'll just sit there just like…painting." In the following excerpt, she talks about the process of creating a painting with Kate (MP) who does not have this experience.

| | |
|---|---|
| Marla (SD): | …I like paintings that don't have glass in front of them because you can actually see the texture of the… |
| Kate (MP): | What do you mean? |
| Marla (SD): | Like see how the clouds, that paint is applied farther- you can tell it's applied later in the process because it's sitting more on the surface. |
| Kate (MP): | Yeah, like here. |
| Marla (SD): | Like that white-white, yeah. |
| Kate (MP): | So what would be like a place to start? Would you do the whole thing? |
| Marla (SD): | No, you do- I don't know what this artist did, but it depends on how you started it. But like you work from general to specific. So you're going to start with something like, oh, I know this is going to be a sky. You paint that blue, and then maybe paint this a color. Or you can start with painting the whole thing one color, and then you just like add layers on top. See, like that ship is behind this one? So you think about it like making that illusion work, and like with that haziness, it would probably block in this ship before you even start this ship or something. |
| Kate (MP): | Block it in with the haze? |
| Marla (SD): | Or no, block it in by like painting it first. |
| Kate (MP): | Okay, you like paint over the haze or something. |

| Marla (SD): | You could do that. That kind of looks like it. |
| Kate (MP): | Interesting. |

In both of these examples, the knowledge that the student docents brought to the discussion was based on their roles as university students. Brenda (SD) believed that she could approach a work of art from a different point of view, because her background was rooted more in history than in art. Marla (SD) incorporated her knowledge of the processes and materials throughout the time in the gallery, giving Kate (MP) a type of insider's viewpoint into the works of art.

Without the docents' knowledge, the non-art majors may have walked away with questions or with less awareness. Instead, opportunities for learning and connections to the works were created. This concept is supported by Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978), which as Zollinger Sweney (2007) discusses, can be used by docents to help visitors learn more advanced concepts as they share information at a slightly more advanced level than the visitors may otherwise engage in. Indeed, the non-art majors asked questions and engaged in dialogue with the student docents as they brought in their expertise in the galleries. Although Koroscik (1993, 1996) found that people with less knowledge about art often could not retrieve or organize what they do know easily and lacked self-motivation, this was not the case with the non-art majors in this study. The students built meaning and understanding together, and they did not seem to have problems keeping up with the information that the student docents brought to the dialogue.

Some student docents incorporated more of this information than others. Brenda (SD) voiced her concerns about her approach in her interview. When reflecting on her

PMM, she stated "That's something I need to work on is to have it [the tour] be more of a dialogue about the work and less me kind of lecturing about stuff." This idea came up a couple of times during her interview, especially in terms of talking with Carrie (MP) about the works. She later said, "I guess we didn't really talk about ourselves at all or personal things, which I feel like was a missed opportunity on my part because I didn't really introduce any of that in the discussion. But I think it could have been a way for us to connect with the works in a way that was different than maybe a more formal tour." Brenda (SD)'s comment is supported by Armstrong (2000) who sees this focus on information as a way to avoid "a more personal relationship with the object" (p. 14).

*Expertise of the Non-Art Major*

Because most of the pairs came from different educational backgrounds, they were able to bring different types of information to the dialogue with the works of art. As Hubard (2007c) discusses, visitors bring vast knowledge with them, and their information also contributes to "collective meaning making" (p. 22). The non-art majors, while not having a lot of experience with the works in the galleries, continually drew on outside knowledge as part of their contribution to the dialogue with the student docent. In their interview, Kate (MP) talked about being comfortable with Marla (SD) because "she knew what to relate it to. And she knows I love American history, so we spent a lot of time talking about the stuff that relates…" Marla (SD) responds, "I didn't even notice that, but I guess I was trying to cater it to make you [Kate (MP)] like it more."

Indeed, the student docents worked very hard to make sure the non-art majors felt comfortable and were able to make connections either through knowledge or through

personal interests with works in the collection. Carrie (MP) was able to connect her interest in history with works, and in particular, she was excited that the museum included works by artists from the state. She was surprised that Georgia artists and works of art about Georgia were highlighted in the collection, and these works added to her enjoyment of the experience, stating, "I like art from Georgia because I feel like it gives people more appreciation for their history."

Additionally, the student docents sometimes facilitated these connections between works of art and the museum partners' majors or interests. In the example below, Alice (SD), a senior with a double major in studio art and art history, chooses Jacob Lawrence's *Children at Play*, 1947 (Appendix L6) with which she thought Martin (MP), a master's student in social studies education, would connect because of his background in history.

| | |
|---|---|
| Alice (SD): | How about this one? |
| Martin (MP): | Which one? |
| Alice (SD): | Jacob Lawrence. |
| Martin (MP): | Oh, I've heard of him. |
| Alice (SD): | What do you know about him? |
| Martin (MP): | Nothing. |
| Alice (SD): | Nothing. |
| Martin (MP): | I've just heard the name. |
| Alice (SD): | He worked during the Harlem Renaissance. |
| Martin (MP): | Oh, yeah. |
| Alice (SD): | Helps place them all. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Martin (MP): | That's right. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah. So what do you know about the Harlem Renaissance? |
| Martin (MP): | What do I know? |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah. |
| Martin (MP): | Duke Ellington, and Miles, and all of them. That's when African-Americans had their own cultural movement. |
| Alice (SD): | Nice. |
| Martin (MP): | I am a history teacher. |
| Alice (SD): | Yes, exactly. You can tell your children about this. |
| Martin (MP): | Cool. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah, so Jacob Lawrence, he grew up in Harlem. |
| Martin (MP): | Oh, okay. |
| Alice (SD): | And he started painting when he went to this community center, this after school place. He really started learning from his teachers, but also kind of his surroundings; and that's what he liked to paint, like his neighborhood and the things around him. Do you get a sense of that from this? Do you think this is something he would see around him? Or is this kind of something you thought he would just paint from his imagination? |
| Martin (MP): | Yeah, it seems like a community get-together or a family get-together. They're all dancing and having a good time. |

Alice (SD): So do you get Harlem Renaissance from this, with what you know about the Harlem Renaissance?

Martin (MP): Yeah, I guess dancing equates, reminds me of culture, and music. I guess I can see that, make that connection.

Alice (SD): It's interesting that this evokes a sense of music to you. It's just like a two-dimensional work of art; and you get the sense of music. That's pretty cool. I guess that also comes with the association with Harlem, and the jazz.

Martin (MP): Oh, I guess they're not. [reading wall text] They're playing a game called Squares, whoops.

Alice (SD): It's okay. No, a lot of kids who look at this painting hear the music too, because it's placed in the city, I think. You usually hear music just when you're walking down the streets.

Martin (MP): Yeah.

Alice (SD): So what do you think about his use of color in this painting? I know you've been attracted to the greens. Is this on the same level as the green in the baseball field and in the *Georgia Pines*?

Martin (MP): Not really, they're more, they're darker and less – they're a lot more… They're not as, what's the word, expressive?

Alice (SD): You think so?

Martin (MP): Yeah. I guess they're – yeah.

Alice (SD):     Do you think it's because it's painted like flatter, like they're just kind of these flat shapes, and there's not much like – like the [painting of the] baseball field has like great variation and greens that's used.

Martin (MP):    Yeah, I guess that's it. This is more simple.

Alice (SD):     Yeah, definitely.

Martin (MP):    I'm not really a fan of the greens here, but I like the painting for what it is.

Alice (SD):     You think so?

Martin (MP):    Yeah, not the colors, but – I guess for the cultural relevance.

Alice (SD):     Yeah. Would you have ever gotten cultural relevance, just looking at it without a label that said Jacob Lawrence, or anything about the Harlem Renaissance?

Martin (MP):    I don't know. Probably because it's around, it's a group of African-Americans, and it's around other paintings by African-Americans. So maybe. I don't know.

Alice (SD):     Maybe. But the painting itself, it doesn't really jump out at you?

Martin (MP):    You mean the first thing I'd want to see?

Alice (SD):     Just in terms of being kind of about this cultural revolution, you don't really get that from this?

Martin (MP):    No. I guess not really.

| | |
|---|---|
| Alice (SD): | It's interesting. That's kind of what I get too, just because it's such a small aspect of their everyday life, that you don't get that monumentality of that whole movement. It's not a portrait of Jacob Lawrence and Billie Holiday and all them. It's just children playing. |
| Martin (MP): | What's that one where all the musicians are sitting on the steps? Or have taken a porch together? I think Ellington, Miles Davis. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah, like that's kind of like one liner, like hi, we're important. |
| Martin (MP): | Yeah. |
| Alice (SD): | This is just kind of like generic. |
| Martin (MP): | It's like we're just a family or friends. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah. |
| Martin (MP): | Yeah. |
| Alice (SD): | That's interesting. I always point this out to the kids. What do you think of her red shoes; she's the only one wearing red shoes. |
| Martin (MP): | This accentuates how she's like the star; she's like the social butterfly. She's in the middle of the circle; she's in the center of the painting. She seems – I don't know, she seems bigger than everybody else. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah, no, she definitely does; maybe older too. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Martin (MP): | Yeah, she's like a leader. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah. |
| Martin (MP): | Of the game or whatever, and the music, dancing, I don't know. |
| Alice (SD): | What do you think of his use of pattern in this painting? |
| Martin (MP): | Pattern? |
| Alice (SD): | Is that something you even noticed when you looked at…? |
| Martin (MP): | You mean like the dresses? |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah, like he uses stripes in the dresses. And there's definitely a pattern; it's like green, black, green, black, red, green, black, red. |
| Martin (MP): | Oh, yeah, I didn't even notice that. |
| Alice (SD): | You didn't notice it at all? |
| Martin (MP): | No. |
| Alice (SD): | It's definitely subtle. It's not like every other thing. |
| Martin (MP): | Huh, yeah, I guess that makes sense. |
| Alice (SD): | What do you think of that? Do you think he's using that on purpose, or to say something? |
| Martin (MP): | Probably. I guess probably saying, emphasizing solidarity or something; we're always together. Harlem Renaissance, we're proud of our roots and our culture. |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah, I can definitely see that. Cool. So do you like this painting? |

Martin (MP):        Yeah. I like it now.

Alice (SD):         Not a favorite?

Martin (MP):        I like it after, when I know the context.

In the interview, they talked about this exchange in terms of visiting the museum together.

Interviewer:        Do you think you approach paintings, maybe, some of them at least a little bit differently than-

Alice (SD):         I think so, yeah. I mean, I would definitely, yeah, I think so. It was kind of like we started out with the Jacob Lawrence, and we were talking about the Harlem Renaissance, and he obviously has a background with the Harlem Renaissance, so I think he made more connections than some of the kids make, just because of his background, so that was pretty cool.

Interviewer:        Yeah, that is cool.

