

SLIGHT SHIFTS AND LITTLE TURNS: A CARTOGRAPHY OF SMALL JUSTICES ON
SINGLE-VISIT SCHOOL TOURS IN ART MUSEUMS

by

EMILY HOGREFE-RIBEIRO

(Under the Direction of Christina Hanawalt)

ABSTRACT

My dissertation analyzes the interplay of justice, art museum education, and posthuman theory in the context of single-visit 4th grade school tours at an art museum. Using a post qualitative approach (St. Pierre, 2017; 2021), my inquiry explored how guided school tours in an art museum created unplanned, minor gestures of justice. Grounded in posthuman theory, particularly the work of Rosi Braidotti (2013, 2019a), and a conceptualization of the art museum as an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987), my study moved beyond humanist social justice frameworks to consider how guided school tours might function as transversal sites of becoming, where justice is not imposed but, instead, realized as part of immanent, embodied, and emergent processes.

My goal when writing my dissertation was to meld experience and thinking, echoing the way theory influenced what I thought and knew and did and felt while entangled in my study. I explored ideas of the partial, fragmentary (MacLure, 2013), and speculative in my writing process. As a cartography, a mapping of both record and speculation that politically and epistemically documents “the production of alternative knowledges” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xvi), my dissertation experiments with conveying the ways that an art museum assemblage, students,

educators, objects, and spaces converged unpredictably during my inquiry. My writing charts school tours forming collective transversal assemblages (Braidotti, 2018) that temporarily unsettled normative museum structures. Instead of asking “How do we change the museum?,” my dissertation asks “How can we move differently with/in it?” Inspired by the thinking-writing-doings of Manning (2016), Rousell (2021), and Ellsworth (2004), my study suggests an anomalous pedagogy of small justices made of slight shifts and little turns and a collection of propositions for justice-in-the-making.

INDEX WORDS: museum education, art museum, art education, guided school tours, K-12, single-visit, gallery teaching, social justice in art museums, posthumanism, post qualitative inquiry, assemblage, cartography, affirmative ethics, justice, anomalous pedagogy, slight shifts, fragments, partial, speculative

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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

2025

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May 2025

DEDICATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Hanawalt, thank you for reading all my drafts and providing me with new ideas, laughter, encouragement, and, most of all, structure. I truly could not have done this without your guidance and wisdom. I appreciate all the time you've taken, articles you've sent, and the way you pushed me to improve again and again. I have learned so much from you.

To the rest of my committee, Dr. St. Pierre, Dr. DiCindio, and Dr. Bustle, thank you for helping me think about the art museum and being a museum educator in new ways. It has been inspirational to work with you. I would have not read as deeply or thought as hard as I have in the last few years if not for you, and that has benefitted me so much as a both student and a person.

Adam, thank you for all the times you read my papers that you "didn't understand, but they sounded really good," and thank you for being so patient with me being mean while I was doing this thing. And thank you for all the times you unquestioningly drove us (and the cats!) to Airbnbs in the woods so I could throw books and papers around someone else's house and be somewhere *scenic* and *without distractions* for when I was thinking/writing. Also, thank you for being so excited every time you discover someone who might be using becoming in the way I do, not the other way. I so deeply appreciate you.

Mar and Jessie, my family, thank you for believing in me and supporting me. Mama, you are my favorite person to go to conferences with. I am so thankful for your (many) reassurances and for making me the kind of woman who gets a PhD.

Sammi, my favorite writing partner, thank you for always thinking my writing was important, and thank you for the best last writing retreat (for now). We still got it.

I send so much gratitude to the coven for always cheering me on and counting on me - you are all my best friends and my role models.

Abby, thank you for understanding APA 7 and teaching it to me. This is the best references section I will ever have, and it is 100% because of you.

Juliet, thank you for translating for me and for all the chisme.

To all the other inspiring and thoughtful museum educators I have worked with, thank you for finding so much joy in art museums and teaching with art. You are the smartest and most caring bad bitches I know, and you always make me want to be better, continue to crush, and do more (even when the calendar is packed, and we said no more school partnerships).

Lastly, I want to say thank you to all the kids who came on my tours and enthusiastically and brilliantly helped me with my homework.

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The Feeling of a Little Turn

Imagine you are entering a dark gallery. The walls are black, the lights are off. The darkness in front of you forms into a narrow hallway. It is an abrupt change from the white walls and vivid light in the rest of the galleries, in the rest of the art museum.

You slowly walk forward, waiting for your eyes to adjust. You feel the urge to reach a hand out, locate a wall, and orient yourself. You turn, and you are suddenly in a larger space. In the center, four panels of fabric hang in a wide X. The pieces float from the ceiling, stretching halfway down to the floor, diaphanous and fluttering.

A projector starts. The room fills with sounds and images in black and white. On the panel right in front of you, a young Black girl whirls a baton and dances (Figure 1). It reminds you of the twirlers in Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans and the dancers in Beyonce's Homecoming. The girl is smiling, triumphant.

Something on a perpendicular panel catches your eye, and you turn your head a little bit. It feels like when you're driving in a car, and you see something interesting out the window as it passes. Your head pivots, your shoulders follow, but your body continues in the same direction.

You realize the other panel is showing completely different images. Another story unfolds over your shoulder.

Figure 1

Still from America, Garret Bradley, 2019



How does this movement/realization change the way you experience the work of art?

What is different? What more can we find?

So much of what you understand is determined by the shift of your shoulders.¹

¹ Throughout my dissertation, I have included first person writing about memories/experiences/imaginings/tours. This writing is indented and in italics. Any journal notes I wrote during my inquiry are indented and in quotes.

PART ONE: STARTING POINTS

A MAP OF SORTS

When I first started my doctoral research, I intended to create a social justice curriculum for a single-visit school tour program for elementary school students in an art museum and chart its impact. I am a museum educator who works primarily with K-12 school and teacher audiences. I noticed that museum education was undergoing a critical turn, as programming that focused on social justice became more and more prevalent, and social justice art education was being called the crucial work of museum educators. Social justice activism, frequently initiated by museum educators, was demanding change both within museums and in relation to how museums responded to society. In museum education, the perspective shifted from focusing on constructivist meaning-making towards critical, social justice programming using the art museum as a site of art education activism.

I wondered how to do the difficult work of creating and implementing tours with a social justice focus for students who visit the museum one time, frequently their first time in an art museum. Informed by critical theory, my study was initially meant to contribute to the growing body of research on social justice art education by focusing on the under-theorized space of social justice curricula and programming for single-visit field trips, especially with regard to curricula for elementary school students. And then, during the Covid-19 pandemic, my thinking began to change about social justice in the art museum. I began to rethink (or think differently about) what I knew of art museums with posthuman theory. This complicated my place with/in the art museum as a museum educator observing and leading K-12 school tours, as I imagined the possibility for a different kind of immanent justice.

My inquiry took place with/in the school tours at an art museum in Texas, in the West South Central region of the United States, where I worked over the course of the 2023-2024 school year. While the museum's K-12 School Programs serve the diverse communities in the major metropolitan area where the museum is located, they focus on serving the city's school district. The school district is the 16th-largest district in the United States, with a diverse population of over 153,000 students. The district is comprised of 384 square miles and encompasses 16 different cities. Within the school district, students are 70.6% Hispanic/Latino, 20.6% African American, 5.5% White, 1.1% Asian, 0.03% American Indian, 0.05% National Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 2% of two or more races. District statistics indicate that 85% of students are under-resourced and 95% identify as historically marginalized ethnic groups (Internal Development Document).

During the 2023-2024 school year, approximately 8,155 K-12 students participated in guided school tours and 18,636 K-12 students explored the museum on self-guided visits. To better serve the city's school district, the museum partners with the school district on a 4th grade tour program that features single-visit guided school tours titled "Art Journey" and "My Extra Special 4th Grade Tour." These interactive tours are typically led by the museum's 70 volunteer docents and prioritize looking carefully, thinking critically, and talking about art. In the 2023-2024 school year, 75 schools signed up for the My Extra Special tour, with an estimated 3,000 4th graders visiting the museum and participating in guided tours (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Student on School Tour Co-creating a Color Map of an Artwork



One school tour at the museum consists of a group of 15 students and their adult chaperones being led by a volunteer docent. School tours last for 45 minutes to an hour and can take place in any of the permanent collection or temporary exhibition galleries in the museum. The museum typically schedules 60 students per hour on guided tours, which comes out to 5 or 6 guided tours per hour, Tuesday through Friday. Tours can be scheduled at 10:00 a.m., 11:00

a.m., or 12:00 p.m. each day. Over the course of my inquiry, I observed and led “Art Journey” and “My Extra Special 4th Grade Tour” tours for 4th grade students, including leading 10 tours and observing at least 20 hours of tours led by others.

Because my site and study directly involved school tours, my inquiry contributes to the emerging literature on single-visit school tours and social justice. However, I explore school tours through a theoretical framework that has, to my knowledge, not yet been applied to single-visit school tours. Though critical theory has most often been used to support social justice work in museums, I employ posthuman theory, which offers a different language for thinking and experiencing single-visit school tours and the concept of justice. My framework conceptualizes the art museum as a Deleuzian (1987) assemblage and seeks to explore how posthumanist concepts can rupture and reassemble the processes within these spaces. By focusing on a posthuman justice, I engaged in an inquiry that became a search for (and sometimes recognition of existing) openings—possibilities for becoming differently with/in the art museum.

Rosi Braidotti's (2013; 2019a; 2019d) posthuman theory anchored my inquiry. Braidotti (2019a; 2019b; 2019d) locates posthumanism at the intersection of posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism. Drawing from poststructuralists like Foucault (1977; 1990) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Braidotti critiques the essentialist, autonomous "Self" produced during the Enlightenment, proposing instead a nomadic, relational subject that is constantly in process and shaped by its interactions with others. This reframing of the “Self” aligns with Braidotti's (2013) conceptualization of immanence, which considers matter, including human embodiment, as self-organizing and interconnected with cultural, technological, and environmental forces. Braidotti's (2006; 2019a) posthumanism challenges rigid binaries and distinctions between human and non-human, knowledge and being, emphasizing a process-oriented ontology where subjectivity is

continually becoming through dynamic, collective assemblages. These assemblages do not privilege any one element but emphasize how different entities—human and non-human—interact, transform, and produce new subjectivities.

Thinking with Braidotti's posthumanism in relation to art museum education led me to experiment with ways to disrupt the traditional, territorialized roles that museums play in reinforcing social and material networks of power. Drawing on the concept of the assemblage, my inquiry explored how school tours might function as dynamic, collective assemblages — instances of becoming — where both students and museum educators created something new. I wondered if it was possible for art museum single-visit school tours to transform the repetitive, normative processes of the art museum into affirmative moments of critique and creativity, where students and educators could collectively create new meanings and possibilities for small, embodied posthuman justices.

My post qualitative inquiry focused particularly on the intersections of theory, writing, and the practice of inquiry in a posthuman context. In the text, I weave together the theoretical threads of poststructuralism and Braidotti's posthumanism, informed by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, with the practical experience of being immersed in the art museum's environment-made-dynamic by single-visit school tours. Through post qualitative inquiry, I was able to develop a speculative analysis of my experience and map the development of an emergent, iterative concept of posthuman justice as a creative, collective, partial, and minor resistance. This is a kind of justice that operates in the interstitial spaces and moments in the galleries where normative structures (methods of representation, categorization, ownership, even fairness) break down. These slight shifts towards justice appear through affirmative cartography in the art museum, forging alternative futures through student-driven additions. They are little turns that

create space for unexpected interactions and collective transformations between human and nonhuman others. Small justices occur when engaging with embodied, relational, and anomalous pedagogy, destabilizing hierarchies and binaries and affirming what is possible through a transversal process that is never linear or uniform but is characterized by multiplicity, collaboration, and a constant, collective (re)imagining of the present.

In this dissertation, I experiment with writing as a process of relational thinking-doing-being-knowing akin to what I experienced over the course of my post qualitative inquiry. I attempt to capture some of what happened when I thought and experimented with the critical posthuman concept of immanence in an art museum. However, what I represent will always be partial, as much of what happens in experience exceeds what we can know, recognize, or document.

Fragmentary observations and narratives are interspersed throughout the text, evoking, involving, and rupturing the academic writing and format of the dissertation (McKnight, 2016). I hope these fragments, which might be thought of as “that which exceeds and precedes ‘capture’ by language, such as bodily, signifying, disrupting (and connecting) intensities” (MacLure, 2013, p. 170), expand how the text is read and experienced. My goal is to meld experience and thinking, echoing the way theory influenced what I thought and knew and did and experienced while entangled in my study. The events that happened during the time period of my inquiry continue to be remade through my ongoing writing, thinking, and becoming in the art museum.

I conceive of my dissertation as consisting of two major parts. The text “begins”² with Part One: Starting Points, which describes the various entryways into my inquiry. I start by reviewing the literature on social justice and single-visit school tours in art museums. I outline

² Because my inquiry takes place in the onto-epistemology of immanence, which is a continuous becoming, there is not a static “beginning” or “ending” to my inquiry.

how single-visit, guided school tours in art museums are structured, including discussing how single-visit guided school tours are thought to serve the purpose of enhancing critical learning and fostering classroom connections. Investigating the literature on social justice in art museums, I also address the growing importance of social justice in museum teaching, where the evolution of pedagogical practices reflects the increasing demand for museums to be active participants in societal change.

Continuing with the review of scholarly literature, next, I address how museums and museum educators approach social justice programming and the challenges they face implementing social justice curriculum. I work to highlight the tensions between the ways researchers both present the museum as a space for social justice and critique the museum's role in perpetuating systemic power imbalances. This section touches on key themes, such as how museums handle issues of race, representation, and the institutional structure of art museums, as well as the limitations and potential of art education within such spaces.

In the next section, I examine the theoretical framework and concepts that underpinned my thinking throughout both the process of my inquiry and the writing of this dissertation. Since this study is a post qualitative inquiry, it was essential for my inquiry to be built on a solid poststructural and posthuman theoretical framework. The primary philosophers whose work informed my inquiry included Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault. Key posthuman concepts that I thought with were assemblage, cartography, becoming, immanence, affirmative ethics, transversals, justice, and the new.

The following portion of my dissertation discusses my inquiry process, which included what St. Pierre (2018) describes as “the long preparation”: the “reading, thinking, writing, and living with theory in ‘experimentation in contact with the real’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987)”

(p. 604). This section outlines my thinking and describes how I found myself “in the middle” (Springgay & Truman, 2018) of my writing, inquiry process, and school tours with/in the art museum.

What I think of as “the second half” of my dissertation is included in Part Two: Small Justices. Though this organization is not necessarily chronologically truthful, Part Two delves into my experiments with the concept of justice on school tours. This section of my dissertation is organized into what I have been calling “chunks” of experience, or descriptions and theoretical analyses that correspond to a justice-inflected list of thinking words I used to orient myself in the process of my inquiry.

I conclude the dissertation in two ways. First, I propose an idea of slight shifts and small justices, inspired by the thinking-writing-doings of Manning (2016), Rousell (2021), and Ellsworth (2004). This conceptualization of justice is found in the small actions on school tours that transform existing spaces, practices, and systems in ways that generate new becomings. Second, I offer a constellation of cartographic “lines” and propositions that expand my inquiry outward to what has not yet been thought, to what might be, to what is just, and to what could be created. I hope these lines become new and future art museums-to-be.

NAVIGATING K-12 SCHOOL TOURS IN ART MUSEUMS

While there is plentiful ongoing research about different iterations of multi-visit school tour programs, especially related to social justice education, there is significantly less scholarly research available about single-visit field trips to art museums and notably less when focusing on social justice topics. In the last 15 years, two literature reviews on single-visit field trips — one about field trips to science museums (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014) and the other about field trips in general (Dewitt & Storksdieck, 2008) — have been written. Two other studies from outside the time parameter of 15 years directly address student experiences on single visit trips to art museums. Jeffers (1999) discusses what happened when students explored art museums by guiding their adult partners. Henry (1992) researched what middle school students remembered about a single visit trip to an art museum. Both of these articles note there is a lack of literature about students visiting art museums and what happens on guided school tours during these trips.

In this chapter, I review the available literature to explain the structure of single-visit, guided school tours in museums. Focusing on discussions about the purpose of single-visit guided tours in art museums, I outline current gallery teaching strategies and their connections to the development of critical thinking and/or the role of museum visits in connections to classroom concepts. Later, I also explore the increasing importance of social justice in museum education, noting how evolving teaching practices reflect the expectation that museums actively pursue societal change.

School Field Trips to Museums

Museum field trips to any kind of museum are the most prevalent museum program for K-12 audiences, with the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) reporting that 55 million students in school groups visit museums annually (Young, 2021). Citing educationdata.org, Young (2021), points out that there were 56.6 million students and teachers enrolled in public and private K-12 schools in the United States in 2019—nearly the same number of students and teachers that visit museums on field trips. Some of the 55 million student and teacher visitors to museums are undoubtedly repeat visitors, so this statistic does not mean that nearly every student across the country visits a museum with their class, but it shows that museum visits are a staple of K-12 education in the United States (Young, 2021, p. 7), and they help fulfill the mission of museums to be educational institutions by building museum audiences through the introduction of students and teachers to museums.

These school field trips to museums are particularly memorable, “sticky” (Wilkening & Chung, 2009) experiences that stay with participants long after they visit and inspire repeat trips of teachers who bring their students to museums year-after-year on field trips that include guided tours in museums. “Field trip” is a multifaceted term, most frequently ascribed to single-visit events for K-12 school audiences. Burchenal and Lasser (2007) define a field trip as “a standard feature of museum education programs...extensively used by schools and community groups to introduce young people to museums” (p. 103). They continue explaining that field trips are “commonly planned as self-contained events with little connection to the classroom” (Burchenal & Lasser, 2007, p. 103). In other words, the goal of most single-visit school trips to museums is to foster meaningful connections between young people, their teachers, museums as cultural institutions, and art. Though “field trip” describes what occurs during the event, where students

take a trip away from school and into the field, Fortney (2010) writes, "...the problem is that the same term is used to describe a day at an amusement park or a free-for-all in a big city" (p. 31).

This means that the event of the field trip encompasses such a wide variety of excursions and activities, that the term is both utilized and discarded equally when writing about school visits to museums.

Single-Visit, Guided School Tours

Literature on single-visit school programs to museums stresses that the field trip format is important. A successful museum field trip requires developing relationships with teachers prior to the visit and providing accessible pre-visit materials and post-visit options. DeWitt and Storksdieck (2008) synthesize: "A school field trip begins as preparation in the classroom and ends in some form of follow-up, and the extent and quality of both strongly influence the learning potential of the entire field trip experience" (p. 184). Museum educators are responsible for cultivating relationships with teachers and administrators and providing materials that teachers may (or frequently may not!) use. These additional materials help orient both the teacher and the students to the museum.

Once at a museum, a field trip should combine structured, interactive activities "that engage students in making meaningful connections to their lives" (Marable-Bunch, 2010, p. 13) and experiential learning that provides students a choice to "explore, touch, listen to, watch, move things, disassemble and reassemble" (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014, p. 237). Students have the best experience when they are broken into smaller groups "because small groups allow students to ask more questions, do more hands-on work, and become more involved generally" (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008, p. 184). Small groups also encourage students to share discoveries and experiences easily, construct meaning collectively and help build trust on the trip.

School Tours in Art Museums

The structured part of an art museum school tour will typically be a tour led by education staff or a museum volunteer. Current museum teaching pedagogy follows inquiry-based strategies where students learn to explore for answers instead of relying on a teacher or staff member for information (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). Krantz and Downey (2021) note that the form this pedagogy takes in art museums is students looking and discussing a variety of artworks including two popular inquiry-based teaching methods: Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and Artful Thinking by Project Zero. They explain, “‘thinking’ is indicated in both teaching strategies, as these routines were developed to support students to think about art as opposed to expecting students to absorb art historical information” (p. 38). Using VTS, a facilitator would ask open-ended questions like “what is going on in this painting?” and “what do you see that makes you say that?” to follow up (Hausen et al., 2018). Artful Thinking Strategies include prompts like “See Think Wonder” (Project Zero, Harvard, n.d.) that help students interpret and promote curiosity when looking at art.

Other museum education practices are conversation-based, where the goal is to move from a question-and-answer format, to a slightly guided discussion between the students (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011). Interactive, activity-based teaching builds on inquiry and conversation-focused models to a more participatory approach to learning in museums. This “active learning” pedagogy includes “anything that involves visitors doing things and thinking about the things that they are doing” (Vatsky, 2018, p. 13) on a tour. Activity-based gallery teaching can include artmaking, writing, movement, sound-based, and collaborative engagements that help students engage with art on a tour. Finally, a hands-on art-making

component can be a part of the field trip experience, making connections between the galleries and the classroom.

Young (2021) notes that, in art museums, “field trip” is one of many possible descriptors for what happens when students visit. Other names include “interactive tours and workshops, learning expeditions, school tours, interactive classes, school programs, lessons, group visits, guided visits, guided exploration, class visit, school group visits, and museum learning” (Young, 2021, p. 8-9). The term “tour” occurs most frequently in the discussion of art museum field trips for K-12 audiences, and “guided school tour” is the terminology I will be using to describe the type of museum visits I explore in this study.

What Happens During a Guided School Tour in an Art Museum?

More recent literature on single-visit school tours in art museums include Krantz and Downey’s (2021) article overviewing dominant pedagogies used in art museum teaching in two studies: a 2014 study at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Green et al., 2014), described as the first large-scale, random-assignment experiment of school tour visits to an art museum, and a national study launched by the Museum Education Division of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD; RKA & A, 2018). The authors identify inquiry-based teaching (such as the VTS and Artful Thinking approaches described previously) as a valuable aspect of single-visit programs and describe three additional values of gallery teaching pedagogies: “creative thinking, empathy, and, to some extent, critical thinking” (Krantz & Downey p. 39). They back up their observations with evidence from the fields of cognitive psychology and neuroscience, to legitimize their qualitative findings. They also find that the museum setting “activates senses, perceptions, and emotions” which contribute to the valuable capacities outlined earlier. Interestingly, the experience of “awe and wonder” is

also identified as meaningful, but the authors highlight that more research is required “to clearly articulate the value” (Krantz & Downey p. 40) of these emotional responses.

In a newly published book, *Creating meaningful museum experiences for K-12 audiences: How to connect with teachers and engage students*, Young (2021) provides additional sources and a breadth of more current, and art museum-specific writing about single-visit field trips to art museums. Young (2021) makes a critical observation about the recent studies on art museum field trips. She explains that the results of these studies describe byproducts of art museum field trips as their value. The studies show that critical thinking skills developed in some students after single-visit field trips to art museums, but the focus on critical thinking skills as the valuable part of a museum visit risks minimizing the “true value of museum field trips” (Young, 2021, p. 15). For Young (2021), the substantive value of single-visit field trips to museums lie in museums’ ability to inspire students, spark interest, foster curiosity, and build empathy in addition to enhancing skills such as critical thinking and observation (p. 15). This is the “wonder and awe” component noted by Krantz and Downey. All of these sources work to define the experience and illustrate trends in single-visit programs, clarify the successes and limitations of the single-visit format, and define the value single-visit programs add to the classroom and student’s lives.

In another relevant article, Heller et al. (2021) discuss social justice teaching on single-visit, guided school tours. They find that guided, single-visit tours focused on anti-racist teaching require time to develop trust with students and even more time to “scaffold the contextual information that helps students make connections between their observations about an object, their own ideas, and the political/racialized context of the work” (p. 118). These limitations are elements of the single-visit format that I have experienced in my own gallery teaching. The

abundance of research on *multi*-visit social justice programs leaves these kinds of questions and concerns, which are specific to single-visit programs, out of the discussion. The authors suggest that “planting a seed” might be the best metaphor for approaching what is possible when implementing social justice programming on a single-visit field trip.

Noticing

When I lead a school tour, I try to start at a work of art that is big and detailed, with many different elements. I ask the visitors—regardless of age or comfort with art museums—how long they think the average person looks at a work of art. Younger kids guess longer periods of time—15 minutes, an hour. “Wow,” I say, “a whole hour!” Adults might really think about it and suggest 30 seconds or 10 seconds. Sometimes they’ll make a joke. I tell them studies have shown that the average person in a museum looks at a work of art for 17 seconds, and I am going to challenge them to look for longer—30 seconds, 2 minutes depending on the group. I tell them I want them to look, really look at the art, and think to themselves: what is going on in this picture? And then I ask them what they noticed, and everyone notices different things. That’s the point of starting a tour that way. We’re all noticing something different.

Once, I had a group look at a work of art, just an ordinary landscape with boats in a harbor. A pleasant painting of a pleasant view. In talking about what we noticed, we realized something was off that I hadn’t noticed with tour groups before. Half of the boats weren’t whole—hulls and masts appeared out of nowhere, moored to poles adrift in the water. Hazy details on a distant shore dwarfed the dock in the foreground of the painting. The colors were strange, when you really looked, and this painting that we had just discussed as feeling busy and loud had almost no people—it had no birds. Did those trees in the background even have leaves? It was just empty boats surrounded by empty buildings on an empty beach with an empty sky. What was initially a welcoming, sunny painting that reminded people of travel or summer started to feel complicated, uneasy.

I had done this activity so many times with this exact work of art that I could anticipate responses and guide people to look at different places in the painting to develop a similar interpretation together again and again, but it turned out that I hadn't really been looking either.

Social Justice in Museums

In the last 20 years, museum education in the United States has been undergoing a critical turn along with the museum field itself. Increasingly, museum workers and executives have adopted the term “social justice” and its relationship to issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. This focus on systemic change within the museum and the transformation of museum practice has become an increasingly crucial concern of museum educational programming. Kletchka (2018) describes this transition as a paradigmatic shift in the practices and purposes of museums in the United States, where the need for museums to be relevant in the lives of community members leaves museum educators with the responsibilities of “authentically engaging and serving a society founded on systemic injustice that are vast and difficult” (p. 299). Orienting towards community and away from objects means museum educators are “creating an entirely new set of education and personal road maps for social justice and inclusion” (Coleman & Moore, 2019, p. 93). Such a shift toward social justice has pulled American museums in two different directions, with one possible option moving towards “a destination where museums are replete with the possibilities of changing the landscape of American culture and society” (Coleman & Moore, 2019, p. 91), or a second orientation in which museums remain calcified institutions that fail to transition into the spaces of equity and access that museum audiences (and workers) demand. With these two alignments in mind, it is important to consider how the possibility for a social justice became possible in the museum.

A Shift Towards Personal Interpretation

During the 1990’s and early 2000’s, the focus of museums shifted from prioritizing the objects in the collection to what Willams (2008) describes as “an approach involving contextual examination of artifacts in relation to their origin and culture, incorporating a variety of

contrasting perspectives and methods of inquiry” (p. 61). Adaptations in American Alliance of Museum (AAM) published documents (*Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*, 1992) in the 1990s sought to advance the educational missions of museums, and “the term ‘excellent’ signified an expectation for improved standards of scholarship, and the term ‘equity’ underscored an emphasis on the recruitment of the broadest presentation of culture and society as possible in all aspects of U.S. museums” (Williams, 2008, p. 61). As part of this change, museums began recognizing and incorporating viewer responses, lived experiences, and overall involvement as important and central to the museum’s educational mission of public service. This was a paradigmatic shift to learning in museums, and educators moved away from an emphasis on retaining factual knowledge. Instead, they implemented pedagogy that fostered visitors’ individual narratives, using contextual understanding of objects and informed by personal experience. Williams (2008) contends that this philosophical reorientation was the most significant change in U.S. museum history to date (p. 63). From within this Constructivist paradigm, where “understanding is based in a dialogue between viewer and object and is relative, historical and socially determined” (Ebitz, 2008, p. 17), museum education began its critical turn.

Grassroots Activism

Coleman and Moore (2019) argue that museums became concerned with social justice at all because of a tradition of grassroots activism within the museum profession. Coleman and Moore locate the nexus of this movement with the Guerilla Girls, a feminist, female art collective started in 1985 New York City that still exists today. The Guerilla Girls formed with the goal of spotlighting gender and racial inequality within art museums. Coleman and Moore (2019) argue Nina Simon (2010)’s book, *The Participatory Museum*, was built on the foundation

laid by the Guerilla Girls. Simon provided museum education with “consistent modeling of activist behavior by demonstrating both traditional in-person and digital engagement techniques” that foregrounded a museum’s role to serve the community despite “risks of professional disdain” (Coleman & Moore, 2019, p. 94). Once controversial, this book is now a canonical museum education text. Next, a flurry of grassroots online activism in the museum community from the years 2012 and 2016 responded to societal turmoil and fomented a push towards change. Coleman and Moore suggest this activism uncovered a “new way of being a museum through critical discourse, community building and collaborative practice” (p. 96). Changes in museum education mirrored this evolution, and educators worked to create programming that created critical discourse and foregrounded community.

Online Activism

Jennings (2015) also cites the online rallying cry of the #museumsrespondtoferguson initiative as a turning point in the museum profession’s “reluctance to address the tricky question of race as it affects our cultural spaces” (pp. 97-98). The hashtag campaign started in response to the 2014 uprising in Ferguson, Missouri, and the related Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality. Jennings describes the disparity between the way the 2012 police murder of Trayvon Martin inundated national discussion but did not appear in any museum world discourse, ensconcing silence as an institutional norm in the face of other crises. She points out, “despite frequent references in the professional literature to museums as forums, their relevance to the twenty-first century, and their aptness as spaces for civic discourse” museums refused to engage (Jennings, 2015, p. 98). She suggested the hashtag #museumsrespondtoferguson, which prompted an online discussion that focused on “the continued lack of progress in diversifying boards, professional staff and volunteers corps in museums” (Jennings, 2015, p. 100).

This initial activism led to another initiative, #museumworkersspeak, an action-oriented push that focuses on the museum field's reliance on unpaid internships in a push for social change and "how internal museum practices including hiring, leadership and work environment presents barriers to entry and advancement rooted in race and class" (Moore et al., 2022, p. 24). Jennings (2015) notes that these initiatives prompted the ongoing discussion about "two related and inherently contentious topics: (1) the changing nature of museums, and (2) their connections, in the US in particular, with our nation's racial history" (p. 102). In other words, online activism shook America's museum field out of a problematic "apolitical" stance and began forcing an institutional reckoning.

The 2017 hashtag #MuseumsAreNotNeutral and its subsequent global campaign co-produced by museum educators La Tanya S. Autry and Michael Murawski catalyzed previous online activism. This campaign aspired to expose the myth of museum neutrality and demand equity-based transformations across institutions. The movement argues:

Museums have the potential to be relevant, socially-engaged spaces in our communities, acting as agents of positive change. Yet, too often, they strive to remain 'above' the political and social issues that affect our lives - embracing the myth of neutrality.

(Murawski, 2020)

Museums Are Not Neutral was widely accepted as an organizing sentiment when approaching social justice in museum education. The founders' role as museum educators shows the continued relevance of social justice initiatives in education departments.

Inspired by the previous calls to action, MASS Action (Museums as Sites for Social Action), a collaborative 3-year program sponsored by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, began working on a series of public convenings and the production of a tool kit of resources, to share

strategies and frameworks for social justice activism in the museum. MASS Action centered the question: “how do you transform museums from the inside out and align them with more equitable and inclusive practices?” (Moore et al. 2022, p. 25). The goal of the group was to bring conversation to action, gathering and sharing strategies and frameworks needed to adopt more equitable and inclusive practices.

In response to museum staff shifting towards activism, museum leadership began adopting the social justice language and goals for mission statements and institutional initiatives. As front-line workers who frequently engaged with the public, museum educators were tasked with pushing for and enacting many of the changes inspired by this activism. It seemed that social justice-focused advocacy was beginning to change the museum.

Social Justice Museum Education

This section shifts the discussion of social justice in museum from the museum field to the various perspectives of museum educators. Museum educators consider social justice in the context of museums in myriad ways. Through discussions of programming, pedagogy, and institutional constraints, my analysis of the literature provides a critical perspective on the tensions between the museum as a site of possibility and its role in perpetuating systems of oppression.

The Ambivalent Museum

Despite being central to the push towards social justice in museums outlined in the previous section, museum educators approach the topic in different ways. In literature about social justice education in history and art museums, there is a divide in the way art and museum educators approach, describe, and interact with the physical space (and maybe even the concept) of the museum. On the one hand, some researchers describe art educational programming that

takes place in the museum and engages with the process of social justice art education in a neutral space. On the other hand, museum educators write about social justice in museum education by considering the educational impediments and potential in the museum institution, focusing on more critically contextualizing these historically complicated establishments than describing the programming itself.

For example, a portion of art educator Merit Dewhurst's work (2011; 2014) focuses on social justice art museum education programs. In analyzing a teen program at a major museum in New York City, Dewhurst teases out two critical processes of social justice museum education: the practical act of planning and implementing a curriculum for an activist art and the creative, unfolding process of the teens becoming social justice artists in the program. Dewhurst ultimately argues that the two processes are intertwined. She explains, "viewing activist art through the lens of process, we educators stand to learn much about the importance of decision making and tactical alignment, as well as how all stakeholders - including the artists themselves - can grow through the practice of making art for social change" (Dewhurst, 2014, p. 112). She argues that a successful program for developing social justice art must provide plenty of conscious opportunities for participants to connect, question and translate, but it must also be flexible, collaborative and iterative enough to adapt to whatever needs arise for students.

Yet, in these works where Dewhurst works to define social justice art museum education through a discussion of programming, she does not engage with the art museum as a contested space itself. Though she argues that the art museum provides more opportunities for complicated, collaborative student-centered pedagogy and programming than more traditional education spaces, she does not address the museum's own set of hierarchical and "white cube" complications. She never proffers an analysis of the way institutions change or manipulate the

intentions of the activist art they collect. There is no discussion of how art created for a white wall museum gallery has already been stripped of its activist potential. For example, when artworks addressing homelessness are removed from the public spaces of their original creation, they are no longer public; instead, they are mediated to a specific audience that chooses to visit the museum to see and experience art. The students in Dewhurst's descriptions all created rich, conceptual projects, but none of them addressed the gallery space or moved their project outside the museum walls. This seems to indicate a gap in Dewhurst's proposed curriculum to inspire teens to think about and create social justice art with the goal of engaging with and changing society. In the same way that the museum could be liberating for this kind of programming and pedagogy, it also limits.

In Coffey et al. (2015), social justice education in the museum takes the form of project-based instruction that includes a history museum visit. The authors discuss the museum as a pedagogical tool for experiential learning that puts critical and social justice theory into practice. The article researches a semester-long program for preservice teachers that emphasized the practice of social justice teaching as a way to help students "develop a sense of courage to take [steps] outside the rigidity of curricular standardization and deficit modeling" that proliferate in schools (Coffey et al., 2015, p. 9). The majority of the article's program takes place outside the museum, and it was interesting to read about how the educators considered the museum as a place to put social justice pedagogy into practice because it is a reflective space for knowledge construction and non-linear, experiential learning.

The authors found participants more willing to challenge their assumptions about society and explore history and culture in a context they had not previously considered while at the museum. However, the roles museums play in creating and perpetuating the systems of

oppression the authors wanted participants to explore was never discussed. This theme continued in Grant & Kee's (2018) otherwise thoughtful and relevant discussion of "counter-narrative dialogues" in art museums. In their chapter, they approach the art museum as a site of possibility for connecting K-12 art education with art museum education for teacher professional development, adopting museum education strategies and spaces to "interrupt and re-interpret mainstream art education curricula" (Grant & Kee, 2018, p. 157). In other words, they suggest art museum education offers social tools and strategies that can be used for social justice in school classrooms, though the limits of museums as institutions are not addressed. In all, when educators describe social justice programming in art museums, they often view the museum as a utopian location for education.

In other cases, however, museum educators use discussions of social justice education programs to outline the systemic and pedagogical issues that emerge from the museum space. There is an emphasis on explaining the problems of museum collecting, curating, staffing, and funding that impact the implementation of social justice museum education. For example, in a discussion of the need for educators of color on K-12 tours, Fuentes (2021a) points out that many museums are predominantly White institutions (PWIs) that have started trying to diversify their collections and education staff but end up reinforcing the idea of the art museums as white sanctuaries, or spaces that allow White people to feel good about themselves. She explains:

By displaying the history of and objects created by Black and Indigenous cultures separately from rather than intertwined with the broader American story, museums segregate and isolate BIPOC narratives. By typically offering label copy only in English, museums ignore the needs of non-English speakers and expect them to conform to the practices of the dominant culture. The content and the context of exhibitions presented by

PWIs tend to either reflect White culture or be presented through a lens of Whiteness - only providing superficial information about communities of color - and are therefore reflections of the dominant group. Similarly, by not incorporating voices and perspectives of the BIPOC communities, they are not granted an opportunity to articulate nuances and complexities of their own culture and/or religion. (Fuentes, 2021a, p. 234)

These concerns are intensely relevant, and implementing the pedagogical process of social justice education in art museum spaces has to take these re-presentations of power into consideration. But how do museum educators do that? What does that look like? In these types of articles, implementing curriculum or building social justice pedagogical strategies in museums takes a back seat to pointing out all the ways museums need to and have not changed. How do museum educators lead K-12 tours in these spaces? How do museums create social justice programming as they are trying to diversify their workforce? The art museum itself becomes a place of heavy conceptual burden for the museum educators who must function inside of it.