Martin (MP):        On the same note, I think I learned that there's a lot more to these paintings than the naked eye, to the common viewer, whereas usually I would just look at it and not really think about it. Well, I would try to think about it, but it would be hard. But when I had Alice (SD) around, it would be easier to really reflect more on it and delve into different aspects of it. So just to hear her perspective was nice. Like I said, it

kind of made a bigger impression on me, it's more

memorable.

Although Martin (MP) at first seems a little hesitant to bring in knowledge about

the history and culture of the Harlem Renaissance, Alice (SD) continues the conversation

and engages Martin (MP) in a dialogue in which they explore this information in relation

to the work of art itself. In this way, they use contextual information as a foundation for

interpretation. Bringing in this type of information also helped Martin (MP) to stop and

notice a work he may have otherwise not seen. Through the dialogue, he considers their

interaction with this work to be a "memorable" experience.

Two of the student pairs included student docents who are not art majors but

masters students in Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors. These docents brought

students from their department who were less familiar with the museum. Lisa (SD) and

Jen (MP), in particular, spent a lot of time relating their knowledge to historic dress with

works of art in the galleries, including in this example about the figures in *La Confidence*

(Appendix L1).

| | |
|---|---|
| Jen (MP): | I mean I love peasant blouses like this and like the under-bodice. She's wearing two different ones. One is like a corset, and the other is just like an over-thing. |
| Lisa (SD): | Well, I did have a person who asked me this question. Do you feel, because she felt like this was kind of very scandalous, because she was lifting up her skirt. But do you think it's an apron, or do you think it's part of a skirt? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Jen (MP): | They had a lot of like, maybe not in the nineteenth century when this was painted, but the era that they're harking back to, they had tons of petticoats and overcoats. And she's a working woman, otherwise she wouldn't be exposing her legs. So they tucked them up, kind of like in all these other paintings where they did laundry, so it looks like instead of having it tucked, it may have fallen down or she just lifts it because she's so used to having it tucked up into her bodice or her skirt. |
| Lisa (SD): | See, and the whole reason I said apron was because I see like a bow up there in the front, and so to me, it was like she was wiping her hand because she was about to get water for the pitcher or something. I'm a fashion major. I figured I'd ask what you thought and especially since you love historic stuff. |
| Jen (MP): | Well, I think aprons were usually, I don't know, it looks like it's all around the whole skirt, so I don't think it's an apron because they were either pinned on, and they just had a lot of underskirts… |

In this dialogue, Lisa (SD), the student docent, is able to engage Jen (MP) in a dialogue in which Jen (MP) can bring in her expertise. Just as Alice (SD) and Martin (MP) were able to build interpretation through facts that Martin (MP) knew, Jen (MP) adds more information to the discussion that builds meaning. Because they are both from

the same discipline, their dialogue relies on information they both already understand, such as the terms "petticoats" and "overcoats."

*Role of Debate*

In some cases, dialogue turned to debate, and student docents used this method to engage the non-art major in the work. Maddy (SD), a student docent, and her boyfriend Peter (MP), found that they were more open to debate because of their close relationship with each other. When asked in the interview how the experience would have been different with someone they did not know, Peter (MP) answered, "I mean, it definitely would have been different because I wouldn't have been as open to asking questions, not asking questions, but being more argumentative, I wouldn't do that with someone I didn't know." Surprisingly, it was works by self-taught artists and not post-modern works as Kanatani (1998) and Vallance (1995) proposes, that became the strongest point of contention for many of the pairs of students in the galleries. Maddy (SD) and Peter (MP) spent time discussing whether or not folk art should be in museums. In talking about a self-portrait on metal by a self-taught artist Jimmy Lee Sudduth from the 1980s (Appendix L7):

| Peter (MP): | I'm not going to go with this one. |
|---|---|
| Maddy (SD): | Why? |
| Peter (MP): | Because it just looks like someone who didn't know what they were doing made it. |
| Maddy (SD): | Well, that's exactly right, but- |
| Peter (MP): | I mean, like really didn't know what they were doing. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Maddy (SD): | Yeah. But at the same time, he found the metal and wanted to do it, and it's himself, it's a self portrait. I don't know, I think there's a certain charm to it. |
| Peter (MP): | It just seems to spit in the face of artistic pursuit, like trying to improve and get better, and it's like well, I'll just paint this first thing I ever tried to paint and then I'll be able to be in a museum. Do you understand the thought of it? |
| Maddy (SD): | Yeah, I understand what you're going for. |
| Peter (MP): | Why is this museum worthy is my question. I mean, it being on metal is kind of cool. |
| Maddy (SD): | Yeah, but also, if you read the label, homemade pigments and house paints, so I mean, he obviously thought about it. And I think what gives it its sort of interesting quality is not, if you think of it this way, people who are trained and stuff, they might have these pigments, they might have the paint, they might have all the materials to do this, but he may not have been in that kind of position to have canvas and paint and stuff like that, but he still really wanted to paint so he painted on metal and making his own pigments. |
| Peter (MP): | You're just completely making up- |
| Maddy (SD): | It's possible. |
| Peter (MP): | Yeah, it's possible, but you have no idea. |
| Maddy (SD): | No, I know, but it's possible. |

Peter (MP):              I'm not denying the possibility, I'm just judging what I see right here.

Maddy (SD):           I know. But what's definitely true is he wanted to paint enough that he did this.

Peter (MP):              Yeah, a lot of people want to paint enough that they paint, and their paintings aren't in the museums because they're not good.

In this dialogue, Maddy (SD) and Peter (MP) incorporate elements they see in the work, the information they read in the wall text, and what they know about self-taught artists to debate the museum worthiness of a work. The topic was revisited in their interview because Maddy (SD) included it on the PMM.

Peter (MP):              …[W]e've gone through museums a lot of times before together in various places, so we usually end up getting into discussion about the definitions of art and what constitutes art, what would make this art and what would make this not art. Like, where is the decision, where is the line drawn between art and non-art? Is it intention? Does that have something to do with it? Stuff like that has always interested me.

Interviewer:           So did that come up in the gallery?

Peter (MP):              Yes, in the folk art section.

Maddy (SD):  Especially in the folk art section. The self portrait on the metal sheet, it's sort of in the corner right next to the girl with balloons. Yeah, that one I think was the main one.

Peter (MP):  We talked about that one for a while.

Interviewer:  Yeah, and that one is made with earth pigment, I think.

Maddy (SD):  Is it? Good to know.

Peter (MP):  We were talking about is it because it's on a metal sheet that makes it or what it's made with that helps contribute to its status or like its deserving of a place in a museum? Because from an artistic standpoint, it's something that really could have been done by anyone. But is it just the fact that it was done or what it was done on? I don't know, it's a lot of just questions as to what made, or if it was the intention behind it, like I mentioned earlier, like he's made this and said I have made art, and that's what makes it art.

Maddy (SD):  And it's interesting because from an art history standpoint, I ought to have answers to all these, like well, let me tell you. But with folk art, that's actually kind of a great question, what makes the folk artist be noticed and what makes other ones because I'm sure there are tons not being noticed.

In this dialogue and reflection in the interviews, Maddy (SD) uses contextual information about folk art to debate with Peter (MP) on whether or not these works

should be considered art fit for museums. Thus, they build meaning from the information to better understand their definition of art and to consider the role of the museum in distinguishing art.

Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011a) write,

Dialogue is guided by the spirit of discovery and curiosity; its typical tone is exploratory. Thinking together requires people to suspend their certainties and listen deeply to the views that others express. Dialogue is an experimental forum in which each participant tries his or her ideas against those of the others, matching, comparing, and making adjustments in the process. Participants' perspectives are constantly transforming in the process of dialogue. Each person's viewpoint is enriched, informed by all the others. Participants revise preconceptions and expand initial impressions as they confront and exchange ideas. (p. 87)

Burnham and Kai-Kee's description of dialogue is important to consider in terms of how the students incorporated what they knew about a work and how their opinions about the works and about art in general influenced the dialogues. Although contextual information played a strong role in the dialogue in the galleries, it was used as part of this process in which the pairs of students explored works together and came up with interpretations and meaning making. In other words, the information was a component of the dialogue, but it was not the focus of it. Instead, it was woven through the experience as students interacted with the works of art and with each other.

**Chapter 6**

**Emergent Theme: Personal Preferences and Connections**

Art historian and connoisseur Bernard Berenson wrote,

In visual art the aesthetic moment is that flitting instant, so brief as to be almost

timeless, when the spectator is at one with the work of art he is looking at, or with

actuality of any kind that the spectator himself sees in terms of art, as form or

colour. He ceases to be his ordinary self, and the picture or building, statue,

landscape, or aesthetic actuality is no longer outside himself. The two become on

entity; time and space are abolished and the spectator is possessed by one

awareness. (Berenson, 1948, as quoted in Funch, 1997, p. 214)

As Berenson beautifully describes, when we interact with a work, we go beyond

superficial observation to truly have a bond with the work. It is through these interactions

in which we enter into a relationship with a work of art that we can create a personal

connection. In the dialogues between students in the galleries, there were many instances

in which evidence of these types of experiences could be found. As discussed below,

students appeared to be aware of these connections, and they came up often in reflections

during the interviews and PMMs.

*Personal Preferences*

Students' likes and dislikes were discussed quite frequently in dialogue in the

galleries and interviews. Most notably, student docents often incorporated works that

they liked in their tours and tried to gauge the interests of their museum partners to customize the visits. Although originally, I thought of the likes and dislikes and personal connections as two separate categories, I now see likes and dislikes as a type of personal connection. While the students' initial reactions to works may have been to say they liked or disliked something about them, when they discussed their responses further, their reactions seemed to be part of how they connected to the works.

All of the student docents tailored their time in the galleries to fit the interests of their museum partners. In this way, working with someone that they knew and with whom they felt comfortable made a large impact on the experience. It also impacted the level of conversation. When the students were interested in the work they discussed, they spent more time on it. This point was supported by Alice (SD) and Martin (MP), who started in post-modern American art and worked backwards. They noticed that the level of conversation lessened as they went through the galleries.

| | |
|---|---|
| Alice (SD): | …We started on the far end and just kind of worked our way back. And as we were working our way back, we kind of stopped at paintings that he found interesting, and it seemed to be less and less as we moved back in time. |
| Interviewer: | Do you think you were fading by the end, like just getting tired? |
| Martin (MP): | Not really, it was just the type of paintings that we were looking at, the typical historical… |

The student docents also took time to talk about their favorite works in the galleries. Brenda (SD) talked about sharing with groups as a way to help visitors open up

to talk about their interests. "…I always tell my tour groups, if I can squeeze it in there, the Billie Holiday painting, because that's my favorite in the collection, so I always tell people, 'This is my favorite and this is why.' … I think that that kind of helps the people that you're able to make kind of a judgment call. You don't necessarily have to be neutral. It's okay to have paintings or works of art that you prefer over others…As long as you're able to kind of articulate why that is, then that's a valid opinion."