The Audiences of Social Justice Programming

Most of the programs discussed in the literature I read about social justice art museum education are multi-visit programs for two specific audiences: adults, specifically preservice teachers and other educators, (Clover et al., 2018; Coffey et al., 2015; Crum & Hendrick, 2014; Grant & Kee, 2018) and high school students (Crabbe et al., 2022; Dewhurst, 2011, 2014; El Amin & Cohen; Reid 2014). Young (2021) provides one of the few sources that looks at social justice programming for elementary school students as part of the larger category of K-12 audiences, which still includes teens. Part of this might be practical: these are the audiences that art education scholars are working with in university settings, and they are easier to get

permission to work with. It also might be that these groups are the people we think will be interested in social justice education.

What Are the Characteristics of Social Justice Museum Education?

As I reviewed literature about social justice education in art museums, social justice art education, and social justice education for elementary school students, I compiled a list of repeated traits and concerns that emerged to formulate some sort of answer to answer this question: what makes an art museum program or tour a social justice program? I found a variety of models: drawing students attention to positive representations of BIPOC artists and fostering critical literacy about dilemmas of representation (El-Amin & Cohen, 2017); “encouraging students to look critically and challenge assumptions about race and culture” (Grant & Kee, 2018, p. 157), to use their lived experiences to create counter-stories that challenge mainstream art education curricula in the classroom; and diversifying school tour curriculum to include more BIPOC artists, tell hidden histories, and talk about Whiteness differently (Fuentes, 2021; Heller, et al., 2021). There are programs or tours that include a process of reflection and action where educating and artmaking are a central, unfolding activity (Dewhurst, 2011; 2014), or museum visits are used to challenge participant assumptions about society and explore history and culture in a context not previously considered through project-based, experiential learning (Coffey et al., 2015). Social justice art museum programs emphasize personal reflection, prioritize lived experience and acknowledge systems of oppression. Ideas that structure social justice art education, according to the literature, include courage, optimism, constant activity, and transformations. Finally, social justice art museum education uses art to encourage alternative possibilities, perspectives, and futures.

Acuff and Evans (2014) describe museum educators as attempting to bridge the gap between a museum's intentions and the realities of visitors. Educators fulfill the role of negotiator, working between the museum collection and its community. This role of negotiator seems both hyper-relevant and under-explored in the literature I reviewed for this question. Ultimately, I was left wondering how ideas of rupture, emergence, and transformation might create space for a museum educator to write about the process of social justice museum programming in a manner that includes institutional critique but considers what else is possible.

Impacts of Covid-19

When the Covid-19 pandemic started, the adopted veneer of institutional activism and diversity in the museum industry began to fade. When faced with economic and racial equity issues compounded by the pandemic, many museums fired staff (specifically front-line employees like guest services, admissions, retail and education, frequently contract staff and the most diverse departments in museums), stagnated wages, and offered fewer benefits to museum staff (Chevalier, 2022). An AAM and Wilkening Consulting (2021) survey during the pandemic showed 53% of responding museums furloughed or laid off staff during the pandemic. In addition, 67% of museums participating in the survey reduced education programming due to budget and staff cuts.

Chevalier (2022) describes the results of a National Art Education Association (NAEA) survey on the impacts of Covid-19 with 245 - 289 museum education professionals that were employed by a museum when museums closed due to the pandemic. She reports that while respondents felt visitor services and education were the most heavily impacted departments during the pandemic, "senior management was the only department that respondents felt fared better than education" (Chevalier, 2022, p. 249), with 48% of survey results indicating that

factors like staff, budgeting, and responsibilities were less impactful on management. Another component of the survey indicated that respondents felt museum leadership was unable or unwilling to care about staff.

Cipolle (2024) outlines the shift away from activism in an article about the transformation of Minneapolis Institute of Art since a change of leadership in 2020. Cipolle (2024) quoted MIA museum president Karen Crawford Luber: “MIA is an art museum, and I think sometimes with very activist voices, they forget that it’s an art museum, and they want it to be something else. They want it to fulfill a purpose that isn’t appropriate for an art museum” (para. 19). Luber was saying, in essence, that the museum, once touted as an exemplary activist institution and the site of the MASS Action protest and program, was reaffirming its role as a repository of objects. Since 2020, museums have been repeating and reproducing the systems of power that the past two decades of activism had worked to highlight and overturn.

In response, a new wave of activism erupted as museum workers at America’s biggest and most preeminent museums started organizing. For example, in 2021, unions formed at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New Museum, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Guarino, 2021). Workers felt they needed collective bargaining to be paid fairly, receive base-level benefits, and ensure their job security after working in the institutions throughout the pandemic. In addition, museum educators, “tasked with connecting to the community and serving previously underserved audiences” indicated that, facing budget cuts and less staff, they would need to carefully allocate human and financial resources, leading to the inevitability that “some or all DEAI work led by museum educators will stop or slow

immensely” (Chevalier, 2022, p. 257). The space between what museums said they were about and what they protected in a crisis widened into a hypocritical chasm.

As a museum educator, I realized that things were not what they had seemed, and this rift presented an area of possibility for my research. I realized that there was no way to “fix” or “overthrow” the museum, and the museum perhaps was not a productive site for emancipatory educational programs. I wanted my inquiry into single-visit guided school tours to consider justice in the context of art museum education but realized I would need to find other theoretical perspectives that might help me think differently.

Theoretical Frameworks for Justice Work in Museums

The literature about social justice museum education that I analyzed is entirely situated within a critical theoretical framework. The critical theoretical tradition problematizes dominant ideologies and, ultimately, seeks to turn critique into action. Emancipation and social justice work are central goals of these traditions. El-Amin and Cohen (2018) use critical pedagogy to discuss a multi-visit teen program that activates critical theorist Freire’s concept of conscientization, which they describe as “making students of color aware of...positive representation of their racial identity in the museum” (p. 8). Dewhurst (2014) also references Freire (1970/2018), and Grant and Kee (2018) cite critical art education scholar Dipti Desai in their “counter-narrative inquiry” of K-12 art museum education.

Many of the authors frame their work with Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT addresses the systematic and institutionalized forms of racism that are present in society, and it seeks to understand how race and racism shape society and the everyday experiences of people of color. CRT emerged from legal studies and delves into scholars’ concerns “that racial injustice persisted, even though the Civil Rights Movement brought about incremental changes by

providing equality under the law for Blacks” (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013, p. 11). Adams (2017) introduces museums as places that provide visitors with challenging opportunities to discuss, connect, and reflect on the world around them. She explains how she uses CRT to create programs that challenge the racial status quo. Her article carefully establishes CRT beliefs and outlines that she is not applying a CRT framework to the museum as an educational environment, like a school, but instead, to examine museum practices and programs through the lens of race and inclusivity.

Transitioning from Dewhurst’s earlier focus on social justice programming in art museums, she and Hendrick (2018) later applied CRT to museum education in a systemic analysis of the museum. They use CRT as a theoretical lens to explain that racism and White supremacy thrives in art museums in many ways, including museum education. In their chapter, they describe CRT as an analytical tool for examining and dismantling racism in art museum education. The authors employ a strategy of “name and explain” to analyze six common instances of White dominant thinking that continue racial hierarchies and oppressive systems within museums. They are interested in clarifying two levels of racism, the individual and institutional. Dewhurst and Hendrick use CRT to analyze big institutional themes like hiring practices and art acquisitions that reproduce white supremacy, but they also address art education programming concerns—like assumptions about audiences and neutrality and silence about race on the part of art educators who might otherwise emphasize interactive discussion and conversation-based learning on museum tours.

Heller et al. (2021) discuss the impact of Whiteness on Art Museum Field Trip teaching by using participatory action research to analyze and discuss their experiences as White museum educators through the framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS). CWS is a theory that

works to describe Whiteness as a socially constructed, privileging racial category that is “an invisible, hierarchical power structure and identity construct...that informs how all individuals, regardless of race, view themselves and society” (Heller et al., 2021. p. 112). This article examines the ways Whiteness of museum educators complicates anti-racist teaching on single-visit programs. They outline a tension between balancing open-ended inquiry, anti-racist pedagogies, and the time limitations of single-visit field trips.

Assemblages

Despite reading and understanding the practices and goals of social justice programming and critique in art museum education, I realized that an emancipatory framework was not going to work for my inquiry. If the museum was to be understood as an institution entrenched in systemic racism and relations of power that resists sustained, major calls for change, I knew I would need to approach justice differently. Seeking other theories that could provide the framework I needed to continue my study, I began to consider the possibility and promise of engaging with art museums through the concept of the assemblage.

Museums are composed of various material and discursive processes that structure the way we understand art and knowledge and the physical space of the museum (Kletchka, 2018). Museums combine “states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes” in addition to “utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs” (Deleuze, 2007, p.177). They are “repositories of cultural hegemony” (Raicovich, 2021, p.1). Their repository logic prioritizes the object (combined with its material and cultural worth) and the capitalist means of acquiring more objects, prestige, and money. That people follow the rules and internalize a White, Western teleological understanding of art (and the world) is a crucial message of a collecting institution (Raicovich, 2021). Despite attempts at change from workers,

and the need for change dictated by society, the art museum assemblage persists in its being.

Buchanan (2017) describes the tendencies of assemblages:

Assemblages are structured and structuring (not purely processual), that is one of their principal processes...assemblages have a logic, an operational sense if you will, that can be mapped - one always knows what is possible and what is not possible within a given assemblage, and, lastly, assemblages always strive to persist in their being, to use a Spinozist turn of phrase - they are subject to forces of change, but ultimately they would always prefer not to change. (p. 462)

That is, art museums have an internal and external logic, an operational sense, that can be described and mapped. They are structured by their logic, even as their logic leaks beyond the art museum. Despite waves of activism and calls for structural change, art museums continue, and this tendency towards stasis helps explain why art museums have not been able to successfully transition into critical educational spaces. Though external and internal forces attempted to deterritorialize the assemblage of the museum, it held on to its logic on the strata in crisis. Museums would always prefer not to change.

As I began to conceptualize art museums as assemblages, I needed a theoretical framework that would take this shift into account. Deleuzian assemblages are situated in poststructural theory, but would it be possible to rethink “social justice” through this theory? Theories sometimes termed the “posts,” including poststructuralism and new empiricisms, follow philosophy’s “ontological turn,” challenging how we “think of being, of human being, and of inquiry” (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 113). The term “social” in social justice, then, becomes problematic because it typically describes humanist “humans” that are incongruent with poststructural ontologies. I wondered if “social justice,” a concept laden with humanist meaning,

was being rethought by other researchers using the posts in a way that could help me think differently about what was possible while continuing to work for justice in museum education?

In the midst of these tensions, I began thinking about what justice meant in the posts and how the ideas of emancipatory social justice aimed at change and the desire for something new might be rethought. The questions guiding my study evolved and now included: how might students on guided tours in the museum *become* differently? What, in the context of a museum, could be created, ruptured, changed?

Circles

Draw a circle on your paper.

Now trace that circle with your pencil. Move your pencil around the shape. As you're moving, think about the way the circle feels. Go around and around, tracing the circle while you think. What do you notice about the circle on your paper? The feeling of drawing the shape?

How do the circles work in this piece? Why do you think the artist used this shape in the artwork?

How many circles can we find?

MAPPING THEORY

Various theoretical coordinates and scholars informed my inquiry and thinking about posthuman theory in art and museum education. Here, I introduce the theories and concepts I thought with as I inquired and wrote about my study. This includes a careful reading of the art museum where I completed my inquiry as an assemblage and the implications of completing my inquiry with/in that assemblage.

Posthumanism

Rosi Braidotti (2013; 2019a) locates posthumanism at the intersection of post-Humanism and post-anthropocentrism in the present. The post-human refuses the humanist ontology of a thinking Western White Man, separate from and superior to the world around him, that was invented in the Enlightenment. St. Pierre (2012) explains, “we generally say that the modern subject began with Descartes’s (1937/1993) statement we remember well, ‘I think, therefore I am’ (p. 18)” (p.40). This Cartesian idea of the Self privileges knowing over being as part of a subject/object distinction that categorizes the world “through common sense and good sense in a dogmatic image of thought” (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604). The thoughts of the individual human are thus the center of the universe - more important than anything else. If we accept that the humanist description of human being was created, invented during the Western Enlightenment, it might be possible to think that there is no “I” for the self at all.

Postmodernism finds the Self created in the Enlightenment to be a “solitary self...an empty self, unencumbered and unsituated, an autonomous master of its own destiny through self-generated and voluntary agency, by which it dominates reality” (Kramnick, 1995, p. xxiii). It is a

self without connection to the world, always divided into a binary between knowing and being, where epistemology and ontology are always separate. The self emphasizes the notion of something essential or true which is the project of the metanarrative - to explain things as universal truths.

The poststructuralists (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault 1977; 1990) refused the humanist self to re-describe the human being as a subject who is produced by and produces a complex network of social interactions that construct reality. Their characterization of the subject prioritizes being in the world (ontology) and rejects the modes of knowledge creation (epistemology) that are defined by the core truth or essence of the metanarrative (Lyotard, 1984). For poststructuralists, ontology and epistemology are combined into onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007); where one does not come before the other. The subject is continually being described through different relations on the grid of intelligibility where it is produced (Butler, 1990). The subject has no essence, identity, or central core truth. It is not stable. Instead, it continually produces itself and is produced through language and interaction. In poststructuralism, the verb “to be” is refused (and dangerous) and replaced with the connecting conjunction “and...and...and” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002) where everything is already tangled, intertwined, assembled, and becoming together. Rethinking the human in postmodern poststructural theories created the foundational thought continued in posthumanist dismantling of the Humanist human (Braidotti, 2013).

The poststructural refusal of the humanist self, the de-centering of ‘Man,’ the former ideal and measure of all things, is only part of posthumanism. The other, according to Braidotti (2013), is post-anthropocentrism, a material rethinking of matter. Braidotti (2013) explains:

My monistic philosophy of becomings rests on the idea that matter, including the specific slice of matter that is human embodiment, is intelligent and self-organizing. This means that matter is not dialectically opposed to culture, nor to technological mediation, but continuous with them. (p. 35)

From this, Braidotti (2006; 2013) posits a process-oriented ontology where subjectivity is a process of self-styling involving complex and constant negotiation with dominant norms and truths. She argues that the posthuman ends what she describes as a binary of post-humanism and humanism, creating an affirmative discursive framework that looks towards new alternatives.

Posthumanism is located in the historical decline of humanism but works to explore alternatives “without sinking into the rhetorical crisis of Man. It works instead toward elaborating alternative ways of conceptualizing the human subject” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 37). Posthumanism has to think differently about a post-humanist onto-epistemology because it is based in the climate and socio-political emergencies that currently exist on the planet. Braidotti (2018) explains, “the convergence of these two lines of critique in what I call the posthuman predicament is producing a chain of theoretical, social and political effects that is more than the sum of its parts” (xi). For Braidotti, theoretical work intertwines with real life circumstances, and posthuman scholarship must take both influences into account when considering the urgency of what the world must become.

Posthumanism in Museum Education

Over the past 10 years, some museum scholars have been thinking with posthuman theory in their work; posthumanism provides a fruitful framework for considering the intersections of the institution and artistic practice in the museum. In *Posthuman Glossary* (2018), a resource co-edited by Braidotti, Cameron’s entry, titled “Posthuman Museum

Practices, “explains how posthumanism can be applied to the way museums work. As Cameron (2018) explains: “in a more-than human world, museums as custodians of cultural memory and as trusted information sources are ideally placed to concretely re-work human subject positions and frame and promote posthuman theories and practices of life through curatorial practice” (p.104). For Cameron, museums are sites and sources of posthuman perspective, where posthuman curatorial practices invite the audience to consider the posthuman potential of objects and “material, discursive, technological, biological and non-human aspects” (p. 104) of objects. This explanation and consideration synthesizes much of what is discussed in the posthuman literature on museums in general, though it focuses on curatorial practices rather than educational practices, which is where my interest lies.

To situate my own posthuman inquiry within the literature on posthumanism in museums, but with a specific focus on art education, I referred to a number of texts that either paralleled or intersected with this focus as I completed my inquiry. For example, MacRae et al. (2017) study early childhood education in the museum, exploring the concept of the posthuman child in order to think young children in museums differently. They argue that the perspective of the posthuman child suggests a more powerful understanding of objects themselves and the animacy of non-human aspects of the museum. They explain:

A great deal of what a child does in a museum, they do without thinking about it, and would struggle to explain it in words. Why did you run up and down that corridor? Why are you so very attached to that small plastic magnifying glass? Much of our ‘sticky data’ on young children in museums involves experiencing with the body, in ways that defy verbal explanation. When research works with conceptual models that can only account

for what can be explained in words, other aspects of what takes place are usually disregarded. (MacRae et al., 2017, p. 509)

The authors argue that these sticky moments of thought-in-action that exist outside/around/as part of museum programming should cause museum educators to emphasize the value of unexpected connections generated through human and non-human encounters.

Education scholar Mulcahy (2016) investigates how museum education contributes to affective learning with Deleuzian concepts. She thinks through case studies and argues that the “sticky learning” created through educational experiences in museums “affords consideration of the complex distributed agency (and pedagogic responsibility) that emerges from breaking down the subject-object and mind-body binaries” (Mulcahy, 2016, p. 207). Students (and teachers) on museum tours can create bodily memories from interacting with objects in museums that cause them to think about themselves and their world in very different ways. Mulcahy argues that this affective response provides insight into the possibilities of museum education in affecting social change.

Feinberg and Lemaire (2021) are gallery educators who created and led gallery tours for teens ages 17-19 that were “somatically and affectively” (p. 357) attuned by using relational thinking and new materialist theories. The authors discuss their desire to move away from museum education’s reliance on voice to instead help visitors connect with works of art through their bodies, senses, and emotions. Their thinking is led by Bourdieu, Foucault, Bal, Deleuze and Guattari, and their definition of somatic is informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1991) definition of concepts as “centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond with each other” (Feinberg & Lemaire, 2021, p. 359). The design of their program and their gallery teaching is deeply

influenced by the poststructural theories they are thinking with as they complete their experimental projects.

These scholars helped me understand a school tour and student experience in the museum in new ways by broadening my perspective on what a school tour does and could become. My inquiry fits in with this literature using posthuman theory in museum education and theorizing the art encounter as an assemblage (Berard, 2017), but I hone in on an exploration of justice on K-12 school tours through Braidotti's critical posthumanities. In my study, I used a posthuman theoretical foundation to intervene in and analyze the processes at play with/in the art museum on single-visit school tours, considering the way art museum programming can foster new subjectivities, collective becomings, and the potential for justice.

Concepts

Philosophical concepts provide something to think with; they reorient thought and being. They “seize hold and change the way we do everything and everything about what we do. They are constitutive of our daily becomings” (Jackson, 2016, p. 190). Concepts are onto-epistemologically oriented to the flat ontology of the “posts.” A concept is always working and becomes a way to move past experience to think something new with theory. In this way, concepts are active, and they create. Post qualitative research involves thinking deeply with theoretical concepts. Jackson (2016) describes the process of thinking with the Deleuzian concept of the refrain:

I do not seek to represent a reflection of the real but use theory and concepts to prioritize invention over discovery, and to use the musical concepts associated with the refrain as ‘learning devices’...The refrain, along with its companion concepts, allows not a

representation of the empirical world but highlights that which is ‘Interesting, Remarkable, or Important’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 82). (p. 184)

Concepts help frame, invent, learn, and confront. They are not used to discuss one idea or moment. The posthuman concepts of assemblage, affirmative ethics, immanence, and cartography provided creative ways for me to think, inquire, and then write my study.

Art Museum Assemblages

Watching museums repeat and reproduce systems of power that the past two decades of activism had worked to highlight and overturn made me consider how museums function like Deleuzian assemblages. An assemblage is not a descriptive term about how things are assembled together; instead, it is a concept to think through the arrangement, or construction, of something. Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of assemblage in the first section of *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) where they describe a book as an assemblage, a relational little machine (p. 4). They explain:

A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations...A book is an assemblage of this kind and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity - but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of substantive. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4)

In other words, an assemblage is relational (variously formed, exteriority), always changing (we don't yet know what it will become), dynamic (a working of matters) and multiple (a multiplicity).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain assemblages as having “neither base nor superstructure, neither deep structure nor superficial structure: it flattens all of its dimensions onto a single plan of consistency upon which reciprocal presuppositions and mutual insertions play themselves out” (p. 100) on a flat onto-epistemological plane of becoming. For an assemblage to always be becoming, it is always in motion. In all assemblages, this becoming happens in different ways. There are lines of articulation or segmentarity, territorializing strata and territories, and there are also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. One side of the machinic assemblage faces the strata, which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) characterize as “a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject” (p. 4). The other side faces a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, “causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name and a trace of intensity” (p. 4). An assemblage is always, consistently rearranging into being. Fullagar and Taylor (2021), describe this action further, “the productivity of an assemblage is important. Assemblages as sociopolitico-economic gatherings of intensive forces, powers and desires, are always changing, always open” (p. 33). Because an assemblage is always rearranging and transforming, the most important aspect of it is not what it is, but what it is doing.

Using the concept of an assemblage in analysis then explores the circumstances of where and how things happen. Building on the book analogy, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain, “We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it;” rather, “we will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own convergence” (p. 4).

This is not a descriptive analysis but a political framing of problems, “that brings into dynamic relation the flows of desire (power, minor and major), more than human forces (affects, bodies without organs) and (de)formation of territories (strata, lines of flight, becoming)” (Fullagar & Taylor, 2021, p. 32). Framing the museum as an assemblage asks the questions: how do art museums function? How is power articulated, and how is it stratified? How is the museum assemblage deterritorializing, rupturing?

The Art Museum Assemblage in Context

The site of my inquiry is an encyclopedic visual art museum in Texas where I work in the education department. The museum includes more than 25,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years. It offers nearly 5,000 multidisciplinary education programs annually that are dedicated to helping visitors experience, interact with, and learn from art by illuminating their cultural and historical significance. The permanent collection includes works in a variety of media, with strengths in the arts of the Ancient Americas, Africa, Indonesia, and South Asia; European and American painting, sculpture, and decorative arts; and American and international contemporary art. The institution’s mission statement claims the museum will: (a) place art and our diverse communities at the center around which all activities radiate; (b) pursue excellence in collecting and programming, present works of art across cultures and time, and be a driving force in contemporary art; (c) strengthen our position as a prominent, innovative institution, expanding the meaning and possibilities of learning and creativity (Internal document, Strategic Plan).

The city’s community includes around 1.3 million people, according to the 2020 census (Dallas, city, Texas, n.d.). It is the ninth-most-populous in the United States and third in its state, following only Houston and San Antonio. Its metropolitan area includes one-quarter of the state’s population. In 2020, the racial composition of the city where the museum is location was 42.3%

Hispanic or Latino (of any race), 28.1% White (non-Hispanic), 22.9% Black or African American, and 3.7% Asian, making it a majority-minority city. In the city, 40% of residents speak a language other than English at home. The city is part of a larger metroplex with almost 8 million people, the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States. The "outer ring" counties in the region experienced estimated double-digit growth rates, from 2020 – 2024, with some counties growing between 11% and nearly 20% from 2020 to early 2024, based on the Texas Demographic Center's estimates (Arauz Peña, 2024, para. 6). Dynamics between the city's population and the dynamics of large metroplex – including its rapid expansion mean the museum must serve many complex, evolving “communities” simultaneously. For example, the museum must keep in mind wealth disparities between the museum's donor class and the socioeconomic realities of a majority of its visitors, especially those students visiting the museum from the city's public school district.

While I was completing my inquiry, the art museum underwent two large changes simultaneously. First, the museum announced a major building expansion and renovation to be helmed by an international architecture firm, with the building project expected to cost nearly 200 million dollars. Second, the museum laid off eight percent of its staff and reduced public hours of the museum, closing on Tuesdays and eliminating longer open hours on Fridays, except for a few times each year. In a meeting, which I was a part of, the staff was told that the new building plans and layoffs were not connected, and the museum needed a new building to better protect and provide more space for art (personal meeting notes, October 24, 2024).

Articles detailing the layoffs note, “while these renovations and new facilities may be needed to continue to serve the Dallas community, the recent layoffs at the cultural institution feel ‘contradictory’” (Pontone, 2023, para. 12). The contradiction lay in the museum's decision to

limit the public's access to the museum and decrease programming and staff, while focusing on the art object and a prestigious building project. These choices did not align with the museum's mission statement, which aims to prioritize "diverse communities at the center." That is, the museum publicly claimed that art and community were equal priorities, but, with this decision, the museum chose the object and acclaim over both its external visitor community and its own institutional community of employees.

Buchanan (2021), referring to the assemblage, asserts that concepts "should bring about a new way of seeing something and not simply fix a label on something we think we already know about it" (p. 2). In other words, concepts should be used to frame a problem, not as adjectives to name or describe. Using the concept of the assemblage to analyze my study's site helped to answer the question of how the museum works. In this example, the art museum assemblage's normative, territorializing processes and descriptions of power—the accumulation and exaltation of objects, the production of hegemonic knowledge, the drive for legitimacy and prestige—worked in tension with forces of deterritorialization that simultaneously demanded change or something new, such as prioritizing diverse communities, centering people and not objects, and "expanding the...possibilities of learning and creativity" (Internal document, Strategic Plan). Even as the art museum purported a desire to change, it seemed obvious that it would rather not. Further, the art museum assemblage's internal logic used the language and priorities of critical change to the museum, "the need to better serve the community" to reinforce the museum's existing function. The assemblage is not just an accumulation of parts, but the relations and forces that connect them, along with the outcomes they generate as they constantly shift and change. It is with/in this art museum assemblage that my inquiry took place.

Braidotti's Nomadic Assemblages and Affirmative Ethics

Braidotti (1994) adapts Deleuze's concept of the assemblage to describe what she calls "nomadic subjects" (p. 7) as critical posthuman assemblages. This dynamic vision of the subject as assemblage implies a process ontology of continual becoming and changing and a strong sense of community, of collectivity or co-presence –the simultaneity of our being in the world together. Braidotti (2012) explains, "a collectively distributed consciousness emerges from this (the nomadic subject), i.e. a transversal form of nonsynthetic understanding of the relational bond that connects us" (p. 12). This places the relation at the center of both the ethics and the epistemological structures and processes of the subject that is "constituted in and by multiplicity" while being "internally differentiated" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 49). Braidotti's point is that the subject is open-ended, interrelational, that it transforms by interacting with multiple others, part of the relational collective assemblage that is always in the process of transforming.

Braidotti's assemblages move from critique to creativity. Collective assemblages, comprised of the relational interactions of nomadic, posthuman subjects, are directed "towards new forms of solidarity, social justice, democratic debates and dissent" (Braidotti, 2019b, p. 1185). Affirmative ethics steer posthuman subjects in this way that counters capitalism and negativity and politically drives posthumanism by focusing on creativity and collectivity. Affirmative ethics combines affirmative critique with action. Critique helps us make something happen in the world, to direct that action, to create new assemblages.

Following Braidotti, in my work, I wanted to explore the way creating/considering transversal, collective assemblages of school tours might disrupt or rupture the existing, territorializing processes that construct and perpetuate the assemblage of the art museum. How could school tours deterritorialize the norm of the museum? Often, school tours can become

repeating processes that reinforce established rules and normative thought. How could focusing on affirmative ethics, immanence, and critical thinking spark changes or different ways of viewing/being in the world with students? Thinking with the concept of collective assemblages helped me approach my inquiry as both analysis (critique) and a series of provocations or interventions (creation) during different school tours to then see what kinds of collective alternative becomings emerged and how they might result in reflections of becoming or becomings toward justice.

Immanence

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ontology of immanence animates posthuman ontology, where the multilayered and multidirectional present is at the same time the record of what has already happened and what might be. Immanence is opposed to the humanist "transcendence" where something is "exterior or beyond the world" (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 4). That is, immanence describes a process of continuous, multiple becoming. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe becoming this way:

Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, "appearing," "being," "equaling," or "producing." (p. 239)

In other words, immanence is the dynamic, onto-epistemological process through which reality comes into being. Becoming is a repetition of difference across all modes of existence.

Immanence is the way through which things and events become into being. For Deleuze, all things exist within the flat plane of immanence.

Braidotti and Immanence

Braidotti describes immanence through new materialisms and the animation of the critical posthuman subject. She (2018) explains, “all matter or substance” as being “one and immanent to itself” (p. xv). That means that immanence drives the ontological desire of vital matter to become. All matter is becoming on a web of relations that composes posthuman subjects. For Braidotti (2019a), critical posthuman subjects are continually “a work in progress” (Braidotti, 2019a, p. 45). The critical posthuman knowing subject is a nomadic subject, a part of a nomadic transversal assemblage, a community bonded together by affirmative ethics. Braidotti (2019d) explains that critical thinking is central to posthumanism, immanence, and “the creation of new concepts, or navigational tools to help us through the complexities of the *present*” as we, the embedded and embodied nomadic subjects imagine the future (p. 37).

Immanence in Museums

Immanence was important to my study because I did not want to look at what had already been done on school tours in museums; I wanted to focus on what was in the making. I was not looking to repeat and categorize school tours through the application of posthuman concepts; rather, I wanted to see what transpired when I asked students to be in the museum differently and asked docents to lead tours differently. I wondered if thinking with these posthuman concepts might prompt the creation of something new in the space of the art museum.

Cartography

Cartography is a method of tracking power relations that Braidotti operationalizes. It is a theoretically based and politically informed understanding of the present. Cartography, drawing on Foucauldian power relations (1978/1990), exposes the process of power/knowledge as a continuum of entrapment and empowerment, avoiding a binary of the two ideas. Braidotti

clarifies, “this method accounts for one’s position in terms of both space (geo-political or ecological dimension) and time (historical memory or genealogical dimension) thereby grounding politically and epistemically the production of alternative knowledges” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xvi). A cartographic approach can track the complex posthuman subject on the vibrant, relational web of power relations as they move nomadically, using affirmative ethics to create transversal, collective assemblages of new ways of becoming. A cartography is a mapping of posthuman subjects as they move nomadically towards what might be.

Justice

Though social justice is a humanist idea, which focuses on interrupting forms of domination, Braidotti argues that a posthuman approach to justice does exist and is characterized by the ways reality could be enacted differently. Braidotti (2018) acknowledges that there are contradictions to this thinking, but out of these contradictions, she describes a “socially just pedagogy” (p. xiv) that must fulfill two basic requirements: first, it has to be consistently posthuman, at both the analytical and the normative levels, generating the need for the posthuman ontology of immanence and affirmative ethics. Then, it must foreground the socio-political aspects of the posthuman predicament, including the specific forms of de-humanization and discrimination, the inhumane and the injustices that characterize the conditions of the present (Braidotti, 2018, p. xiv). Socially just pedagogy celebrates emerging categories that proliferate different ways of knowing and becoming and includes pedagogies that work transversally, that combine different academic subjects or epistemologies to create new assemblages and develop new ways of thinking.

In my inquiry, I wanted to re-imagine and re-describe a posthuman justice. I originally set out to use the concept of socially just pedagogy in my study, building off the ideas of Braidotti.

However, I kept running up against the inevitability that the concept of “social,” as related to the notion of distinct human subjects, was not compatible with a posthuman ontology. So, I began to think more broadly about justice. What does that look like and feel like when thinking with posthuman concepts? How does justice function in the art museum assemblage? Locating my inquiry in a posthuman theoretical framework meant that my project needed to address the complex socio-political factors that exist within the art museum, and the wider present, which called for a rethinking of justice that responded to the unfolding present while remaining a speculative proposition. My inquiry focused on how school tours at art museums enacted becoming in the current conditions of the world in a way that articulated a posthuman form of justice.

Throughout my inquiry, I explored the ways creating/considering transversal, collective assemblages on school tours disrupted, ruptured, and created with/in the normative processes that construct and perpetuate the assemblage of art museums. Often, school tours can become repeating processes that reinforce established rules and territorialize thought. I wondered: how could thinking with affirmative ethics, immanence, and cartography spark different ways of viewing/being in the world? Would this clarify a posthuman justice? Braidotti’s insistence on the affirmative, the process of becoming, made me wonder how approaching school tours as affirmative assemblages might help me address my inquiry as both analysis (critique) and a series of provocations or interventions (creation) during school tours. I hoped these choices would help me realize and understand what kinds of collective alternative becomings emerged and how they might result in more just perspectives or reflections of becoming.

INSIDE LINES WITH NO OUTSIDE LINES

My study included analyzing the museum as an assemblage while seeking to create something different from with/in the complicated site of the museum. It was a post qualitative inquiry. In post qualitative inquiry, theory guides all the aspects of the study, and my inquiry was, most importantly, informed by what St. Pierre (2018), drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, describes as “the long preparation”: the “reading, thinking, writing, and living with theory in ‘experimentation in contact with the real’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987)” (p. 604). Braidotti’s posthuman theoretical framework thus influenced and directed all elements of my study.

Post Qualitative Inquiry

Post qualitative research was first described in St. Pierre’s 2011 chapter “Post Qualitative Research: The Critique and the Coming After.” The chapter was an initial attempt to suggest education researchers try something else instead of continuing to do humanist qualitative research that had tightened into a rote, repeated methodological structure. Instead of continuing qualitative research that has become “so disciplined, so normalized, so centered...that *it has become conventional*, reductionist, hegemonic, and sometimes oppressive and has lost its radical possibilities” (p. 613), St. Pierre calls for a reimagination of social science inquiry thought with postmodernism. The “post” of post qualitative inquiry is used both as a chronological indicator, because it is what comes after conventional humanist qualitative research, and to indicate deconstruction, the opening up of qualitative research’s structure through poststructural approaches.

While post qualitative inquiry was first named in a 2011 article, St. Pierre states that post qualitative inquiry truly began when she wrote her doctoral dissertation, an interview study with 36 older Southern White women who lived in her hometown, and the categories, the structure, of qualitative research methodology failed. St. Pierre (2021) recounts:

When I was a doctoral student in the early 1990s, I studied conventional, humanist qualitative research methodology on one hand, and, on the other, I studied poststructuralism. It didn't occur to me that the two might not work together...It didn't occur to me there might be a way to inquire without using a preexisting social science research methodology. (p. 4)

Despite St. Pierre's initial attempts to persist in the use of existing methodological structures for her research, the Deleuzian concepts of "the fold" and "haecceity" began a deconstruction and deterritorialization of her conventional qualitative methodology.

St. Pierre (2017) explains, "I realized my study existed in the given, the predetermined and not the possible, the experimental...I wrote a conventional methodology chapter for my dissertation and then deconstructed it" (pp. 686-687). Deconstruction is a Derridian approach that happens when a structure is examined so closely that it falls apart, and "the structure undoes itself in its own time" (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 687). For St. Pierre (2019), the name "post qualitative inquiry" finally wrote itself after "lingering on the edge of the not yet" (p. 3) for many years. In this way, the timeline and history of post qualitative research is unstable, its timing is not linear; it has an ontology of immanence "because immanence is always already within it" (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 5). Thus, post qualitative research began in one way and at one time as St. Pierre wrote her dissertation, and then later, it began again through her efforts to articulate post qualitative inquiry in writing.

Post qualitative inquiry refuses methodology, meaning that the structures, categories, and foundations of qualitative inquiry are no longer applicable. These categories have all been deconstructed and remain in the “ruins” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; MacLure, 2011). MacLure (2011) defines the ruins as “a kind of shorthand for the crumbling edifice of Enlightenment values that have regulated theory and research for two centuries, such as belief in reason and progress, unmediated access to the truth, and the agency of the centered humanist self” (p. 997). This first work of deconstruction was about making something imperceptible, perceptible. “Working the ruins” became an acknowledgement that the Enlightenment project was breaking down and researchers were committing to “bringing forth a different kind of research out of those ruins” (MacLure, 2011, p. 997). MacLure charts “ruins” as one name in “a wider lexicon of uncertainty that has emerged across the humanities and the social sciences” (p. 997). The categories of qualitative research were stuttering, haunting, rupturing, getting stuck.

Something New

To explain what post qualitative research is, it is important to clarify what it is not. St. Pierre (2021) explains that, in philosophy, negative definitions are always a good place to begin when describing something new. The “what is” question comes from Plato, and it is essentialist, which cannot be thought in poststructuralism. Asking “what is,” “assumes something already exists, that something ‘is’ stable, and so can be identified and represented. The ‘what is’ question denies immanence, the not yet, the what is ‘not yet come’ of poststructuralism” (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 6). The first practice for post qualitative inquiry, then, is “to leave conventional humanist qualitative methodology behind, to refuse it” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 86). In order to refuse qualitative methodology, we must admit that it was created, it is “simply one approach among others, and we can’t take it too seriously” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 86). To put it another way, the

inquirer has to acknowledge that qualitative methodology as an approach does not work, and they must try another strategy.

Post qualitative inquiry has no pre-existing research designs, methods, processes, procedures, or practices “because *it is not a methodology at all*...a post qualitative study cannot and does not begin with any social science methodology, including qualitative methodology” (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 164). When separated from the humanist Self, conceived as the essential human being, methodology falls apart. Importantly, however, post qualitative inquiry overturns and displaces methodological structures to make room for something new.

Because I have refused the structures, categories, and foundations of qualitative research, my study is, subsequently, nonlinear. It was informed by the “toolbox...full of transformative potential” of posthumanism, where the inquiry is always already becoming (Braidotti & Strom, 2018, p. 186). Post qualitative inquiry is on the plane of immanence, where everything is coming into being together. Braidotti explains that critical posthuman inquiry shifts the figure of the researcher because researchers are “involved in the production of knowledge and power, knowledge as power in a fast-changing world. We owe allegiance to the world, to the present. Thinking of ourselves as... the becoming-nomads of research [is] absolutely crucial” (Braidotti & Strom, 2018, p. 182). Posthuman subject knowledge flows “in a web of mediated relations with human and non-human others” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xv). There can be no separation between the researcher and the research in posthumanism, because all inquiry is collaborative, connected, and relational.