Throughout the tour, Liz (SD) looked for themes and interests that would engage her museum partner, Summer (MP). They found that they both enjoyed works with water, and this theme comes up repeatedly as they chose which works they would discuss. In the interview, they recalled this theme.

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | Did you guys come up with a theme on purpose or did it just kind of come out that you had a theme? |
| Summer (MP): | It came out. |
| Liz (SD): | It kind of came out. We just realized that we started talking about water a lot. |
| Interviewer: | That's kind of a structured- |
| Summer (MP): | I'm pretty sure we talked about it on our little recording too. About how funny it is that we keep going to paintings with water. Like for a while, it was like every other painting was a water painting. |
| Liz (SD): | Yeah, and I think we just went to a lot of landscapes in general. |

Summer (MP):        I mean, we talked about people, but I mean, because

personally, I'm not, I don't really love paintings with

people.

Liz (SD):        Yeah.

The audio of the galleries reveals that the student docents spent a lot of time structuring

the tours around the feedback they were getting from the non-art majors. They often used

the likes and dislikes mentioned by their museum partners to make decisions on the

direction of the visit.

Indeed, the student docents incorporated works that they thought would relate to

their museum partners' interests. Liz (SD) used information she knew about Summer

(MP) to choose works with which she thought Summer (MP) would make a personal

connection. She chooses a 1914 self portrait by Lucy May Stanton (Appendix L8), in

which the artist is portrayed reading, because of Summer (MP)'s interest in reading.

Liz (SD):        …do you like this portrait of the woman reading, because

you like to read? Like, do you feel a connection there?

Summer (MP):        I mean, not really.

Liz (SD):        No?

Summer (MP):        I like this one better because she's not looking straight at

you.

Liz (SD):        Right, you don't feel into it.

Summer (MP):        But I mean, I don't really feel like a connection to it

because she's reading. At least, I didn't before you said it.

Liz (SD):        I just know you like to read.

Summer (MP):        I do.

However, later, Summer (MP) chose Jay Robinson's *Billie Holiday Singing the Blues*, 1947 (Appendix L9) that relates to another interest, singing, and Liz (SD) talked with her about the difference between the two connections.

Summer (MP):        I like that color in this one.

Liz (SD):        The blue. *Billie Holiday Singing the Blues*. Yeah.

Summer (MP):        I like it.

Liz (SD):        I like it because, I mean, you understand that she's singing the blues; but it's not just because of the color. I think the color could be different, and I would still think she's singing the blues.

Summer (MP):        But see now, like with paintings like this, because I sing, I do have a connection, two paintings that depict music in some way.

Liz (SD):        So more music than reading.

Summer (MP):        Yeah, because I'm immediately drawn to this because of the color, and because she's singing into that awesome microphone.

Liz (SD):        It is a pretty cool microphone.

Summer (MP):        Yeah, so maybe- I don't know why though.

Liz (SD):        I was thinking because reading is something that we would do that's not only for pleasure, but it's also right now in our lives. It's academic. So we don't necessarily associate

|                    |                                                                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                    | reading with fun, whereas you probably associate singing with fun.       |
| Summer (MP):       | Yeah.                                                                     |
| Liz (SD):          | Because it's something you do for yourself.                              |
| Summer (MP):       | And maybe it would be different if it was something like this and someone reading, instead of an actual portrait of someone sitting there in the chair. Maybe if it was just like a picture of a bookshelf or something like that. |

*Opportunities for Choice*

The student docents continually gave their museum partners opportunities to pick the works with which they would engage, as can be seen in Figure 5, in which Martin leads the way in the galleries. This point comes up in both the audio and video of the gallery visit and in the interviews. In some cases, the student docent was not prepared to discuss works that the non-art major chose, and so they explored the work together. For Brenda (SD) and Carrie (MP), Carrie (MP)'s interest in landscape changed the entire format for the tour.

|                  |                                                                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brenda (SD):     | I kind of tried to go along with whatever Carrie (MP) was looking at. Landscapes weren't something that I was planning on spending a lot of time looking at. |
| Carrie (MP):     | I'm sorry.                                                                      |
| Brenda (SD):     | That's fine. I mean, it's something that I needed to do, and I enjoyed it. But that's not something that I've really talked |

about in tours that I've given or worked with a lot. So that was really good for me to kind of push me out of what I normally do. But, yeah, I was really planning on hitting up some of the folk art and, to me, more accessible things, but that didn't wind up being what you were looking at, which was interesting for me to see.

Allowing the non-art majors opportunities to choose the works with which they would interact was a topic stressed in the education sessions of the student docents. Falk and Dierking (2000), Henry (2010), and Paris (1998) stress the need for visitors to have choices in the galleries, even on structured tours, in order to empower them and help them to feel ownership of their visits. Additionally, student docents suggested



*Figure 5*. Martin (MP) leads Alice (SD) in the galleries.

that they included a lot of choice because of the more personal, focused nature of this museum visit. This is reflected in Alice (SD) and Martin (MP)'s interview in which he

asked to talk about a work about baseball, *Night Ball Game*, 1946, by Ferdinand Warren (Appendix L10).

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | So you let Martin (MP) pick too? |
| Alice (SD): | Yeah. Well, I mean, he was, it seemed like when, and I find this with kids too, like when they're interested in a painting, they're going to talk about it more and get more interested and so we just kind of walked back and he was like I like this one, let's talk about this baseball. |
| Interviewer: | Yeah, baseball, I know exactly which one you're talking about. |
| Alice (SD): | He's like, can we talk about that one? |

[Alice (SD) mentions that she started with folk art because Martin (MP) seemed to like that during a previous visit to the museum with her.]

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | Did you like getting to choose what you were looking at a little more? |
| Martin (MP): | Yeah, I prefer that over just being- what's it called? |
| Alice (SD): | Like talked down to? |
| Martin (MP): | Led around to all the paintings. I think I would have gotten bored pretty if I had to see every single painting. |

*Personal Connections through Free Time and Popular Culture*

Lachapelle (2007) found that visitors with little experience in art used personal experience in interpretation. Although Lachapelle found that this could limit their

interpretations, in this study, it seemed to enhance the students' dialogue as they wove it with other observations and information to make meaning. Through their interactions, the student docents and non-art majors were able to make personal connections with works of art that may have been more difficult if they had not been given the freedom to choose the works with which they would interact. Personal connections took various forms in the dialogues in the galleries, including references to family, friends, travel, and other experiences. Non-art majors made connections to movies and television, music, and personal stories. These comments were often integrated in brief spurts throughout the museum visits, such as in this mention of William Stanley Haseltine's *Castel Fusano*, n.d. (Appendix L11).

| | |
|---|---|
| Carrie (MP): | Oh, that looks like FernGully. |
| Brenda (SD): | It does. *Castel Fusano*. It's kind of an art deco-y feeling, like the lines of the trees. |
| Carrie (MP): | Yeah, but it looks neat. |

However, in other cases, these comments were a part of the ways in which students interpreted a work of art, such as in the following excerpt from Lisa (SD) and Jen (MP)'s interview about James McDougal Hart's *An Afternoon Concert*, ca. 1860 (Appendix L12).

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | …so did you have differing opinions on certain things? |
| Lisa (SD): | Yeah. |
| Jen (MP): | I think there was one painting where she was like, look, there's a couple going off by themselves. |
| Lisa (SD): | Oh, yeah. |

Jen (MP):          And I was like, no.

Lisa (SD):         That's an excellent one right there. It's *Afternoon Concert*,
                   where I thought it was like this big scandalous thing
                   because obviously you had to have a chaperone at that
                   time.

Jen (MP):          A shadow in my world.

Lisa (SD):         She said "shadow in my world," but I thought so that would
                   have been so very scandalous if they did sneak off by
                   themselves, especially if they weren't married. And so she
                   pointed out, wait, if you see this really obscure person next
                   to them, it's actually a chaperone sitting right over there. So
                   I was like, oh my God.

Jen (MP):          I just watched *Bright Star* before coming, and it was like a
                   little brother would run out the door after the grown woman
                   because she's not allowed to go anywhere by herself. She's
                   not allowed to leave the house, and he had to at least be a
                   few feet behind her, so it showed him pulling on his jacket
                   and chasing her out the door, just so he could chaperone
                   her. So I think just watching those movies kind of
                   heightened my awareness of the culture of the time, and
                   like very Jane Austen thing, like women and men just
                   couldn't go walking by themselves.

Interviewer:       Right.

| Jen (MP): | But this, I think this movie was extremely, that family was very conservative and- |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | Yeah, I never saw *Bright Star*. |
| Jen (MP): | Yeah, it's pretty depressing….but yeah, I think that probably had heightened my awareness beforehand to be able to see that. Had it not been, if I weren't so much into nineteenth-century literature and film, I wouldn't have known. |

In this case, contextual information overlaps with personal interest as Jen (MP)'s interest in period films has a connection with her interest in historic fashion. However, it is the film that helps her to understand the work of art and incorporate her knowledge into the interpretation with Lisa (SD), the student docent. They were able to see the work of art in a different way because of Jen (MP)'s knowledge from the film.

As noted by one of the educational researchers who read part of the data collected for this study, the town in which the university is located was brought up repeatedly in the students' conversations in the galleries. Because this town known for music and, in particular the band REM, student docents often brought relationships to the band REM into the discussion. *La Confidence*, (Appendix L1) was used in a music video by REM in the 1980s. The video suggested to some viewers a sexual relationship between the two women sharing a secret in the painting. A museum visitor thought this theme was immoral and got the media involved while trying to force the museum to remove it from the galleries. This story came up often in the students' dialogues as a way to start the conversation, but the dialogue soon led to deeper interpretation about what they thought

was the subject of the work. Whirligigs by R. A. Miller, an artist who has a whirligig in the museum's collection (Appendix L13) , also were used on one of REM's albums, and Alice (SD) brings this point into her dialogue with Martin (MP).

However, as Brenda (SD) points out in her interview when discussing her PMM, including references to popular culture does not always pique visitors' interests.

Interviewer: And I saw you have pop culture down, too.

Brenda (SD): Uh huh. That's something that a couple of the docents have been working on- kind of like REM kind of… music style tours for Student Nights and things like that. So I think that's what we were thinking as far as making works of art accessible to an audience that might not necessarily be as knowledgeable about works of art. But that kind of approach that I thought might be hip and cool and fun and awesome, but that's not what you [Carrie (MP)] were interested in at all. So that's just kind of something that I need to do a better job of really knowing my audience and what their interests are and what their prior knowledge is.

Interviewer: So did you kind of change gears, then, when you realized Carrie (MP) wasn't into that?

Brenda (SD): Yeah.

Brenda (SD)'s point is important to remember because the students involved in this study had a diverse range of interests and approaches to the galleries. Although their

experiences fell into categories, their interactions with each other and the works of art were all a little different.