I am walking through the European art galleries, a place/space I find docents frequently on their tours even if I hope to find them elsewhere in the museum. I stop at a group standing in front of a sculpture I’ve never noticed before.

“Vital matter...animates the composition of posthuman subjects of knowledge - embedded, embodied and yet flowing in a web of mediated relations with human and non-human others” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xv).

The sculpture is in a vitrine and the kids are clustered around it, close but not close-close. The docent is asking what they think the sculpture is made of, and the kids are going wild making suggestions. The docent says it is made of plastic, and the students press forward in their disbelief. She says this is one of the first kinds of plastics, and the sculpture is over 100 years old.

“Does it look like it is 100 years old?”

“NO!”

The sculpture does look contemporary, almost digital in its construction.

“If you made a sculpture like this, what material would you use?”

“Rubber”

“Metal”

“Glass”

The teacher interjects, “Guys, we should be raising our hands.”

A student offers, “it’s not like a face that we have with skin.”

Posthumanism works towards “elaborating alternative ways of conceptualizing the human subject” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 37).

The docent agrees and prompts the students, “Hold out your pointer finger and imagine you are tracing the outline of the sculpture.”

The jumble of kids hold out their fingers and carefully trace the shape of the sculpture in the air.

The docent offers, “we just drew the outside line of this sculpture. But did you notice, the lines the artist chose were inside lines?”

A student responds, “the artist made an outside with only insides...”

The map “fosters connections between fields...is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 12).

Inside/outside.

I think about this for days. The outsides with only insides, the invisible outside lines, the imagining of a structure, an outside line that we impose without thinking about it, and the ease with which students disregard what something is supposed to look like. The ways in which my inquiry must be all inside lines, lines of flight, that interact, intertwined together without forming into the structure of qualitative research, of the museum, of what I expect and anticipate.

We order the world in outside lines, but the inside lines are always already there.

Post qualitative inquiry cannot proceed in the same manner as qualitative research, and “the post qualitative inquirer does not know what to do first and then next and next” (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604). As such, I did not have a recipe, steps to follow, or a predetermined process to guide my inquiry because it was necessarily experimental and nonlinear. St. Pierre (2018) clarifies, “The post qualitative inquirer who has prepared herself must trust herself and do the next thing, whatever it is - to experiment - and to keep moving” (p. 605). Researchers McKnight et al. (2016) explain that, to situate their post qualitative inquiry, they refused the qualitative category and structure of the research question. They explain, “We do not set out so much to answer a pre-existing research question that separates the knower and what is desired to be known, but to see what happens” (McKnight et al., 2016, p. 3). My inquiry started from the same place, a desire to see what happened as a relational, iterative inquiry emerged.

I stop at the sculpture every time I’m in the galleries now. It is funny how that happens.

“Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3).

Writing to Understand

Writing as inquiry is another idea that arises from the refusal of qualitative inquiry methods. Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) recounts that she found herself teaching qualitative research the way she was taught. She had been told “not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, that is, until my points were organized and outlined” (p. 960). However, she realized that those directions discouraged the creative nature of writing and were derived from scientism and quantitative research. She suggests that postmodernism and poststructuralism free an inquirer to write differently because, in poststructuralism, “language does not ‘reflect’ social reality but rather produces meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another,” (p. 961). According to Richardson, writing helps us “understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times” and “frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone” (p. 962). This allows writers to reject the metanarrative of scientific objectivity in favor of “knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it” (p. 961). Working from that premise “frees us to write material in a variety of ways - to tell and retell” (962). Richardson continues that using writing as a method of discovery, in conjunction with Deleuzian theory, altered her purpose for writing to: “how to document becoming” (p. 966). Writing as inquiry shifts writing from a method of representation to an active way to think and understand as an immanent process. I grappled with a similar process as I wrote this dissertation: how could I document *becoming* in my inquiry?

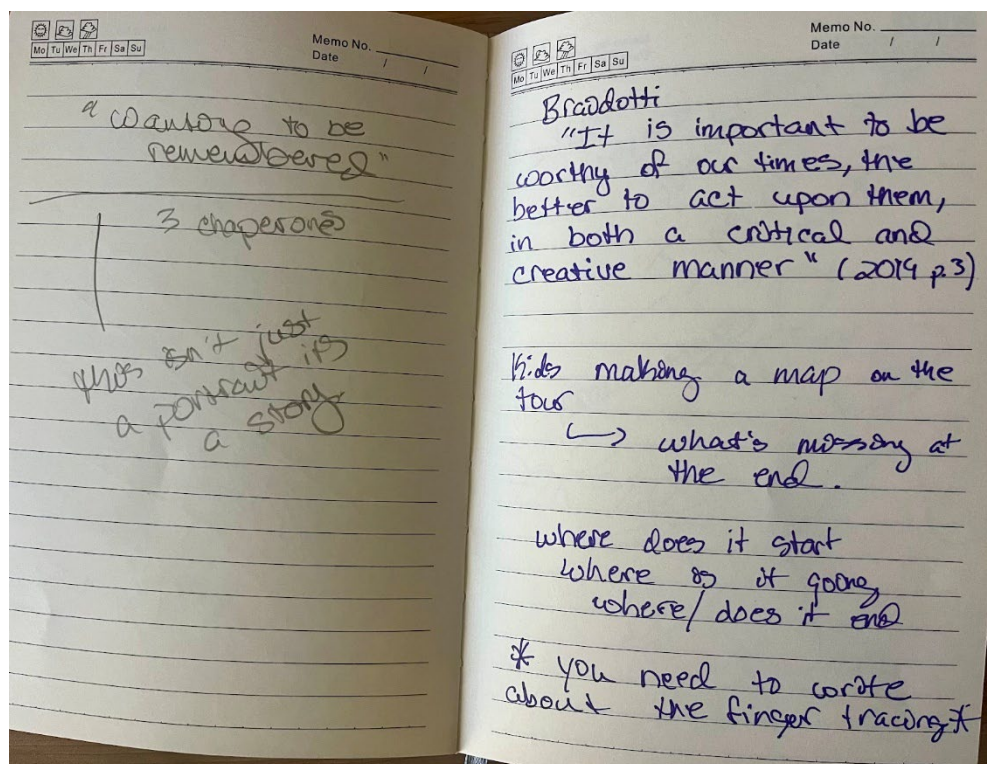
St. Pierre (2017) builds on the ideas of writing as a method to argue that writing is an empirical form of inquiry. In post qualitative inquiry, an inquirer can “think-write.” Post qualitative inquiry frees the inquirer from interpretation and prompts questions such as “*What*

else might writing do except mean?” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 969). St. Pierre (2017) argues that writing “is adventure, experimentation, pushing through” (p. 605). Writing in post qualitative inquiry is a continuation of the inquiry. When writing this dissertation, the new text I produced was always in conversation with the writing I had scribbled down in my notebook before. Writing is thinking where something new can form.

I approached the writing for my dissertation as a palimpsest, continuing my experience of inquiry. I wrote my way “into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytical induction” (Richardson & St. Pierre, p. 970). My notes were jumbles of written citations, written observations, scrawled bits of dialogue I wanted to capture, lists (Figure 3). My writing and rewriting practice mirrored what I did while leading tours; everything I read or recorded became a new entryway into more theory or the theory became a new iteration of a tour or became a written reflection on what I had already done and would do next. It felt like the layers of my inquiry were talking to each other. Questions I continued having as I tried to map a study compiled from this diffracted approach included: what is writing, what is analyzing, what transformations do I keep? And how do I record and convey this layering in a dissertation?

Figure 3

Jumbles of Written Citations, Written Observations, Scrawled Bits of Dialogue, Lists



I continued “thinking with theory” as I revisited, wrote about, and reflected on my tours, and as Deleuze (2004) argues, “a theory won’t be totalized, it multiplies” (p. 208). While writing through my inquiry, the theories I thought with during my tours stayed important to the writing and rewriting process of my inquiry. The theories felt like loops, bringing me back to and then opening up certain themes: collectivity, the map, creation, justice. Continuing to read and think with theory was a crucial part of my writing process. It kept me writing and communicating with the past and the possible, which also kept my work immanent, because it was always becoming as it worked together. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest “writing has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (pp. 4-5), and my writing created a cartography of my inquiry. Everything came together to meld the thinking and the writing and the knowing and

the experiencing. A goal I had for this dissertation was weaving the experience, the theory, and the thinking/writing about single-visit museum tours together, so the reader would become entangled, like the author, in the becomings of single-visit school tours with 4th grade students.

My Brain Started Itching

Methods work “as an apparatus of capture,” Manning (2016) says, because method elevates reason. Method “diagnoses, it situates, it organizes, and ultimately it surveys and judges,” and “despite its best intentions, method works as the safeguard against the ineffable: if something cannot be categorized, it cannot be made to account for itself and is cast aside as irrelevant” (Manning, 2016, p. 32). It was exactly this too much, this ineffable, that interested me in my study. I did not try to capture or represent everything that happened during my study; I did not seek out interviews, but instead tried to notice the thing that “exceeds or evades...remaining illegible and unrecognizable” (MacLure, 2013, p. 167). I revisited the moments, experiences, memories, notes, videos, sound recordings and artifacts that, for lack of a better phrase, made my brain itch.

In “Methodology in the Fold and the Irruption of Transgressive Data,” St. Pierre (1997), troubles qualitative research’s idea of data, and the methods that collect that data. She works to think differently about the data in her dissertation study and places data under erasure, identifying transgressive data, emotional data, dream data, sensual data, and response data—data that cannot be thought in conventional humanist qualitative research. This data can, however, be thought through Deleuze’s (1993) description of “the fold,” a concept that disrupts our notion of interiority as it defines “the inside as the operation of the outside” (p. 178). It opposes the binaries of inside/outside, self/other, presence/absence, and identity/difference. St. Pierre (1997) explains, “I believed, since I had such difficulty separating myself from my participants, that I

was working within a fold and that that fold was constructing a subjectivity, my own, that enabled me to think differently” (p. 178). By working in the fold, St. Pierre realized that the structure of qualitative data fall apart when Humanist binaries are refused. This means that the Humanist linear representation of knowledge through language in post qualitative inquiry because experiences are always happening simultaneously and subjectivity is not created through clear binaries but through complexity, overlap and interactions.

St. Pierre (1997) asks: “how can language, which regularly falls apart, secure meaning and truth? How can language provide the evidentiary warrant for the production of knowledge in the postmodern world?” (p. 179). She answers, “In my study I knew that I had analyzed much data that had never been textualized into words on a page. Data that escaped language...exploded all over my study - data that were uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 179). MacLure (2013) calls this kind of confounding, wonder-evoking, unrepresentable data, data that “glows” (p. 164). Brinkmann (2014) describes this kind of data as “stumble data,” or “the strangeness of the world...to stumble upon” (p. 724). This data is found in dreams, felt in the body, experienced through emotions, and exists in an unstable, floating time. There is no space for this data in qualitative research, St. Pierre argues, but all this data exists, is experienced. Through such transgressive data, the possibilities for post qualitative research emerge from the rigid foundations of methodology.

How to account for my experiences then? Braidotti and Strom (2018) state that “the empirical does not consist of flat, inert data just waiting to be collected. It is living matter self-organizing, which can be partially recorded” (p. 181). I thought with this quote as I continued my study, not seeking to represent what was occurring but to focus on the idea that “data are partial, incomplete, and always in a process of re-telling and re-remembering” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012,

p. ix). These ideas helped me ruminate on notions of the partial, the overheard, the re-told, the spark, the shift. These experiences were the ones that made my brain itch: the moments that I sought to narrate in my notes and record quickly, and the remarkable interactions I shared with others. I took pictures of things that happened on tours that impacted me in what I can only describe as a process of simultaneous thinking/being/knowing. I wasn't collecting or creating data in any predetermined or systematized way. I was doing and reading and recording and thinking and writing and reacting and creating all the time.

In the Middle (Inside Lines)

St. Pierre (2015) explains that, in post qualitative inquiry, method comes at the end, “when we think back about what we did and why and what we might have done instead and will try next time” (p. 92). I continue to realize that I am still in the process of negotiating and renegotiating with the spaces between thinking/doing/knowing in my study and what might come out of the inquiry. I was doing my inquiry and doing my job and writing about what I was experiencing and then reflecting back on those notes and writing more for the set duration of my “research.” Yet, when I was at the “end” of the study, I was also still in the middle of it, writing the dissertation. I was also at the beginning again. Another school year will begin, and I will still be working at the museum, focusing on school tours, and observing and evaluating the docents. All these different parts of myself never unwound from the knots they were/became when I “officially” started my inquiry. The parts of my inquiry that made my brain itch continue to impact who I am becoming and how I view my role within the function of the museum.

St. Pierre (2017), reflecting on her dissertation research, explains that she expected to complete a *conventional humanist qualitative research* study, but instead was confronted with an ontological problem: she was always already entangled in the middle of her study. She clarifies:

The study began unofficially (when I was five) much sooner than it began officially (when I was middle-aged). It began before it began, and I had always been in the middle of it. I had been interviewing and observing in Milton—collecting and interpreting data—for decades before I returned to study it for my dissertation research. (St.Pierre, 2017, p. 689)

This feeling/knowing that I had been engaging with and interpreting experiences that connected and disconnected to my study was something I felt throughout the entire experience. I wanted to get to my research because I was thinking about it before it “began” and now, here I am, still feeling like I am in the middle of it. This experience emphasizes the uncertainty and creativity of finding oneself “in the middle.”

The middle exists in a time that is always past and always about to come (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the middle is where things grow, expand, and “where things pick up speed” (p. 28). The middle is not an average or an area between the start and the end of something. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write that it is “not easy to see things from the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left” (p. 25). The middle passes between things as a “transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other way” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 28). The middle is confusing but fecund; it connects possibilities. Springgay and Truman (2018) apply this description of the middle to research, defining a “speculative middle” (p. 89) in inquiry. They explain, “in the speculative middle, which is not a place but an event, (in)tensions, concerns, and gnawings continually emerge” (p. 89). That is, in the space between plan and action, there is always becoming as the (in)tensions spark subsequent interactions, propositions, directions.

New speculative middles, which Mark (2021) characterizes as “an experience of the

virtual/possible emerging into being” (p. 175), continually emerge(d) throughout my inquiry. At first, I was nervous about approaching my dissertation study with sparse guideposts of a plan, clinging to the bewildering idea that I would just know what would happen next. I replayed remarks from a presentation on my research proposal, that I was setting up a tricky problem for myself to try and enact an evolving inquiry within the assemblage of the museum, over and over again. However, the speculative, immanent middle, the process of becoming I found myself in, helped me rethink my own assumptions.

HOW TO STAY UNDONE

Working in the speculative middle inspired the questions that truly jump started my inquiry: how not to re-form? What if we stay undone? When I initially conceived of my inquiry, I looked at how other scholars described and structured their iterative inquiries to think about how I might provide a loose, flexible framework for my own. Erin Manning and Brian Massumi (2014) create interactive, emergent projects guided by theory that meld art and education, what Braidotti (2018) describes as an “un-dutiful” (p. xxi) posthuman creative practice. They describe their projects as disruptions inside a structure.

SenseLab, an international network of artists, academics, researchers, dancers, and writers working across disciplines, was founded by Manning in 2004 to explore research-creation. In their book *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* (2014), Manning and Massumi (2014) discuss the SenseLab project, explaining: “The point was not to force a heroic struggle against structure, which too often leads into a ‘black hole’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161)” (p. 99). Instead, SenseLab hosts international events where participants are involved in experiences that “create new modes of encounter” (Manning). In these events, creative participation is encouraged, and opportunities are “implanted” for creativity to take its own “shape, direction, and momentum” during the event (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 92).

In SenseLab’s first event, *Dancing the Virtual*, the presentation of “already-completed work of whatever kind,” was prohibited, requiring participants “to read the same selection of philosophical texts in advance of the event,” in order to activate “ideas on site...in connection with texts everyone had read” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, pp. 95–96). This idea of

experimentation and disruption inside the structure of the art museum dovetailed with what I was trying to spark on school tours as I moved from posthuman critique to creation.

Manning and Massumi (2014) highlight “enabling constraints” as crucial components to the success of their events because, they contend, experimental inquiry with unconstrained interactions rarely leads to worthwhile effects. They describe an enabling constraint as “positive in its dynamic effect, even though it may be limiting in its form/force narrowly considered” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 94). Their paradoxical terminology includes viewing set parameters as “enabling,” because any kind of constraint does not necessarily provoke techniques for process, and “constraining” because they have found that, in and of itself, openness does not create the conditions for collaborative exploration (Manning & Massumi, year, p. 94). In other words, they recognize the need to create carefully considered restrictions that provide the space and environment for new things to occur. To create the changes I was thinking about in the art museum, I set out to identify the “enabling constraints” for my project, settling on disruptions, provocations and interventions.

Disruption, Provocation, Intervention

At first, I considered a number of strategies for my inquiry. I attempted to group the different strategies into broad categories, acknowledging that the structures were more intertwined and relational than broad categories themselves could be. I outlined the ideas of “disruption,” “provocations,” and “interventions” as the tactics I would employ in my inquiry. Disruption was based on the way Manning and Massumi (2014) write about their projects as disruptions inside a structure.

It was important to me that I not imagine I could somehow overthrow the assemblage of the museum (as if that was possible) but instead create what Braidotti describes as transversal,

collective assemblages that become differently with/in the museum itself. To spark disruption, I thought I would prompt docents to include works of art, questions for looking, or activities in the galleries that might inspire a becoming different on a tour. I told docents that I would be giving them prompts before their tours to do things like “walk around a gallery backwards” or “look at art while you sleep.”

For provocations, I imagined inviting play with the students on tours but also with the docents who led tours. I was inspired by this passage describing the opening elements of a teacher workshop designed by McKnight et al. (2017) for “in the afterward”: “A conference. A room. Paper around the walls. No presenter. A chair. An envelope labeled ‘Open me when it feels necessary’. A rustle. An unfolding. Words on a page. An instruction: ‘Please read aloud’” (p. 637). I wanted to provide docents and students with abstract prompts that could play with the museum, to ask them to help enact the museum differently, to be or become differently than they had been (or had not been). I assumed I would interview or survey docents to ask them how their tours changed through these provocations.

Finally, the interventions I imagined would occur as stopping points and elements in the galleries on school tours. I looked at ways that contemporary artists intervened in the museum and considered how to adapt their strategies for my inquiry. I thought deeply about the opportunities that existed at the end of school tours; the final closing of a tour provides a great opportunity for participants to creatively reflect on how visiting a museum has changed them or conversely/simultaneously how their visit can spark the museum itself to become differently. For example, I suggested I would recruit docents in their “meaningful goodbyes” training to provide students with places to draw their future museum or a museum for who they would become.

In all of this, I was considering my role as something of a conductor, planting these various suggestions or prompts in the hands of the museum's docents and then watching to see what happened. I think in some ways I wanted to distance myself from an active role in my inquiry, so I could observe and tinker and iterate more behind-the-scenes. Now, looking back, I know that it was never going to be possible to continue as a detached observer, even if I was planning to take on the role of a trickster, wreaking experimental havoc from a distance. I was never separate from my study.

The Enabling Constraints of the Art Museum

When I began observing tours for my inquiry, I quickly came to a profound, though initially unexpected, realization that the museum structure—the assemblage itself—already offered enabling constraints in the experience of a school tour. When students visited the museum with their schools, the art museum became a vibrant, active environment that ordered students as it disordered them, constantly creating new and different, frequently unexpected moments of immanence.

Before I started leading tours, I spent time observing docent-led tours. In field notes from one of these tours, I wrote, “Kids are constantly navigating spaces of control vs. freedom [in the art museum] - they can stomp, they can run, they can move and lay down and look around and hear other tours. At the same time the docents are asking them to behave a certain way, [in a manner] that teachers are imposing, that the space of the museum dictates (size, content)” (November 11, 2023). Ultimately, the interaction between the students and the museum itself prompted my thinking about the structure of the museum to shift. The museum itself acted upon the students as they activated it with their movements, noise, queries, and their wonder. The

museum assemblage acted differently when inundated with students on tours - it began a process of deterritorializing instead of repeating (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Students in the Main Concourse Flowing into the Galleries

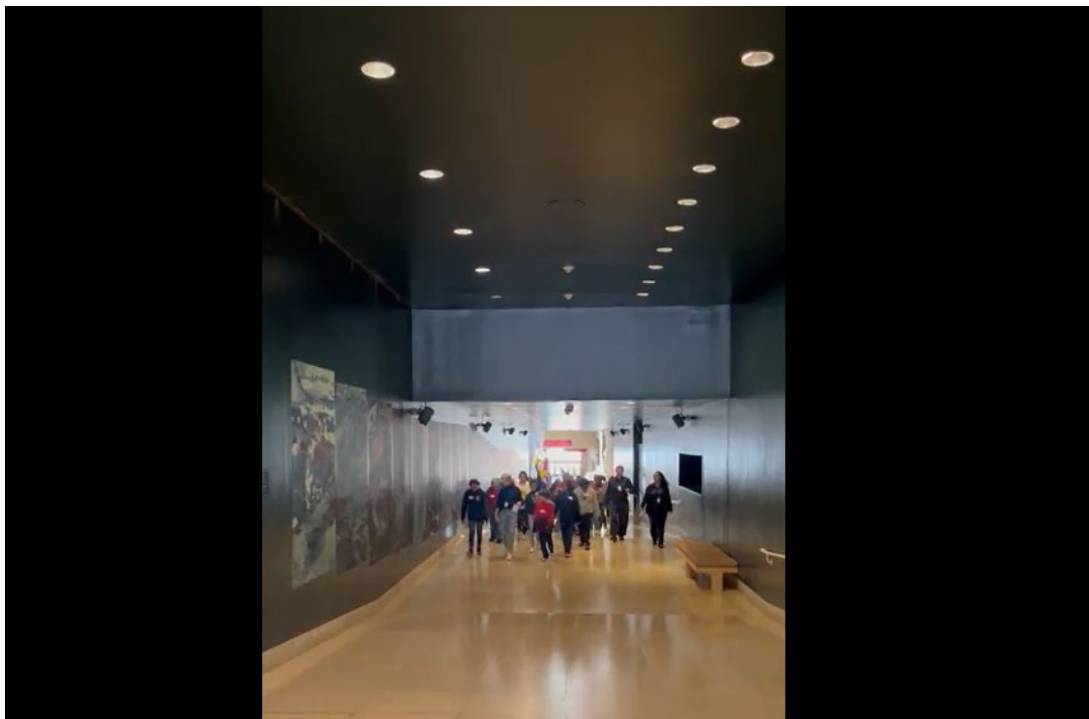


As I observed more tours, I became attuned to how students created sounds that filled normally hushed spaces. During school tours, students seem to overwhelm the museum spaces in a cacophony of people, directions, excitement and motion. The sounds of tours and students bubbled and receded daily, altering the structure of the museum itself.

The video linked in the following image (Figure 5) shows students emerging from the galleries and bubbling up and out towards the school tour entrance and exit. The sound of the students being in the museum swirls and rumbles. Sometimes I would sit on a bench in a gallery just off the main concourse and listen as student tours arrived, dispersed, as docent-guided tours started with questions, and I felt there was something crucially important in listening to this—that I was understanding something better by prioritizing listening.

Figure 5

Sounds of School Tours (Video Linked in Image)



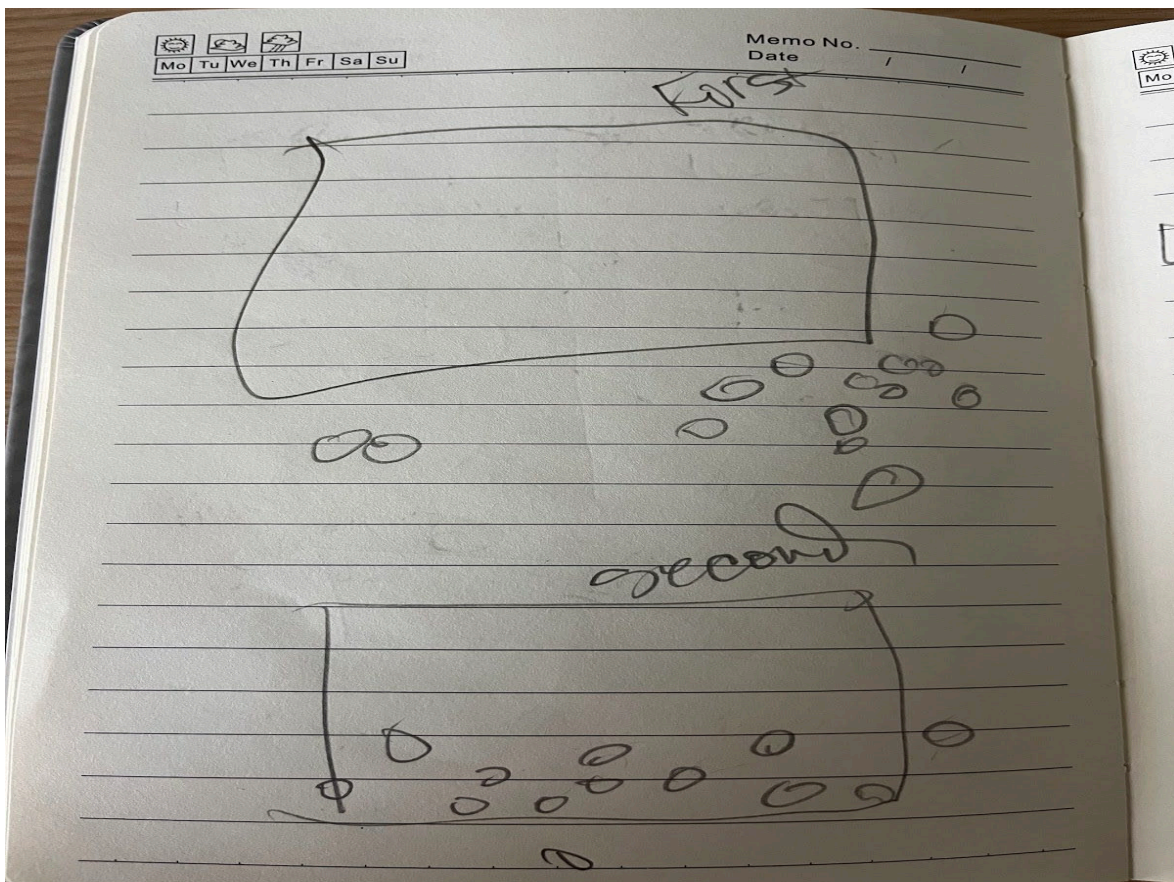
Note. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FIws40xA1o8Cu60NTaQ3NPyEnb9-qKtH/view>

Later in my notes from November 11, 2023, I recorded “navigating a swarm” and “forming/re-forming: the kids are always looking around watching, watching, watching.” There are always outside factors, constraints, acting on the tours: different art, sound from other tours,

chaperones, the physical space of the galleries, the art in the galleries, the conceptual order of the galleries, the way the docents chose to move through the galleries, the ways they explain how they ordered their tours. Yet, the students always seemed to break free and move with and through the space in a way that was dynamic and interactive and constantly in flux. The following image (Figure 6) shows a rudimentary drawing from my field notes, in which I aimed to capture my observations of students (the little circles) forming and reforming into groups around works of art.

Figure 6

Connecting, Scattering, Connecting, Scattering



Note. Connecting, scattering, connecting, scattering (field notes, January 23, 2024).

The students created rupture in the space, “making the broader institutional system, comprised of schools, museums, pictures, lessons...leak and flow” (Eakle & Bailey, 2021, p. 568). The leaking and flowing museum can be understood with Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of immanence. Immanence animates posthuman ontology, where the multilayered and multidirectional present is at the same time the record of what we no longer are, and the trace of what we are capable of becoming (Braidotti, 2019d). Students on school tours occupied an emerging space that was not about being free of the museum confines and rules, but of finding a different way, other options, new paths and immanent experiences that could become possible at any time within the enabling constraints of the museum.

In this way, the school tours also functioned as an intervention with/in the art museum assemblage. The tours themselves were transversal, contingent, and entangled with the assemblage around them, and students activated spaces immanently, where possibility flowed from the experience of being on a tour and in the art museum. In a discussion of an artist-led walking tour called *The Walking Neighborhood* that is part of their *WalkingLab* project, Springgay and Truman (2018) describe a similar experience. In their project, children and/or youth explore communities via walking tours. The walking tours are characterized as “minor public walking interventions that were not about recording or capturing their environment, but about activating problems in the midst of the event” (Springgay & Truman, p. 88). On these tours, the participants did not just experience the event and the neighborhood. Instead, the tours themselves were “speculative middles, contingent on entanglements” (Springgay & Truman, p. 89). Similarly, on school tours in museums, students, spaces, objects, and ideas are entangled,

contingent, and immanent. School tours are not passive; they are active, temporary interventions that can prompt moments of becoming differently.

Deleuze (2001) describes absolute immanence as “in itself: it is not in something, to something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject” (p. 26). Immanence can never be outside itself and can never be interpreted, represented or described from outside. Instead, an ontology of immanence is “less interested in what is and more interested in what might be and what is coming into being” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 26). The plane of immanence is always different, always new, and always pure variation. It is an ontology of the conjunction “and...and...and” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002). Shifting my thinking about what was already happening when students went on guided school tours helped me see a multiplicity of new opportunities and pathways to move on.

Braidotti (2018) explains that this ontology of immanence is sustained by approaching matter as vital, intelligent, and self-organizing. Immanence is all matter becoming. Understanding matter as becoming enlivens the embedded, embodied, flowing web of mediated relations between humans and non-human others that composes posthuman subjects of knowledge (p. xv). The art museum itself interacted with students, helping them to come undone and become different, just as it then reinforced the constraints that define it. I realized that the ways students interacted with the space already served as disruptions, interventions, and provocations. Students activated problems and concepts, inspiring speculative variations in experience in the museum by themselves.

Recognizing the way school tours were intervening, interconnecting, and interacting with the gallery space already, I had to think differently about what I planned to do next. I was no longer looking to create a catalyst for disruption because I was already experiencing a space of

immanence. The disruptions were already happening, and the museum itself was an enabling constraint that the students activated. I asked myself the questions again and again: how not to re-form? What if we stay undone?

A Speculative Middle

Working in the speculative middle provoked my thinking and living with other posthuman theoretical concepts like cartography and justice because they truly began helping me experiment and build on what happened before. I looped from experience, to writing, to theory - working in this middle where something new, something embodied, something that had not been thought yet might emerge, was already in the process of emerging.

This realization concludes this section on what I was “doing” and serves as an introduction to what was becoming. It is from this vibrant, reverberating rethinking of my own assumptions about the museum and school tours that I moved from observer to active participant on the tours. The recognition that the museum was already comprised of enabling constraints and that the students were always already altering the museum served as a spark in my inquiry. For me, this was the “something in the world” that “forces us to think,” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 139), and it caused a “shock to thought” (Massumi, 2002) that disrupted my normal flow of experience and thought about school tours, forcing me to think differently.

Feeling this shock jump-started my inquiry and incited subsequent shifts in how I moved forward. It also helped me become comfortably uncomfortable in the middle of things all the time. In fact, I found myself working, knowing, thinking, and doing in between the dualities of researcher/employee and participant/observer and creator/recorder and past/present/future before I had the language or theoretical grounding to assert that yes, I was working in the middle, the

speculative middle. I might not have known where I was going, but I was making connections between what I was doing and reading and writing and that was exactly where I needed to be.

After this, I better understood that I was “a portal by which I move out to bigger patterns” (Braidotti & Strom, 2018, p. 183), and my inquiry opened up from my experience, expanding in many other directions. I observed docents on their tours as they were, and then, I started leading tours, tinkering and experimenting as I went along because I was in the middle of this. I was a part of the sounds on school tours: I was making the sounds *and* I was listening to them, all at the same time.

CARTOGRAPHY I

In a lecture on cartographies of the present, Braidotti (2010b) quotes Glissant, stating, “we need maps and maps is all that we have” (7:07). For Braidotti, cartography is both a conceptual and methodological process that is oriented toward affirmative ethics and experimentation. Conceptually, cartography works to explain and understand a posthuman politics of location. Posthumanism understands power in terms of its relations, causing both “entrapment and empowerment” that work together to produce subject positions that are “necessarily trans-individual, collective and hybrid” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xvi). Humans and nonhumans occupy these interrelational positions. Braidotti (1994) calls these subjects “nomadic subjects” (p.7) who are becoming in the dynamic networks of limiting and affirming power relations. A cartography is a tracking of the complex posthuman subject on the vibrant, relational web of power relations as they move nomadically.

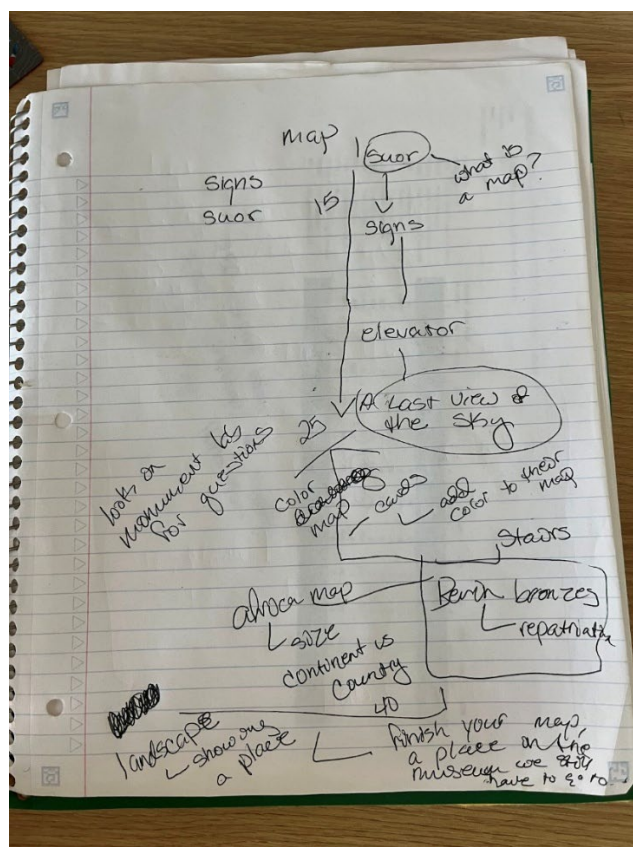
Mapping as a (methodological) process includes plotting our negotiation and navigation of these vibrant, interwoven cartographies in the present. Braidotti (2018) contends that cartography accounts for one’s position “in terms of both space (geo-political or ecological dimension) and time (historical memory or genealogical dimension) thereby grounding politically and epistemically the production of alternative knowledges” (p. xvi). A cartography makes connections between an infinite multiplicity of elements. Geerts (2022) expands on this entanglement, arguing that cartography “embodies an immanent conceptual take of the world, while at the same time coming into being in full entanglement with the cartographer’s

geopolitical positionality and lifeworld” (p. 389). That is, a cartography is a tangle of both record and speculation.

Mapping in my inquiry occurred in a variety of ways, shifting from literal mapping prompts to more conceptual cartographic experimentations. First, my planning and brainstorming process started as a physical word map (Figure 7) where I charted works of art and direction and ideas that I would undertake on my tours. I worked on this initial plan over the course of a week, adding as I went. Now looking back, I notice similarities between some of the elements on my planning map (arrows, text, a focus on our means of traveling throughout and across the gallery space), and the maps students created. Yet, I did not bring this map with me to the galleries; I moved to a typed tour plan structured with prompts and questions.

Figure 7

Tour Planning Map



In my early tours, I used an abstract painting called *Suor* (Figure 8) to talk with students about what makes a map. This contemporary painting is meant to resemble a mapped landscape. I asked students what they knew about maps: their uses, their components, and I asked them to take a look at the painting and find ways it looked like a map. The first time I tried this, I found students struggled to make connections between the maps they were learning about in class and the swaths of color and textures in the large-scale painting.

Figure 8

Suor, Marina Rheingantz, 2021

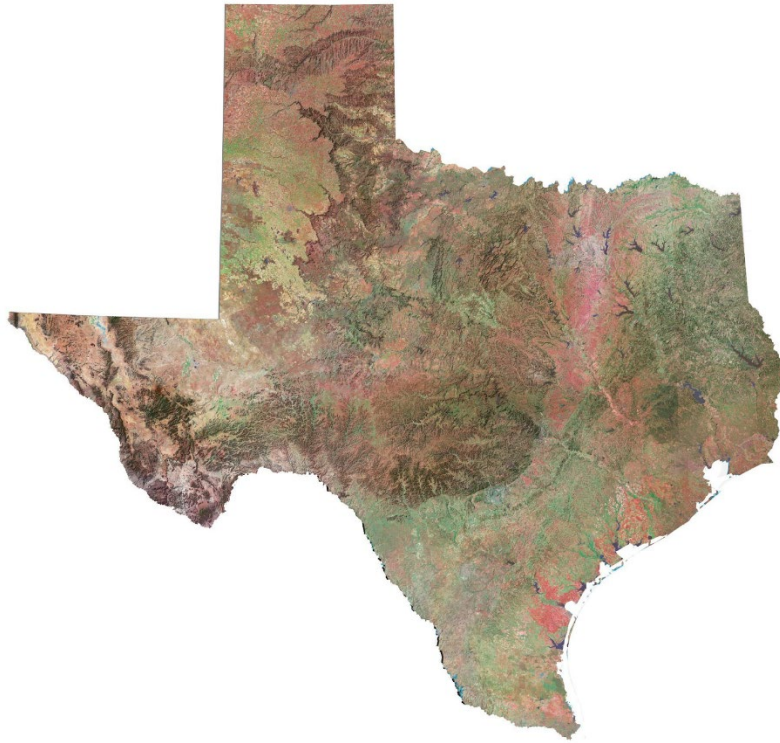


On a subsequent tour, I printed and laminated different maps of Texas: a street map, a political map, and a topographical map (Figure 9) of the state made from satellite imagery. Once

I introduced these maps, students started making more observational connections between the Texas maps and the abstract painting.