*Diversity in Interests and Experience*

Brenda (SD)'s realization that not all college students are interested in the same things reminds us how personal museum visits can be, and it is important to remember that not all young adults are going to be interested in the same things or approach works of art in the same ways. This concept relates to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983) in which different types of intelligence relate to different cognitive characteristics, which vary among individuals. By incorporating different types of engagements and approaches to works of art, museum audiences form relationships with works that are complex and integrated in experience. Illeris (2005) also emphasizes that not all young adults are the same, and writes, "It is extremely important that educators interact with young people not as a unified and 'perfect' audience, but as individuals, all of whom should be given the best opportunities to learn by exploring many different forms of individual experiences and social interaction in their relationships with works of contemporary art" (p. 239). Again, it is important to consider the needs of individuals and how each person creates relationships with art rather than grouping them into one audience.

By helping visitors with little experience in museums make personal connections to works takes away some of the inaccessibility of art. Vallance (1995) sees the role of the museum educator as a translator when we use language to convey meaning from visual representation. I would argue that our role should focus more on helping visitors to

translate works of art for themselves by bringing their own meaning and understanding to the experience. It is more about teaching the visitor to "read" objects (Van Kraayenoord & Paris, 2002) as an interpretation that incorporates their knowledge and experiences with their observations and the contextual information of the work of art.

**Chapter 7**

**Emergent Theme: Creating Meaning**

When asked if they learned anything during their visit, Liz (SD), the student

docent, said, "I think for me it was more about the experience because I learned I like

quiet, I like to be alone, but also, I always thought that I liked to go to museums alone

rather than with someone, but I realized that if I have the right person, then I would like

to go with them." As discussed in the preceding chapters, throughout these different

approaches to working with art, there was evidence of the construction of meaning

through dialogue. In the model (Figure 1), I sought to convey how these dialogic

connections with the works of art lead to meaning-making. This chapter will focus more

on how the student pairs created meaning in the galleries through their observations,

knowledge, personal preferences and connections, and focused engagement with the

works.

*Building Interpretation through Dialogue*

Falk and Dierking (2000) consider museum learning to be social. Longhenry

(2007) points out that we have connections with other visitors in the museum as well as

connections with the works of art. As the pairs of students went through the museum,

they spent a lot of time talking about what they saw in works together. They incorporated

information about the museum, about the works, contextual knowledge from their

studies, and personal experiences and connections into this dialogue to create meaning.

Kyle (MP) and Marie (SD)'s dialogue about O. Louis Guglielmi's painting *Tenements*, 1939 (Appendix L14) reflects how they built their interpretation through a back-and-forth exchange, or as Gadamer (1975/ 2006, 1986) describes, play. It is important to note that this play is quite serious, contrary to normal associations with the term.

| | |
|---|---|
| Kyle (MP): | Hmm- wonder what that means. Is that a coffin? The rest of them look like coffins. That is a brick structure that looks like a coffin. I wonder what the wreath… |
| Marie (SD): | Kind of reminds me of like a crown of thorns. |
| Kyle (MP): | Mm-hmm. Somebody's living there though. There's clothes hanging out of one of the windows. |
| Marie (SD): | And '39 is right towards the end of the Depression. Still was unhappy. Yeah, because I guess he did it right after then, he would've started- you couldn't run a farm anymore. You were just living in these tenements. That is like death. Like just large tombs. |
| Kyle (MP): | Just waiting to die. |

In this dialogue, Marie (SD) and Kyle (MP) incorporated observations and contextual knowledge to build a powerful interpretation. They bring empathy to the work in understanding what it would be like to live in a tenement in the 1930s during the Great Depression.

Although they did not talk directly about this interaction, Marie (SD) mentioned in the interview that she thinks that it is a benefit to come to the museum with someone

who has a different background than her own because "we're drawn to different paintings." She goes on to say that "…some of the stuff that I normally don't focus on and don't look at were works that he was drawn to, so it kind of, yeah, it did force me to kind of stop and just look at it more and take a few minutes and just really spend some time with that, where I normally just walk right past them."

This constructed meaning also is found in an excerpt from Maddy (SD) and Peter (MP)'s gallery dialogue about *Mixed Doubles* (1946) by George L. K. Morris (Appendix L15).

| | |
|---|---|
| Peter (MP): | *Mixed Doubles*. I guess it's tennis. |
| Maddy (SD): | Definitely tennis. I can see like broken racquets and the ball. |
| Peter (MP): | Some nets. |
| Maddy (SD): | Those are golf balls more and you can see the nets and you can see a chain link. 40 love. |
| Peter (MP): | Maybe there's not too much more to it than that. Then you have this border. |
| Maddy (SD): | Yeah. |
| Peter (MP): | I wonder what that is. |
| Maddy (SD): | Although I just now saw a face for the first time. Is this supposed to be like eyes and maybe like a chin there? |
| Peter (MP): | I don't know. That's debatable. |
| Maddy (SD): | Because then that's sort of another set of eyes there. |
| Peter (MP): | Oh, that's very true. |

Maddy (SD):          [inaudible], which could be the mixed doubles part of it because it's female and male.

Peter (MP):          I think those are more like breasts to be honest with you.

Maddy (SD):          Oh, I see it. Yeah it totally is, it's a figure, and there are the arms, yeah.

Peter (MP):          Yeah, there's a leg.

Maddy (SD):          Yeah, so that's, yeah, which makes sense because in ancient art history, the females were always depicted as the light figure and the men were always darker.

Peter (MP):          So, there we go.

In the interview, Peter (MP) and Maddy (SD) recount this dialogue, and Maddy (SD) stresses Peter (MP)'s role in helping her to understand the work. Both Peter (MP) and Maddy (SD) considered this situation to be an example of how groups of visitors together in the museum can help each other with understanding and meaning making.

Peter (MP):          …I remember we talked about the abstract tennis one for a while.

Maddy (SD):          That's right, because I could finally figure it out then. I had been looking at that painting the entire time since I've been here like since January, and I couldn't figure it out. Like I saw the subject, and then I play tennis, so I understand it, and I couldn't see it in there. And then when we went through together, he was like, yeah, there's a girl, there's the guy, and I was like, wow, I see it now. But it took like

sixty times of me looking at it, and then finally with him to understand it.

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | Well, knowing that you guys could kind of, you guys were kind of helping each other figure out- |
| Maddy (SD): | At least on that one, that totally makes sense now. |
| Peter (MP): | I mean, I think it happens a lot actually. |
| Maddy (SD): | Yeah, I think so too. |
| Peter (MP): | That's a good thing about going to museums with groups of people. Some people are bound to notice things you don't notice, and it gives a whole new meaning or whole new spin to a painting. |

By building on each other's observations, the students were able to create powerful interpretations that they acknowledged in their reflections on the experience, they would not have done on their own. By working together, the students engaged in conversations through which interpretation was the focus. We see it again in this brief excerpt from Carrie's (MP) and Brenda's (SD) audio in the galleries about Jean Marchand's *Wharf Scene*, n.d. (Appendix L16).

| | |
|---|---|
| Carrie (MP): | It's really dark. |
| Brenda (SD): | It's an interesting angle of the wharf because most of the time, you have it from actually up there. It'd be like overlooking. |
| Carrie (MP): | Yeah. That's- The water's kind of swirling. |

Brenda (SD):          It's an interesting contrast between the man's built world

and the natural world, kind of, and how this is kind of

rushing in.

*Equal Partners*

In building meaning, the non-art majors and the student docents were equal

partners in the dialogue. This type of reciprocal relationship came up continuously in the

dialogues in which interpretation was the focus. It was less about the student docent

leading the conversation as the students contributing to an interpretation together. In the

following excerpt from their interview, Marie (SD) and Kyle (MP) reflect on working

together to understand art in the galleries. They talk about a conversation about George

Cooke's *Portrait of Mary Hattaway Curry and Son, John*, 1847 (Appendix L17), an early

American portrait of a woman with her son in which a curtain is drawn in the

background. Marie (SD) had never noticed it before, but Kyle (MP) had pointed it out in

the galleries. Marie (SD) connects this experience to the advantage she thinks non-art

majors have in looking at art.

Marie (SD):          …One of the negative things about an art education and art

history is that we learn, things get translated into

understandable symbols and we start to look at like, oh, a

curtain in the background of a painting would represent this

or a wall and that's going to be this, a pitcher is going to be

this, and if we don't know what those symbols mean ahead

of time, you come up with a different meaning.

Interviewer:        Right, and who's to say that's not-

Marie (SD):        Right, and who's to say that-

Kyle (MP):        It's all interpretation.

This idea was echoed by Alice (SD) and Martin (MP):

Interviewer:        Did this [visit] change your feelings at all about museums?

Martin (MP):        A little bit, yeah. I think if I have somebody who's

        knowledgeable that can talk to me in a, well, I guess, yeah,

        who I can have, like a dialogue with, it's more interesting.

Alice (SD):        I agree.

Interviewer:        You agree, too?

Alice (SD):        Yeah. I definitely found that going to museums by yourself,

        you have your knowledge, and you can look closely at the

        paintings and sometimes you'll discover something new,

        but it's so easy to just look at it the way you've been

        looking at it, and I always find that when I go with

        somebody, especially, I kind of like going with people who

        aren't art majors because they make these, oftentimes,

        really simple observations and you're like I never saw that

        or I never would have thought of it that way.

Interviewer:        Yeah, like you're looking at it from a different perspective.

Alice (SD):        Yeah, just that like I haven't sat through four years of this

        and learned about this perspective. It's really refreshing. It

        was for our talk. I guess that's kind of why I always, or I

kind of had that realization again that we're equals, like

he's teaching me things too.

It should be noted that in the gallery audio, there are periods of silence in which

students are taking moments to look at works without dialogue (Figure 6). The students



*Figure 6.* Alice (SD) and Martin (MP) silently look at works in the galleries.

took their time looking in the gallery both individually and together. Because students

were given a general window of time without the pressure to end at a certain point, unless

they had somewhere to be, they seemed to get lost in the experience and paid little

attention to time. Often, when they did notice, they were surprised by the amount of time

they had spent in the galleries.

*Level of Experience*

      I designed this study with the expectation that non-art majors would not have

experience in art museums, but some of them had much more exposure to art museums

than others as seen in Table 1 and Appendix G. Because some of the non-art majors had

more experience in the museum than others, in particular Jen (MP), Kyle (MP), and Peter

(MP) had more experience than Martin (MP), Summer (MP), Carrie (MP), and Kate

(MP), it was interesting to see how their experiences compared with each other. The non-

art majors with more experience in museums seemed more comfortable asking questions

and sharing opinions than those with less experience. Non-art majors with little

experience sometimes were surprised about what they saw in the museum. This idea is

reflected in Carrie's (MP) revelation that there were objects of decorative arts in the

galleries, as discussed at the end of Chapter 5, and also in Martin (MP)'s understanding

of art, reflected in his PMM. In his initial version on the PMM, he wrote basic

information such as "museum," "paintings," and "sculpture." However, after the visit,

Martin (MP) added "cultural imagery" and "social commentary" to the PMM. We talked

about this during the following excerpt of the interview:

Martin (MP):      I guess I already knew that art is synonymous with social

      commentary and culture, but I guess it didn't really register

      with me when I think of an art museum because I guess my

      experiences haven't been that memorable or I haven't

      really, I guess that's why. But when I really thought about

      the paintings more, it kind of registered with me…

When asked for examples in their dialogue of how social commentary and culture relate to art, the pair brought up many, including a conversation they had about a Cubist work by Torres Garcia, *San Rafael*, 1928 (Appendix L18) in which the people are portrayed as stick figures situated within linear depictions of buildings. The audio in the galleries reflects the idea of social commentary in this dialogue:

Alice (SD): What do you think about the way he depicts people? I always find it really interesting when folk artists depict people like what they choose is the most important thing to show, or what they think they can present that will make people recognize the human form.