Figure 9

Topographical map of Texas



In my tour plan (Appendix B), I recorded the following information to share with the students about the work of art, *Suor*:

- Artist creates real and abstract landscapes
- These landscapes are of her youth and her memories
- Each work is a specific combination of places and memories in her native Brazil and abroad

I asked these questions:

- What kind of place is this artist painting? What physical features might it have?

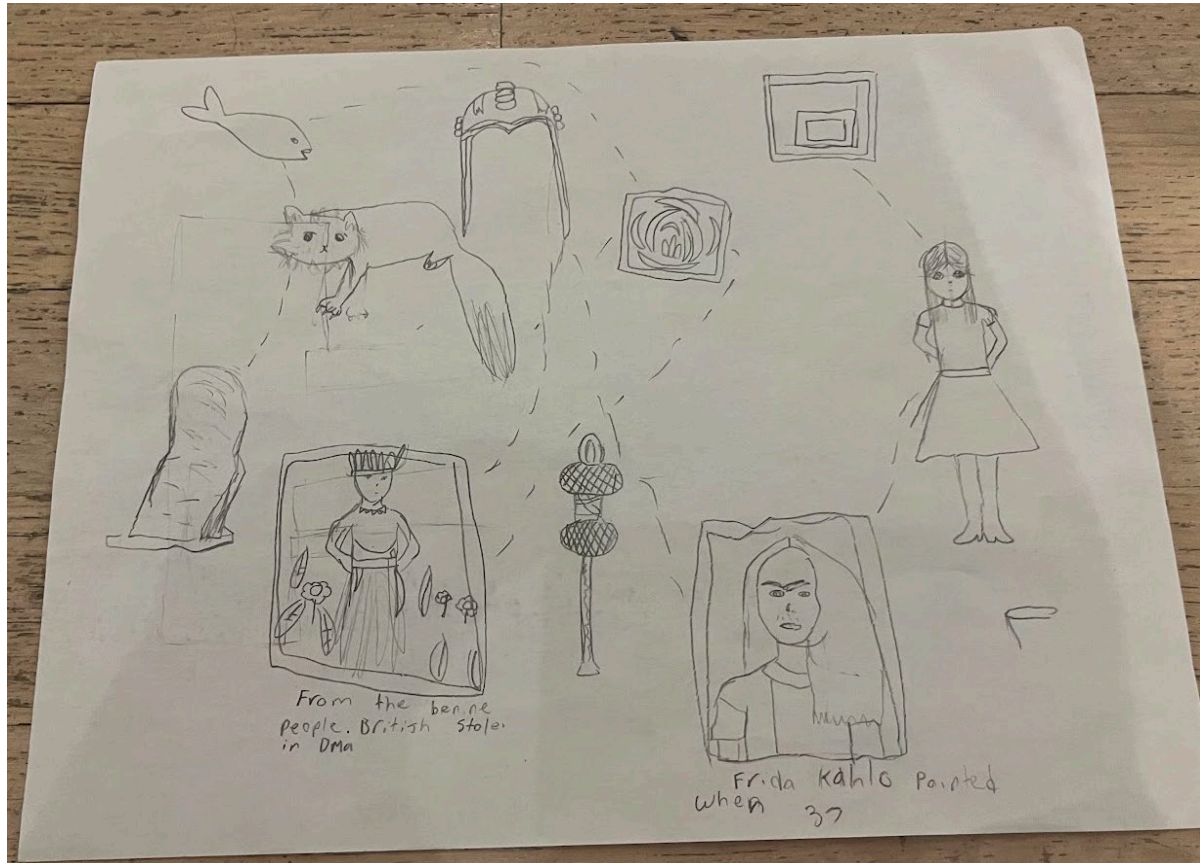
Do you think this is a map of a real place?

I also made the following note:

- The artwork contains real and imaginary elements and includes abstraction. Abstract art does not represent the way a thing actually looks in real life.

The students pointed out different areas of the painting that could be bodies of water or deserts, though students did still struggle imagining the whole of the painting as a map. They gravitated towards the idea of an imaginary location and frequently discussed ideas about where people might live in the painting or if the artist included imaginary animals. One group wondered if the painting could be a map and also be an animal.

After discussing the work of art and maps, I handed each student a blank sheet of copy paper and a pencil and asked them if they would map their experience of touring the museum as the tour progressed. Students could add to their map at each stop on the tour. I told the students that their maps could include anything they saw, felt, knew or even imagined. Their maps were theirs to create and detail (Figure 10). Before we moved on from our first artwork, I gave students around five minutes to start their maps.

Figure 10*Student Map #1 of Tour Experience*

I watched as they drew starting points, buildings, and students sitting in a row (Figure 11). At every stop on the rest of our tour, students were given time at the beginning and ending of the tour stop to work on their maps. I even told students if they saw something they felt they needed to map, we could stop the tour so they could make their additions.

Figure 11*Student Map #2 of Tour Experience*

Deleuze (1997) proposes that children are always creating cartographies: “exploring milieus, by means of dynamic trajectories, and drawing maps of them” (p. 61). That is, children’s cartographies do not represent static territories or structures. Instead, their maps move-with and move-through all the different milieus of life on a trajectory that “merges not only with the

subjectivity of those who travel through a milieu, but also with the subjectivity of the milieu itself, insofar as it is reflected in those who travel through it” (Deleuze, 1997, p. 61). The maps students created on my tours reflected this cartographical expression where they depicted the spaces they saw and where they were, but they also mapped their movement through the galleries. The elevator and our movement up and down different floors, for example, appears on many maps (*see excerpt from maps in Figures 12 and 13*). For the students, mapping exceeded fixed dots or locations but encompassed an experience of traveling through the spaces and engaging with works of art. I hadn’t anticipated the way students would draw cartographies of movements, spaces where they were changing the milieus, the spaces as they moved through them.

Figure 12

Detail of Elevator Movement on Map

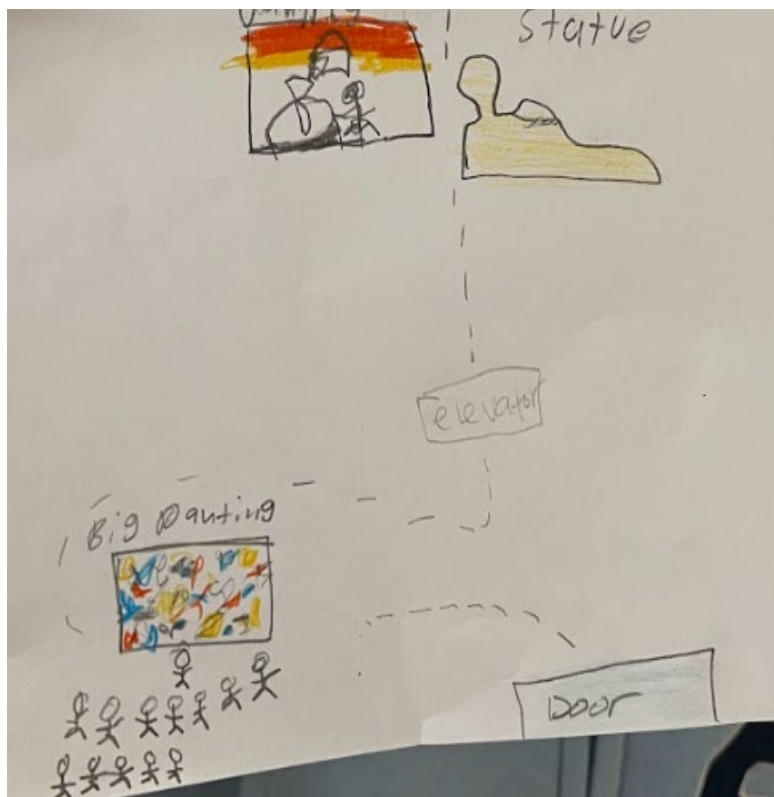
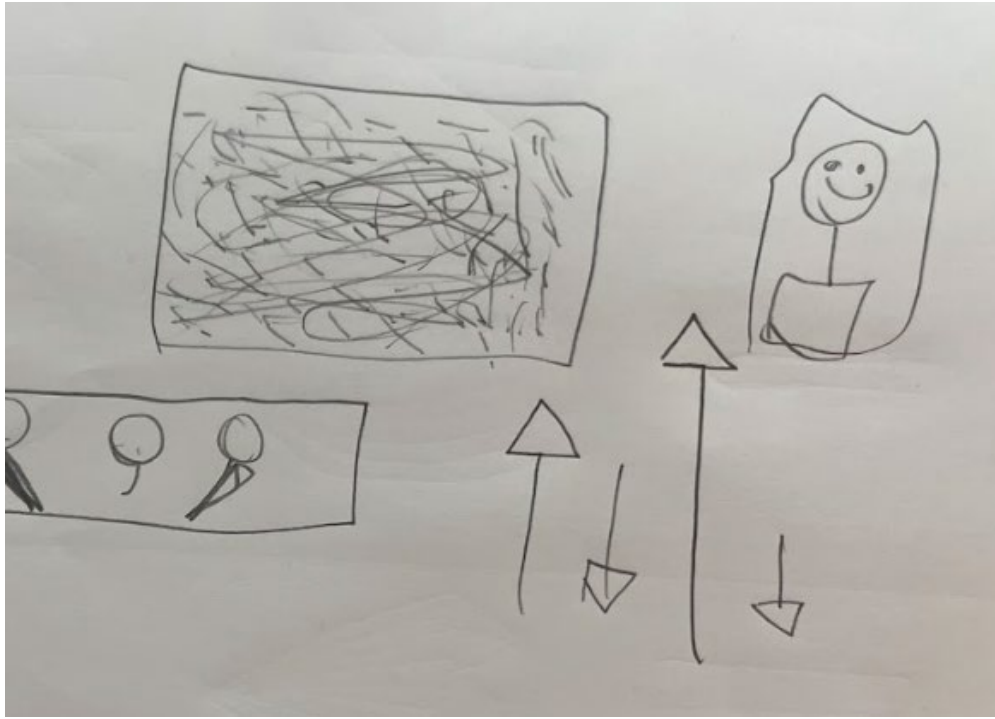


Figure 13

Detail of Arrows Showing Tour Moving Up and Down Different Floors



If cartography is a process of understanding the situation of the present and speculating towards a becoming-future, the maps students created helped chart the museum they experienced and the museum that could-be. Braidotti (2019d) explains that critical thinking is central to posthumanism and immanence, and “the creation of new concepts, or navigational tools... help us through the complexities of the present” (p. 37) as we imagine the future. Cartography critically and creatively produces a map that “fosters connections between fields...is open and connectable in all of its dimensions...is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). A cartography can be approached in manifold ways and is constantly being reworked and changed. These initial student maps helped me realize different connections with/in the museum and the way that students’ trajectories were

different and in motion. Though there were similarities in what students depicted, all the kids on the tours conceived of their experiences differently.

Transversal Cartography

In addition to enacting Braidotti's processual cartographic elements, the student mappings exemplified the theoretical components of cartography: reworking, change, and entanglement/layering. Considering student maps helped me combine the theoretical and the processual elements of cartography, as in the case of the following two student-created maps (Figures 14 and 15) that contain similar features. They include lines of text that move from the upper right corner of the page and move down into the center. While many of the maps students created included words and images, these two maps contain more text than any other student maps from the tours I led during this time, where the prompt was only: create a map of your experience in the art museum.

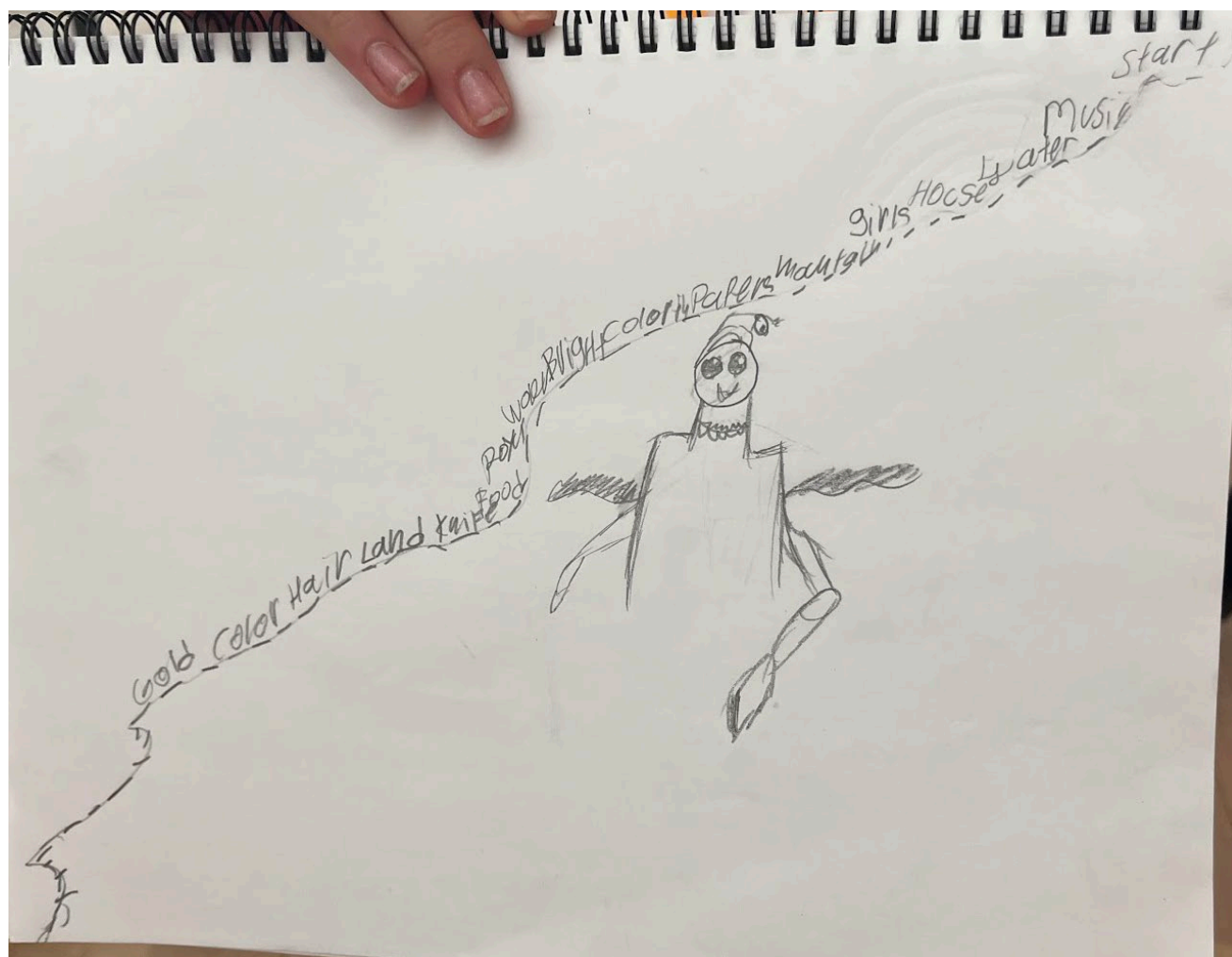
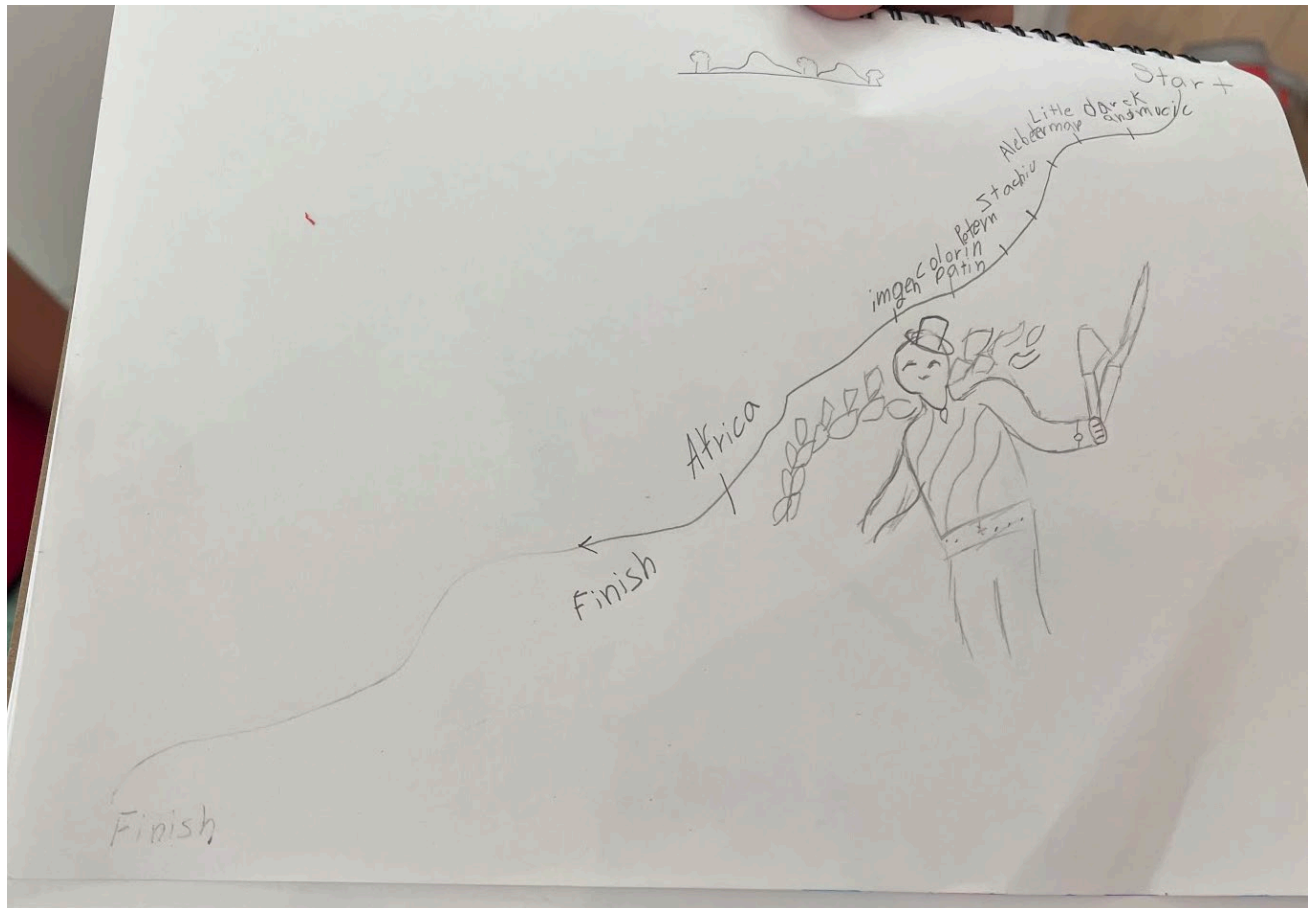
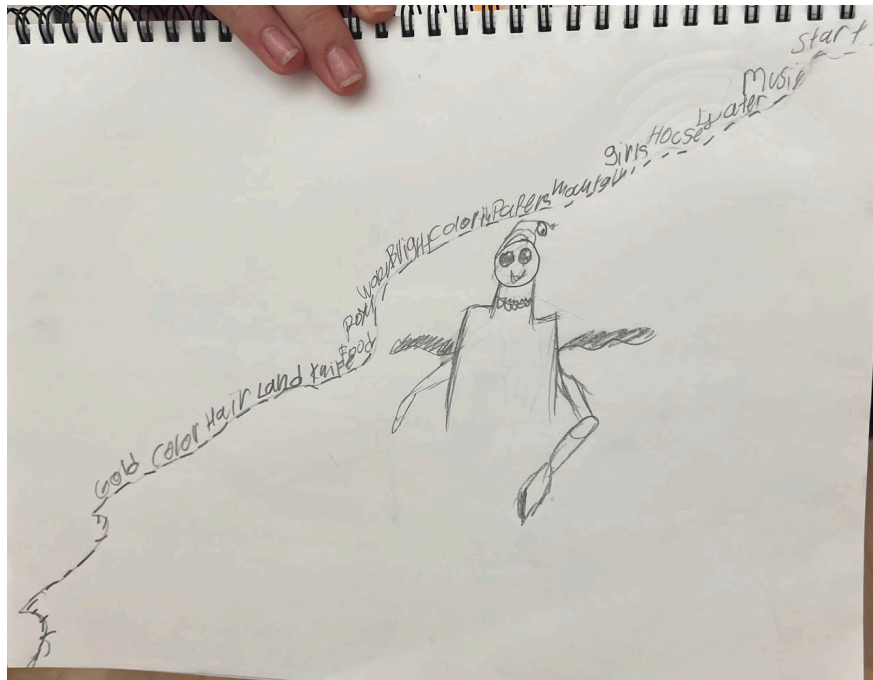
Figure 14*Transversal Map #1*

Figure 15*Transversal Map #2*

Further, both maps contain swaths of blank space with a drawing taking up the lower right half of the paper. These drawings are of a bronze relief from Benin, an artwork we stopped at on the tour. Both maps depict imagined warriors, as the students on this tour responded to a prompt I experimented with on the tour. Before arriving at the work of art, I shared some characteristics of the bronze (for example, a warrior carrying a sword, wearing a hat). Then, I asked students to respond by drawing what they imagined based on my description. The imagined warrior is the only drawing on the first map, and the second map includes this

imagined figure in the bottom right of the map. The maps combine the imagined and the experienced.