Martin (MP): 'Cause they're like stick figures.

Alice (SD): Yeah, and I like the torso on that one. It's like an hourglass.

Martin (MP): It looks like a robot right here. It's interesting.

Alice (SD): Interesting?

Martin (MP): Oh, what do I think?

Alice (SD): Yeah.

Martin (MP): I could see viewing it as to say that we're all- You think he's trying to make a comment? Is he trying to say something?

Alice (SD): I don't know. Do you think he-? I don't know very much about him.

| | |
|---|---|
| Martin (MP): | It's not that important, except how we all look. It's that we're all people. I don't know. That's probably a big stretch but- |
| Alice (SD): | That makes sense. I think it says a lot that he's constructing these buildings and the people in basically the same way. They're all black outlines. He doesn't paint them a different color. Like they're blending into buildings. That's what I find interesting about that. It's an interesting city scene like that, especially if you think about when you see people in the city. They kind of do blend in with their surroundings. |
| Martin (MP): | Yeah. That's interesting. |

In this dialogue, we can see why Martin (MP) would incorporate "social commentary" after the visit, and the role that Alice (SD) had in building this understanding through their conversation. This dialogue relates to Falk and Dierking's (2000) concept that learning is reinforced during the museum experience as we make relationships between our knowledge and the information to which we are introduced in the museum.

Barrett (2007) writes,

Concomitant with greater self-knowledge and resulting appreciation of the changing self, one can also come to better know and appreciate others through their interpretations. To read or hear others' interpretations provides the possibility of learning about those interpreters as well as the work: How they think, what they notice, what they value and why, and their views of the world. (p. 644)

In a hermeneutical approach to interpretation, we see that the understanding that is formed through these dialogues is not focused solely on the work of art, but on the experience as a whole. The students were able to engage in meaning making through which they could talk about their own knowledge and personal connections, their museum partner, and with the work of art. This entire experience is part of the interpretation of the work of art, and through these dialogues and reflections, we see how the experience can impact the students and their understanding of art and museums.

**Chapter 8**

**Conclusion: From Interpretation to Transformation**

As Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson write, "The aesthetic encounter inevitably involves some realization that humanity is communicating with humanity" (p. 132). Through these dialogues in the galleries, we can understand the many ways in which the students were creating connections between each other and the works of art, and how the experience of viewing art was used to build meaning and understanding.

*Revisiting Research Questions*

In this concluding chapter, I will discuss these experiences as they address the research questions posed at the beginning of my study in order to understand how these experiences can help us in practice. An analysis of data through a hermeneutic phenomenological lens requires that we reconsider the data as a whole after considering its parts. In doing so, I looked for evidence of relationships between these interactions and aesthetic response, or *Erfahrung*, and as a result, experiences that could be considered transformative. This evidence appeared in the interviews and discussion of the PMM, which were part of the interviews, most likely because it was during this time that students were able to reflect on their experiences (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study considered the research questions:

- *What factors impact positive or negative perceptions of university art museums for university students?*

- *How can students with experience visiting art museums facilitate engaging experiences with non-art majors in a museum?*

- *How do the perceptions of students about university art museums change after they visit a museum with a peer?*

- *How can university art museums facilitate dialogue between students in galleries through works of art?*

From the analysis of data in the preceding chapters, we can draw the following information in reference to the research question: *What factors impact positive or negative perceptions of university art museums for university students?*

- Wayfinding, crowds, absence of contextual information, and the strong presence of security can be distracting and intimidating to students and can inhibit an engaging experience in the museum.

- Student docents can help resolve some of these issues for non-art majors in museums because of their familiarity with the space, staff, and works of art.

- Non-art majors take note of and appreciate the student docents' role and knowledge in the galleries.

- Both student docents and non-art majors consider their time in the galleries without the presence of others to be a special experience.

The participants of this study emphasized the private, quiet setting of the museum and the role of their peer in the reflections of their experiences in the museum. Additionally, we can conclude the following observations that address the question: *How can students with experience visiting art museums facilitate engaging experiences with non-art majors in a museum?*

- Student docents and non-art majors incorporate knowledge from courses, personal lives, popular culture, and their personal interests into their dialogue, and this knowledge is used in the construction of meaning.

- Student docents engage their museum partners in dialogue by letting them choose which works of art with which they want to discuss and bringing in information that relates to the non-art majors interests.

- The pairs of students engage in conversations in which they build interpretation together. Often one student may make an observation or connection to which the other student will add, and this exchange perpetuates the dialogue further.

- Student docents bring specialized information into the conversation on which the non-art major is able to expand and make connections.

As a summary of the experiences, we see from this data not only the important role of the student docents in the engagement of the non-art majors in the galleries, but also how the non-art majors contributed to the student docents' experiences. Importantly, interpretation was built through these experiences. This reciprocal relationship is emphasized in Gadamer's (1975/ 2006, 1986) description of play in which the players, in this case the students, each bring their own experiences and history to the dialogue, during which meaning is built through their interactions with each other and the work of art.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the subject is not the individuals, but the experience in its entirety. As Gadamer writes, "An aesthetic experience always contains the experience of an infinite whole" (*TM*, p. 63). This specialness of the experience suggested by Gadamer and brought up by students in their interviews, is also emphasized by Buber's

(1958/ 1986) *I and Thou* relationships. Buber includes the relationship between viewers and art as *I-Thou* relationships and considers this relationship between the artist, who communicates through his or her art (or *Thou*), and the viewer (or *I*), as a sacred interaction.

This aspect of the experience addresses the research question: *How do the perceptions of students about university art museums change after they visit a museum with a peer?* Here, it is important to revisit Soren's (2007) "qualitative indicators of success" (p. 229): a development of an appreciation, sensitivity, or understanding; a value of an idea, topic, person, or object; "a meaningful experience" (p. 229) related to specific objects; an insight into themselves or other; and a desire to learn more. Indeed, we see that data drawn from the dialogue and reflections consistently met these indicators and that these students' experiences were engaging and transformative. Students continually mentioned that they understood works of art better through dialogue. They also took each other's ideas and opinions seriously, even when they did not necessarily agree with their peers. The students described meaningful experiences with works of art and often wanted more information. Finally, in the dialogues described above, the students reflected on their own ideas about their interactions with the works of art and their relationship to their peers in their interviews.

Although I looked for evidence of transformation in all of the data I collected from the students, I especially noticed it in their reflections in the interviews. This supports Falk and Dierking's (2000) inclusion of time in their Contextual Model of Learning (Appendix K) in which our understanding develops and evolves over time as we make connections and build meaning from our experiences in the museum.

Additionally, transformation theory also includes reflection. Mezirow (1991) writes,

"Reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are

found to be distorting, inauthentic, and otherwise invalid. Transformative learning results

in new or transformed meaning schemes or, when reflection focuses on premises,

transformed meaning perspectives" (p. 6). Certainly, the experiences recounted by both

the student docents as they better understood their roles in the galleries and by their

museum partners who found ways in which they could engage with the works of art and

see how the art museum fit into their lives transformed the ways in which they saw art

museums and built connections to works of art that hopefully will continue in the future.

By building interpretation together in the galleries, the students were able to

engage in an experience that was transformative, or as Dewey (1934/2005) puts it, *an*

experience (p. 36). As demonstrated in the data analysis above, their understanding of the

museum changed, they made connections with the works of art and with each other, and

they had experiences with art after which they understood the works more completely

and from different viewpoints through dialogic interpretation. Without having the

opportunity to interact with each other and with works of art in the museum, these

students may never find a place for art museums in their lives. Therefore, it becomes

incredibly important for university art museums to create opportunities for this type of

engagement for students in the galleries.

*Recommendations for University Museums*

The students involved in this study suggested that their visit changed how they

saw the art museum, and in the case of the student docents, their roles in the museum. By

giving the students special, private time in the galleries, they came away with reflections on their experiences that were profound. This study demonstrates the need to create opportunities such as this one for more students so that they can understand the intrinsic benefits that will make them want to return to the museum and make it part of their lives (McCarthy et al., 2004). As young adults form independent identities, they begin to choose how they spend their free time and develop a desire to improve themselves either personally or professionally (Falk & Dierking, 2002). It is crucial that university art museums find as many opportunities as possible to engage students with works of art in the museum during this pivotal time in their lives, and thus, we must revisit the final research question: *How can university art museums facilitate dialogue between students in galleries through works of art?*

For university museums, this study reveals certain ways in which we can design programs and create places for students to engage with works of art on a deeper level. First, museums can provide opportunities for interested students to become involved in the museum through docent programs or internships. Student docent programs offer avenues for university students to learn from their peers. Rather than listen to an authoritative voice of museum staff, professor, or even an older community docent, students can learn about the works of art from someone who is engaged in the same activities and interests as themselves. As we know from Vygotsky (1978), students can learn at a higher level by working with a peer who is more advanced in looking at and talking about art than they are. These student docents serve as "professional volunteers" (Zollinger Sweney, 2007, p. 83) who can help novice visitors navigate the museum and feel comfortable in what can be an intimidating setting.

We especially need to stress the important role of the student docent to university faculty, who may expect a curator or person in a position of authority to serve as the guide in the museum, and to the curators themselves, who may wish to serve in this role. By working with curators in student docent training and giving them opportunities to know the student docents and see them working in the galleries, museum educators can gain their support from the start and ask for their help in promoting the program to faculty.

Second, docents and educators should allow students opportunities to choose works of art (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Henry, 2010; Paris, 1997) in order to empower them and keep them interested in the dialogue, and give them opportunities to share their own insights and knowledge. Csikszentmihalyi and Schiefle (1992) stress the connection between a motivation to learn and the individual's interest, knowledge, and values. As we saw in this study, there is a strong correlation between interest in the work of art and the level of dialogue about the work. This relationship between interest and dialogue could be heard throughout the audio of the gallery visits.

Although the student docents had more experience with the works of art at the museum, the non-art majors continuously contributed to the dialogue and brought outside knowledge and personal connections to building interpretation with works. Similarly, although we might not always know students on a personal level as the student docents did in this study, we can ask them about their interests and incorporate it into the dialogue and choices in the galleries. The student docents did not necessarily know which works would be of interest to their museum partners, but they asked, sometimes more than once, until they were able to better understand with which works the non-art majors made

connections. We also can help student docents, and ourselves as educators, by finding out as much as possible about the group ahead of time. With university classes, we can learn the focus of the class and even see a syllabus to look for connections to works in our collection.

Thirdly, although it is wonderful to have large groups visit the museum for events such as Student Nights and blockbuster exhibitions, finding times when students can visit the museum when it is not busy gives them time to interact with the works of art individually and with each other (McKay & Monteverde, 2003). This concept is interesting when looking at the needs of university-age students who consider the museum to be a place they can visit for peace and contemplation (Wilkening & Chung, 2009). This research goes against our inclination to inundate young adults with technology and multi-media because they think of the museum as a place where they can unplug from these devices. Even on tours, incorporating silence and time to simply look and exist with the work is important for all visitors (Burnham, 2011a; Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007), and docents can give larger groups of students on tours opportunities to talk about works of art together in pairs or smaller groups.

Finally, tours for university students do not have to be formal. Rather, it is about creating an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable sharing ideas and building meaning together. Mayer (2007c) links this idea to the pedagogy of care, introduced by Noddings (1984, 1992, 2002), in that "what we deem as being good for students must come out of a caring relationship- care for the students, care of students for each other, care for ideas, care for all living things." Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011b) also talks about this idea, writing, "The dialogues we share with visitors flow toward shared

understandings of each artwork we examine in a cooperative, reciprocal enterprise based on trust and respect" (p. 95). We must understand that these students are individuals with their own thoughts, emotions, and experiences that will help them to connect with works of art in different ways.

Engaging the students in a dialogue that does not have a pre-existing agenda and is open to possibilities and the input of all participants is crucial to building an experience that has the potential to be transformative for students. By working with students to create an atmosphere where their voices will be heard and their thoughts are valued, as contributing to *an* experience, we can help these visitors see how art fits into their lives and hope that they will want to return to continue these interactions with works of art.

*The Museum as a Place for Dialogue and Experience*

Zollinger Sweney (2007) writes that there are many ways in which museums can help visitors interact with works of art, but "the best interactivity an art museum can provide is the sort provided by human contact. A trained docent, engaged in listening closely to a small group of visitors and making lively conversation, can help them make connections between works of art and their own experiences" (p. 80). Throughout these dialogues in the galleries, there is evidence that student docents and their museum partners were engaged in dialogue that included personal meaning, interpretation, history, and silence. This type of interaction should not be restricted to student docents; instead, it has a place in any docent program, and it is the responsibility of the facilitator of the docent program to help docents, especially ones more familiar with a lecture-based approach, to find ways in which they can incorporate dialogic interactions in their tours.

Again, these relationships are reciprocal, and docents, as well as visitors, benefit from these dialogues. In this study, student docents gained new insight into the works of art and their roles in the museum. As Maddy (SD) put it, "I guess, and this comes not just from our visit, but also the tours, but my learning and teaching about art, it's definitely dawned on me recently that just when I'm giving the tours, it's not just me teaching, like the people I'm interacting with, and I know that sounds really cheesy, but I'm definitely learning a lot from each work from the people that I'm talking with and so it's not just a teacher role anymore. It's definitely both ways." She goes on to add, "…it's definitely more about giving, I think, the people time to talk and give their opinions more than just throwing facts at them all the time."

Through this study, we can see the important role of dialogue in the museum and how it can be used to create connections between the visitors and the works of art. For all museum audiences, dialogue is an avenue through which we can interact with art and use our own experiences to understand and interpret the works in the galleries. Indeed, the interactions that the student docents and non-art majors had in the museum reflected the multi-faceted connections that visitors can make with each other and with the works of art in the museum through dialogue. Gadamer (2004) sees our encounters with art as ways to create meaningful connections with the other and to understand how we fit into the world as a part of humanity. He writes,

> Without our bringing concepts to speak and without a common language, we will not be able to find the words that will reach other persons. It is true that the way goes "from word to concept," but we must also be able to move "from concept to word," if we wish to reach the other person. Only if we accomplish both will we

gain a reasonable understanding of each other. Only in this way, too, will we possess the possibility of so holding ourselves back that we can allow the other person's views to be recognized. I believe it is important to become so absorbed in something that one forgets oneself in it – and this is one of the great blessings of the experience of art…Indeed, in the end this is one of the basic conditions for human beings to be able to live together at all in a human way. (p. 11)

As the visits in this study illustrate, art museums allow viewers to have an authentic experience with original works of art in which we have a chance to interact with each other and see ourselves in this encounter. From these unique, reciprocal interactions, viewers can become transformed through art.

Not only do these relationships benefit individuals, but these intrinsic experiences are also crucial to creating and retaining museum audiences who will want to continue to have meaningful relationships with works of art (McCarthy et al., 2005). These dialogic experiences that occur between the viewer and a work of art are important to understand because it is through these relationships that museum audiences will continue to visit the museum and will understand the value of art in their lives. If we are going to engage students in their university art museum, museum educators must find a way to facilitate these experiences. By understanding the nature of these relationships, we can help students learn how to interact with works of art and create meaningful relationships with art in museums.

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**Appendix A: Student Docent Program Midterm Evaluation (Fall 2010)**

1. Please describe what you think are the most positive aspects of the student docent program.

- The student interaction and the speakers are really interesting. I enjoy hearing ideas from other students. The speakers have helped me visualize my own tours and have given me ideas to get the kids involved!

- learning how to talk about art with all different ages of people. Meeting and hearing from different people involved with the museum, the school or (*sic*) art.

- I think the open, comfortable environment that was created by Carissa is one of the most positive aspects of the student docent program. I was never intimidated to speak my mind or share my thoughts! I also learned a lot from other people because it was such a comfortable environment.

- Articles on how to create tours are helpful. Each night has been a unique learning experience- something to look forward to.

2. Please describe what you do not like about the student docent program so far.

- The somewhat abstract nature of the discussions. I'd like a more concrete idea of what to do during tours. I know this will come next semester when we are in the museum.

- nothing

- I don't like that we are not able to get into the museum yet. It will be really nice once we can actually interact with the work ourselves! Then we can start to think about the connections we want to make on our tours!

- That I cannot pet the dog…. [Note: one of the student docents was training a seeing eye dog during this year.]

3. Please make suggestions about what you would like to see in the program next semester.

- Practice tours in the museum!

- I would love to meet more often! I think that we had a lot of valuable time in our meetings and would love to have had more. Having more guest speakers like Carole Henry, or people who have given tours before would be really helpful! I

also would like to see us in the museum a lot more next semester! :) Overall, its been a wonderful experience and I am excited about the spring semester!

- More opportunities to practice tours.

**Appendix B**: **Student Docent Syllabus, 2010-2011**

September 16
Welcome by Education Department
Introductions
Syllabus and guidelines
Overview of the program

September 30
About the museum
Introduction to the collection
Speaker: Curator of American Art
Reading: Manoguerra, P. (2007). Georgia Museum of Art. *American Arts Quarterly*, *19*(4), 86-97.

October 7
Designing a tour
Themes and subjects
Readings: Hubard, O. (2010). Three modes of dialogue about works of art. *Art Education*, *63*(3), 40-45;
Hubard, O. (2007c). Productive information: Contextual knowledge in art museum education. *Art Education*, *60*(4), 17-23.

October 14
Using dialogue with visitors
Practice with a partner- conversation exercise
Reading: Burnham, R. (1994). If you don't stop, you don't see anything. *Teachers College Record*, *95*(4), 520-525.

November 4
Different audiences: Engaging Adult Audiences
Speaker: Professor of Art Education
Reading: Henry, C. (2007). Understanding the museum experience. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.), *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21st century* (pp. 158-164). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

November 18
Different audiences: Children
Techniques and ideas for working with children
Speaker: Community Docent
Reading: Hubard, O. (2007). Complete engagement: Embodied response in art museum education. *Art Education*, *60*(6), 46-53.

December 2
Introduction to the Decorative Arts
Speaker: Curator of decorative arts

Holiday Party
Reading: Information about the permanent collection

January 13
Preparing for the opening: Activities in the galleries

January 20
Preparing for the opening: Activities in the galleries
Sample tour by a student docent who has given tours through her internship in the education department.

January 27
Different audiences: Diversity
Speakers: Representatives of Disability Resource Center
Introduction to European Art
Speaker: Curator of European Art

February 17
Practicing dialogue in the galleries
Each student will pick a work of art from the permanent collection in the fall semester and lead a conversation about the work

Spring: Please attend lectures and gallery talks in conjunction with the collection and special exhibitions on Thursday nights

April 28
Final Meeting

**Appendix C: Student Docent Program Final Evaluation (Spring 2011)**

1. Did the student docent program meet your expectations this year?

- Completely                                    5
- Somewhat                                      2
- Not really                                    0

2. Comments:

- I really enjoyed the experience and learned a lot.
- Great opportunity to interact and learn about the works of art and share that with others!
- The training was extensive and I enjoyed learning more about the GMOA collection and community, but I was only able to give two fifth grade tours. I wanted to interact with the community more.
- This was truely (*sic*) a new experience. I have never taught in a museum setting before. It was great to take what I learned in my education experience in public school and apply it to this environment.
- I was hoping for more tour opportunities but the schedules often conflicted, perhaps more college student events or even some community collaborations.

3. What part of student docent education did you like best?

- I liked how we learned from the other docents (students and the community) because when you interact with others it helps to challenge you. You also get so many ideas from the other people.

- The mock tours with the art ed professor and Sarah

- I liked meeting museum staff and the other docents.

- I really enjoyed helping the students create their own artwork. It was wonderful to see students interacting with the artwork in such a meaningful way. [Note: Fifth-grade tours and Family Days include hands-on activities in addition to tours in the galleries.]

- meeting new people, talking about art with other students, learning about the collection from the curators.

- getting to participate in the museum- giving tours, meeting other staff members, meeting community docents, etc.

4. What part of the student docent program did you like least?

- Overall I had a great experience and learned a lot. The only thing I didn't like was the challenge of dealing with teachers/ chaperones. It was hard to gauge whether they would be interactive or distant. It's out of our control but it would help to find ways to interest them as well as the group.

- Lack of assessment on the tours we gave

- This is hard to answer. Even though the sessions were long and sometimes tedious, the information was analogous to our mission to provide tours. I guess I was just disappointed that I could not give more tours. This was just a logistical issue that affected the first Student Docent group and probably will not be an issue next year.

- What I liked least was crowd control. It was a little nerve wracking making sure none of the students got too close to the artworks or damaged anything.

- Missing lectures at the art school.

5. Next fall, would you like docent education to be at:

- Thursdays from 5 to 6:30 p.m.          5
- Thursdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m.          2

6. What is the ideal age group or groups you would like to work with?

- Grades K-2          2
- Grades 3-5          4
- Middle School          4
- High School          2
- University          3
- Adult          2
- Seniors          1

7. What would you like to see included in the program next year?

- More ways to interact with 5th grade tours. They really enjoy the activities over a traditional lecture so anything that will help to engage them.
- I love the mentor idea! And the more time spent in the galleries, the better. [Note: I shared an idea with the student docents in which the returning student docents would serve as mentors for new ones.]
- More time in the galleries and more opportunities to shadow tours.

- I would love to see visitors have more studio opportunities.
- More docent projects perhaps?
- I always enjoyed when the curators and community docents came to talk to us. I think that should definitely be included next year.

**Appendix D: Detail of Map, Galleries of the Permanent Collection**

Galleries 11 to 22 are located in the wing of the permanent collection in which the study took place. Galleries 11 and 14 include works and archives that contextualize the permanent collection.



No Public Access

Legend:
- Temporary Exhibitions
- European Art
- American Art
- Decorative Arts
- Works on Paper
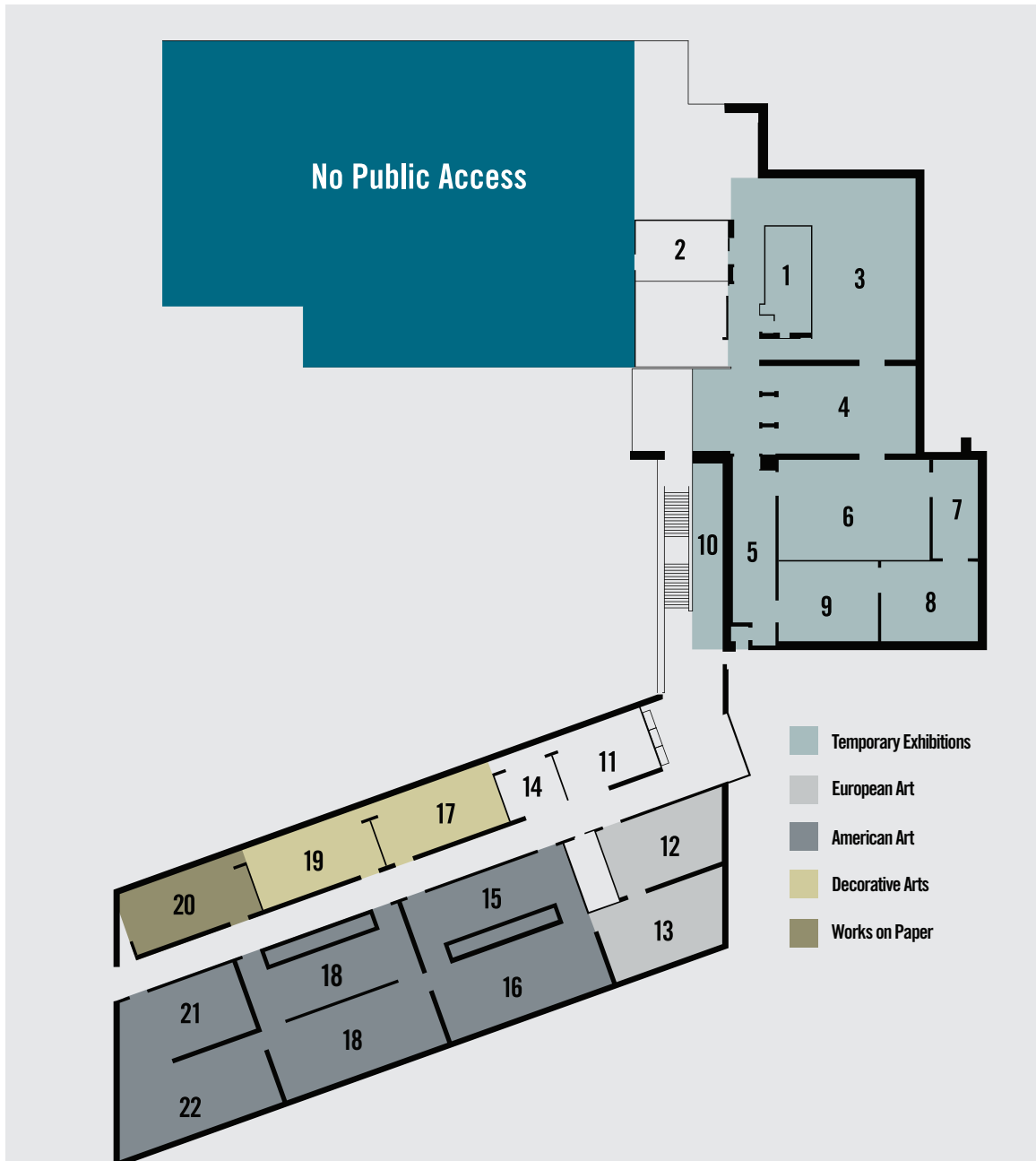
**Appendix E: Letter to the Student Docents Introducing the Study**

Dear Student Docents,

In late February and March, there is an opportunity to take part in an optional study on visiting art museums with a non-art major that I am conducting as a part of my dissertation. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to visit the museum in the morning before the museum opens with a museum "friend" who is not working towards a degree in art. The two of you will walk through the permanent collection galleries and talk about works of art that you and your museum friend choose. These visits will be recorded using both audio and visual recorders to help me to understand your experiences at the museum. You also will each be asked to complete a type of concept map called a Personal Meaning Map (PMM) and return to the museum for an interview the following week. I hope to have a diverse group of students for this study, so please consider this when asking your peers to join you at the museum.

Again, this study is not a requirement of the student docent program. Student docents who participate will receive two tour credits and their museum friends will receive $10 gift cards to a local restaurant. If you do choose to participate, please let me know by February 9. We will begin scheduling pairs of students the following week.

Thank you so much for all you do!
Carissa

**Appendix F: Supplementary Information for Museum Visit Study**

Name:

Age:

Class Standing (circle one):

1$^{st}$ year        2$^{nd}$ year        3$^{rd}$ year        4$^{th}$ year        5$^{th}$ year        graduate
        other

Major:

Cultural/ Ethnic Background (optional; please circle all that apply):

White

Black

Hispanic

American Indian

Asian

Other (please write in):


How many times have you visited an art museum?

When was the last time you visited an art museum?

How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art?

How many high school studio art classes have you taken?

How many high school art history classes have you taken?

How many college studio art classes have you taken?

How many college art history classes have you taken?

**Appendix G: Demographics of Participants and Dates of Study**


**Appendix G1: Lisa (SD) and Jen (MP)**

| Pair #1 | Lisa (SD) | Jen (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 24 | 27 |
| Class Standing | Graduate | Graduate |
| Major | Historic/ Cultural Aspects of Dress | Historic and Cultural Dress- Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | White | White |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | Many times | At least 20? (lots) |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | Less than a week | Last Summer (MP) |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | Multiple times | This is my first time. Was not open when I moved here. |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | none | one |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | none | zero |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | none | two |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | 2 | 4 (Art history was my major for one semester) |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: Mar. 1, 2011 | Interview: Apr. 20, 2011 |

**Appendix G2: Marie (SD) and Kyle (MP)**

| Pair #2 | Marie (SD) | Kyle (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 33 | 37 |
| Class Standing | other | 5th-year |
| Major | Art history | Environmental Engineering |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | white | white |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | 50+ | Between 50 and 100 |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | yesterday | Two weeks ago |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | 20-30+ | Dozens of times |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | 4 | none |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | 2 | none |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | [blank] | none |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | 15+ | none |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: July 15, 2011 | Interview: July 29. 2011 |

**Appendix G3: Liz (SD) and Summer (MP)**

| Pair #3 | Liz (SD) | Summer (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 23 | 22 |
| Class Standing | Graduate | Graduate |
| Major | Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors- Historic Costume and Culture | Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors- Historic Costumes |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | White | White |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | 75 | 5 |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | 2 weeks ago (last student docent meeting) | 3 weeks ago |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | 20 | 1 (this is my $2^{nd}$ time) |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | 5 | 0 |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | 2 | 0 |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | 1 | 0 |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | 8 | 0 |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: Mar. 1, 2011 | Interview: Apr. 21, 2011 |

**Appendix G4: Brenda (SD) and Carrie (MP)**

| Pair #4 | Brenda (SD) | Carrie (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 21 | 22 |
| Class Standing | 4th-year | 4th-year |
| Major | Art History/ Classical Culture | Environmental Health Science |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | white | white |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | 100 | 1 |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | 4/1/11 | 3 years ago |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | 50 | 0 |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | 0 | 0 |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | 0 | 0 |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | 0 | 0 |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | 12 | 0 |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: Apr. 4, 2011 | Interview: Apr. 25, 2011 |

**Appendix G5: Maddy (SD) and Peter (MP)**

| Pair #5 | Maddy (SD) | Peter (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 21 | 21 |
| Class Standing | 4th-year | 4th-year |
| Major | Art History | English |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | White | White |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | Too many to even try to count. In the hundreds. | 18 |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | Today | Last semester |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | Again, too many times to count. | 0 |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | 4 | 1 |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | 1 | 0 |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | 1 | 0 |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | About 16 | 2 |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: Feb. 28, 2011 | Interview: Apr. 28, 2011 |

**Appendix G6: Marla (SD) and Kate (MP)**

| Pair #6 | Marla (SD) | Kate (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 21 | 21 |
| Class Standing | 4th-year | 4th-year |
| Major | Art History and Studio Art | Spanish |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | Asian | White |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | Over 50 | 3-4 |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | Feb. 5, 2011 | 1.5 yr. ago |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | Over 50 | 1 |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | 4 | 1 maybe (6-7 y[ears] ago) |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | 1 | 0 |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | 11 | 0 |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | 12 | 0 |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: Mar. 1, 2011 | Interview: Apr. 19, 2011 |

**Appendix G7: Alice (SD) and Martin (MP)**

| Pair #7 | Alice (SD) | Martin (MP) |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 23 | 25 |
| Class Standing | 5<sup>th</sup>-year | graduate |
| Major | Art/ Art History | Social Studies Education |
| Cultural/ Ethnic Background | white | White; Asian |
| How many times have you visited an art museum? | Many times | 5 |
| When was the last time you visited an art museum? | yesterday | 3 months ago |
| How many times have you visited the Georgia Museum of Art? | Many times | 1 |
| How many high school studio art classes have you taken? | 4 | 0 |
| How many high school art history classes have you taken? | 1 | 0 |
| How many college studio art classes have you taken? | My major | 0 |
| How many college art history classes have you taken? | My other major | 0 |
| Dates | Gallery Visit: July 8, 2011 | Interview: July 15, 2011 |

**Appendix H: Instructions for the Personal Meaning Map (PMM)**

Personal Meaning Mapping
On the attached sheet, please write or draw ideas that you associate with the word in the center of the page. Each time you revisit this sheet, please use different color ink.

**The order of the colors is as follows:**

Purple:          Before visit to the galleries
Red:             After visit to the galleries
Green:           At the beginning of the interview

**Appendix I: Examples of Pair of Students' PMMs**

**Appendix I1: Example of a Student Docent PMM (Brenda)**
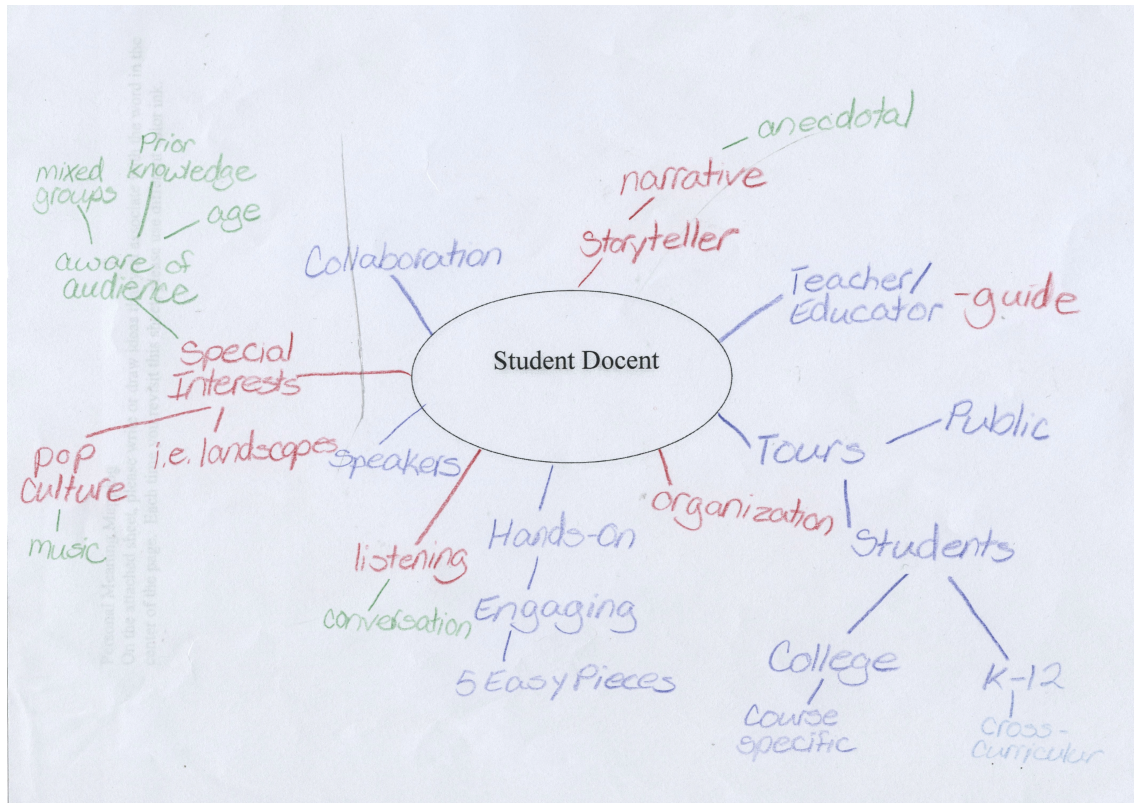
**Appendix I2: Example of a Museum Partner's PMM (Carrie)**

**Appendix J**: **Interview Question Guide**

- Can you each spend some time describing your experiences in the galleries?

- Did you have a favorite part of this visit?

- Did anything make you uncomfortable during the visit?

- Do you feel the same way about the museum as you did before this visit?

- [If the answer is no] What changed for you?

- How did you feel about visiting the museum with another student?

- Did any of the conversations you had in the galleries relate to how you remember this experience?

- Did you enjoy participating in conversations in the museum?

- [If the answer is yes] What did you like about it?

- [If the answer is no] Why not?

- Do you think you learned anything new from this experience?

- If you could redo this visit, would you change anything about it?

**Appendix K: Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model of Learning**
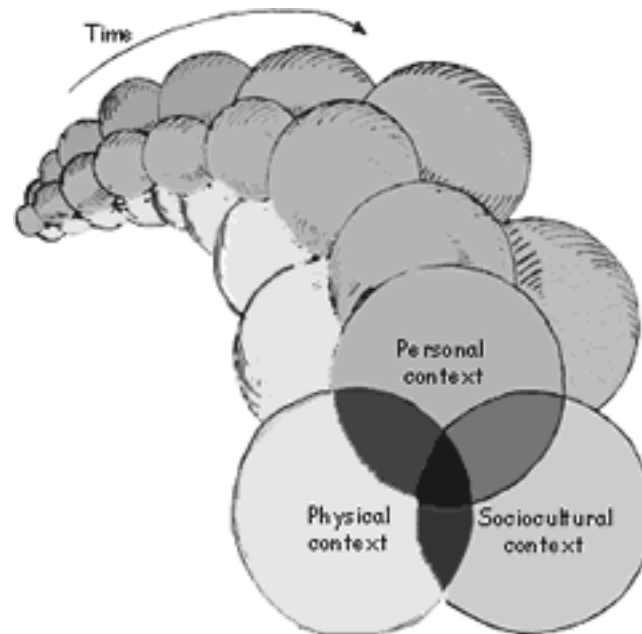
**Appendix L: Works of Art included in the Dialogue of the Pairs of Students**

**Appendix L1**



Elizabeth Jane Gardner (American, 1837-1922)
*La Confidence*, ca. 1880
Oil on canvas mounted on aluminum
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Original gift
of Mr. George Seney to the Lucy Cobb Institute, Athens,
Georgia

**Appendix L2**



Jonas Lie (American, b. Norway, 1880-1940)
*Bridge and Tugs*, ca. 1911-15
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Museum purchase with the funds provided by C.L. Morehead Jr.

**Appendix L3**



Giusto de'Menabuoi (Paduan, active 1349-ca. 1390)
*St. Anthony Abbot and St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1363
*St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine of Alexandria*, 1363
*St. Paul and St. Augustine*, 1363
Tempera on wood
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection

**Appendix L4**



George Cooke (American, 1793-1849)
*Tallulah Falls*, 1841
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Mrs. Will Moss

**Appendix L5**



John Linton Chapman (American, 1839-1905)
*Via Appia*, 1867
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift from the West Foundation
Collection, Atlanta, in honor of William Underwood Eiland

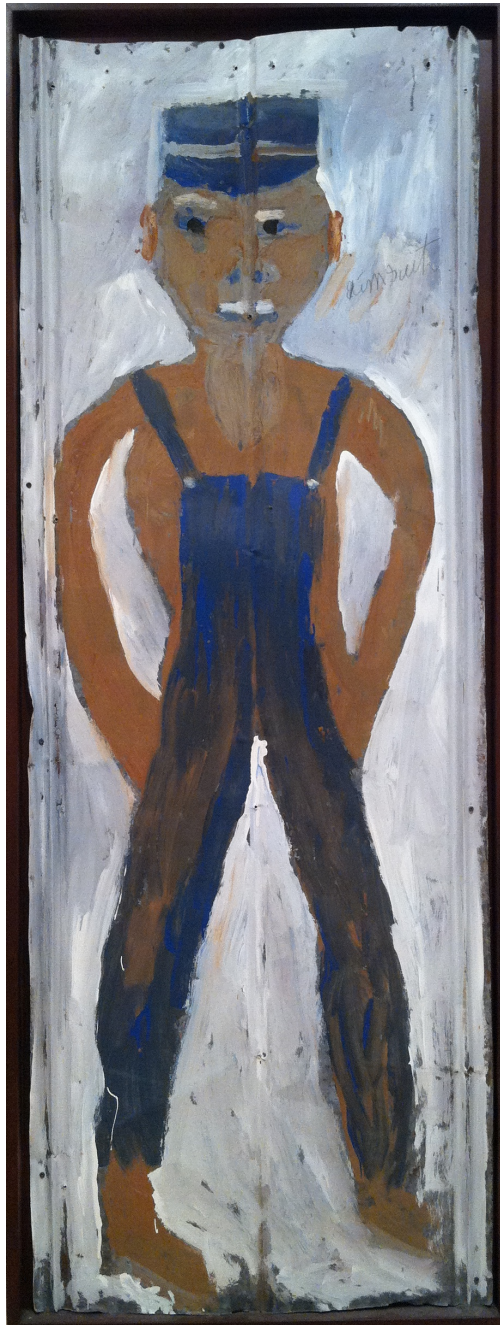**Appendix L6**



Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917-2000)
*Children at Play*, 1947
Tempera on panel
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Eva Underhill Memorial
Collection of American Art, gift of Alfred H. Holbrook

**Appendix L7**



Jimmy Lee Sudduth (American, 1910-2007)
*Self Portrait*, late 1980s
Homemade pigments and house paint on tin
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Ron
and June Shelp

**Appendix L8**



Lucy May Stanton (American, 1876-1931)
*Self Portrait, Reading*, 1914
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of
Frances Forbes Heyn

**Appendix L9**



Jay Robinson (American, b. 1915)
*Billy Holiday Singing the Blues*, 1947
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jason
Schoen in honor of William U. Eiland

**Appendix L10**



Ferdinand Warren (American, 1899-1981)
*Night Ball Game*, 1946
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Eva Underhill Holbrook
Memorial Collection of American Art, gift of Alfred H. Holbrook

**Appendix L11**



William Stanley Haseltine (American, 1835-1900)
*Castel Fusano*, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Bequest of Edith L. Stallings

**Appendix L12**



James McDougal Hart (American, 1828-1901)
*An Afternoon Concert*, ca. 1860
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; The Mr. and Mrs. Fred D. Bentley
Sr. Collection of American Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred D. Bentley, Sr.

**Appendix L13**



Reuben Aaron "R. A." Miller (American, 1912-2006)
*Coca-Cola Whirligig*, n.d.
Enamel paint, tin and wood with bicycle tire rim
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Carl and Marian
Mullis in honor of Michele Turner

**Appendix L14**



O. Louis Guglielmi (American, b. Egypt, 1906-1956)
*Tenements*, 1939
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; University
purchase

**Appendix L15**



George L. K. Morris (American, 1905-1975)
*Mixed Doubles*, 1946
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Eva Underhill Holbrook Memorial
Collection of American Art, gift of Alfred H. Holbrook

**Appendix L16**



Jean Marchand (French, 1882-1941)
*Wharf Scene*, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Richard and Lynn Berkowitz
in honor of Mary and Lamar Dodd

**Appendix L17**



George Cooke (American, 1793-1849)
*Portrait of Mary Hattaway Curry and Son, John*, 1847
Oil on canvas
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Museum purchase by
funds provided by Letitia and Rowland Radford in honor of Andrew
Ladis and by the Schwob Family Foundation

**Appendix L18**



Joaquín Torres-García (Uruguayan, 1874-1949)
*San Rafael*, 1928
Oil on panel
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Promised gift of Martha Randolph
Daura