In the first map (Figure 16), the interplay of text and motion yields “a single plain of consistency upon which reciprocal presuppositions and mutual insertions play themselves out” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 100). The maps link experiential words “dark and music” and “bright” with objects the student observed in works of art, such as “girls, mountain, knife,” and locations, such as “land,” “Africa.” The words included in the maps functioned in different ways, but the student found them important enough to be included. This addition expresses an ontological engagement with the museum; the students included descriptions of the art “colorin patin [coloring, painting],” but they also included evocative words, like dark and music, that diagram the experience of the museum beyond the art we talked about. What the student saw, where they were, what they felt, and what they experienced were all included together—layered, entangled, and becoming on their maps.

Figure 16*Transversal Map #1****Transversality***

An important theoretical cartographic concept is transversality. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe a transversal movement as one that “sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (p. 25). In other words, transversal movement is movement across difference. The concept of transversality comes from Guattari (1995), who describes how changes to a “coefficient of transversality” (pp. 18-19) create alterations in collective awareness, specifically across institutional settings, expanding to networks of power and relational social life.

Braidotti (2010) adopts the concept of the transversal to describe collective, affirmative, transversal assemblages. In her discussion of this concept, she describes transversal “lines of interconnections among disparate organisms— human bodies, technological implants and plants—”

that “create a unity that is based on the affinity among different forces” (p. 78). For Braidotti, the complexity that results in the interactions between posthuman subjects is a critical component of the transversality. She specifies that complexity is “not a synthesis in any totalizing sense of the terms;” rather it is “a set of connective disjunctions and productive unfoldings which bring about a recomposition of the matter in question” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 78). Complexity resulting from transversality opens up unexpected possibilities and flows of movement that connect to Deleuze’s concept of becoming.

In the two highlighted maps, the students clearly indicate “start” but no ending. One map stretches off the page (Figure 17). The other map had a line and “Finish” with a set endpoint, but the student erased that fixed ending while indicating that the map continues with a pointed line (Figure 18). The open-ended nature of cartography is a repeated element throughout all the maps students created on their visits. The way the cartographies remain open conveys a lack of fixed or essential truths in their museum experience. These student maps depict a movement across one experience, one way and the other, showing the written unfoldings of the school tour and their experience of it.

Figure 17

Detail of Tour Without Ending

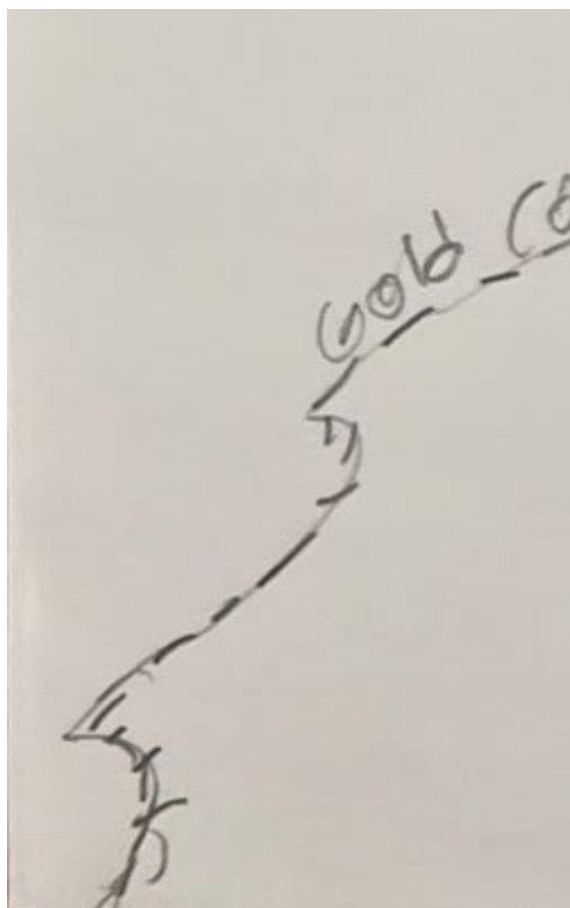
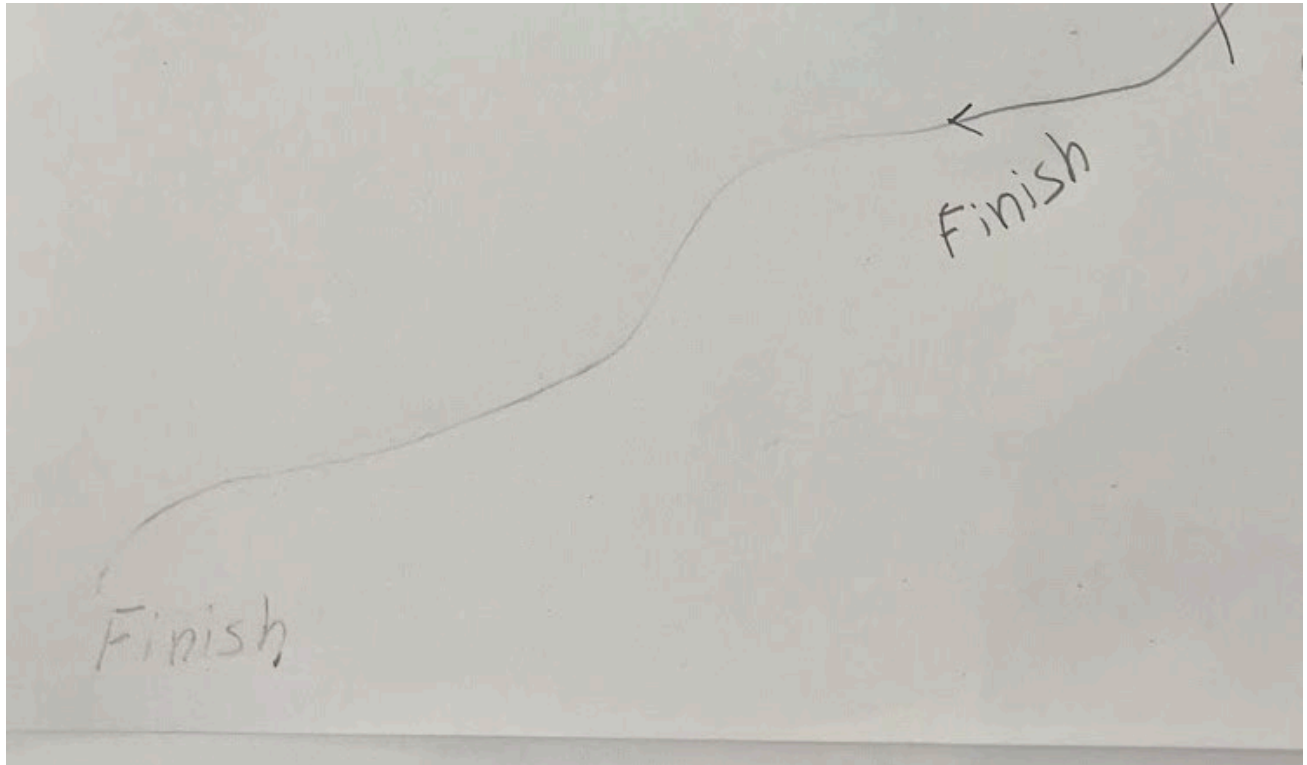


Figure 18*Detail of Unfinished Arrow Tour Ending*

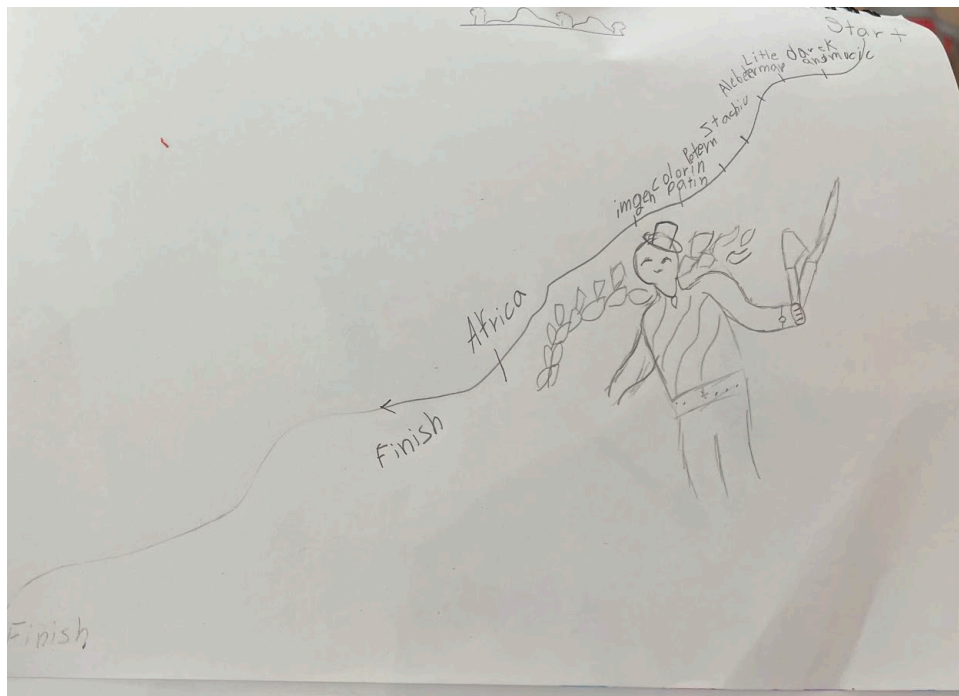
Braidotti (2010) contrasts cartography with traditional methods of "calculation" or "representation" (p. 82), which often assume stable, static categories. In cartography, paths are complex and transversal. They are non-hierarchical, multiple, and open-ended. In these highlighted student maps, descriptions are not prioritized or stratified. There is no hierarchy between the affective, the human, the nonhuman. The students express an ongoing sensorial swish in these maps, melding everything together through a direct, diagonal characterization of movement.

Discussing the concept of transversality, Evans et al. (2022) stress that transversality works "to account for the collective movement of subjectivity along vectors of experience that

run transversal (or diagonal) to the vertical and horizontal dimensions of an institutional assemblage.” (p. 785). Transversal movements draw disparate posthuman subjects into relation and movement together in direct and non-hierarchical ways that “scramble the categorical codes and stratified power relations of the institution” (Rousell, 2021, p. x). Wallin (2013) characterizes transversality similarly, insisting that “transversality becomes a tool for liberating the expressive potentials of institutional life” (p. 40). The two highlighted cartographies stood out to me immediately because of the way they emphasize and coalesce the multiplicity of intensities students experienced on their tour of the museum without, importantly, repeating any of the signs, major gestures, or descriptions of the institution of the museum itself (Figure 19). The students experienced the museum assemblage as they cut across it, interacting, perhaps even rupturing but not normalizing. In other words, these cartographies delineate transversal collective assemblages that evade institutional capture.

Figure 19

Transversal Map #2



Braidotti's (2019a) conceptualization of cartography challenges us to take "record of both what we are ceasing to be and what we are in the process of becoming" (p. 37). It is this sentiment that drives the cartographic thought in this mapping project. Looking at student maps and using their descriptive language continues to push me towards new ways of seeing/being/thinking the art museum.

PART TWO: SMALL JUSTICES

A Running List of Words

Slight
Shift
Diffuse
Fluid
Small turn
Small things
Tweak
Tiny
Trace
Deviation
Incorporation
Rearrangement
Little push
Flutter
Short
Mind-body
Brief
Briefly
A flicker
Swish

If the speculative middle of my inquiry was how to stay undone, then the concept I was thinking about/with the most was justice. “How do we engage with the present in the mode of resistance?” (Braidotti, 2010). How can justice be thought outside conventional humanist formulations (Rousell, 2021)? How does justice fit into this space of immanence and rupture? How can we become differently on school tours? What pedagogy is possible?

The words in this list arose as I completed my inquiry and unraveled what I thought I knew about becoming differently and posthuman justice. I began this list on February 2, 2024, and continued through October 30, 2024. I love a list. Here, I have a list I scribbled down and pondered over

and added to and removed from attentively. Writing to understand: a list of words, carefully chosen.

The experiences I offer in the next sections are glimpses, and they are partial. While they correspond with my running list of words, my goal is not to share what happened to inspire every word or detail an entire tour or all the background information that students received that evoked the list. My interest is in sharing how my exploration of posthuman justice was multiple and how I have come to consider small justices, slight and speculative. My analysis is not chronological. These are simply the collection of moments I continue to revisit, mull over.

SLIGHT SHIFT

Wouldn't you be upset if someone took something from you?

I started planning and leading tours with justice on my mind. In a memo from March 19, 2024, I wrote:

I have been thinking a lot about what justice means for “in the posts” and then what I am trying to do on my tours. I think the way justice is working on my tours so far is kind of two-fold: first, I am making choices in the art objects I use, the way I structure the tours, and the art activities I am asking kids to do that are maybe more traditional (humanist?) social justice choices - I am prioritizing artists of color, I am picking works of art that deal with subjects like climate change, colonialism, racism in culture and in the museum etc. So, I am not avoiding these topics, but I am also not overtly addressing them to try and change minds or inspire activism. **What I am more thinking about are these slight changes...** transformations in thinking and perspective I observe/feel/hear being created during...a tour.

I was making choices that challenged injustice, but I wasn't talking about what I was doing. I was probing what might happen.

I am standing in the museum's African art galleries. I led my group of students from the main concourse, up an elevator, and stopped before the museum's Benin Bronze (Figure 20). I pause and ask the students if they need some time to add to their maps. A few students nod and begin drawing or writing. After a few minutes, when most of their

pencils have stopped moving, I ask them to look at the bronze sculpture we're gathered around. They tell me what they notice, and I restate their observations: flowers in the background, he's wearing a helmet, I think this is made out of metal. As I do, I add in contextual information about the colonial history of the objects, their path from West Africa, to Europe, to Dallas.

Figure 20

Benin Bronze



The Benin Bronzes, from the West African Kingdom of Benin, located in what is now known as Nigeria's Edo state, are central to the repatriation movement in museums. The term

Benin Bronzes is a colloquial name for the Royal Art of Benin, a group of thousands of metal sculptures and ivory carvings made between the 15th and 19th Centuries and looted by British troops in 1897 (Jones, 2021).

The Bronzes are works that are created from metal, but the objects are largely made from brass. The grouping also includes pieces made of ivory, wood, clay, as well as other materials. The creation of these objects began in the sixteenth century, and they are still being made to this day by specialist guilds that work within the Royal Court. Many of the works were commissioned by past Obas (Kings) for ancestral altars of previous Obas and Queen mothers (Jones, 2021). The people of Benin City use busts of previous Obas to remember the deceased within the palace and as a demonstration of their lineage.

The British Museum's inventory number 98.1-15.100 is marked on the face of the plaque. It originally showed the number 298 in white, the Foreign Office number from the plaque's initial arrival in England in 1898. The plaque was one of many works the British Museum sold from 1950 to 1970 (Walker, 2009). Currently, these artifacts are estimated to reside in more than 150 museums and galleries in Europe and North America (Hicks, 2020). Yet, in a 2021 interview, British Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, argued that the Benin Bronzes "properly reside" in the British Museum (Creef, 2021), which has the largest collection of them in the world - with more than 900 pieces (Figure 21).

Figure 21

Benin Bronze Installation at the British Museum September 22, 2024



The students think about each of the facts I layer into our discussion while they continue to draw or write. They ask more questions about bronze and the symbolic flowers in the background. I ask them what they can see that tells them he is a warrior, and they notice his knives and helmet. I introduce the idea of repatriation, objects being returned to the place where they were made and stolen from originally. I ask them to raise their hands if they think the bronzes should be returned, and three fourths of the group raise their

hands. I ask someone who raised their hands why they think the works of art should be sent back, and the student answers that they were stolen, they should go back to who originally made them. I give examples of other works of art that are being returned from Europe. I then ask the students who think they should stay why they feel that way. They respond that people in other parts of the world should get to see the art. I tell them that our Curator of African Art is in conversation with the government of Benin, and she says they don't want their bronzes back yet for that reason.

I began incorporating the museum's Benin Bronze as a place to stop and introduce the ideas of power Braidotti articulates. For Braidotti, power in the posthuman paradigm thinks with a Foucauldian power. For Foucault (1978/1990), power is not something that is possessed but exercised. Foucault (1978/1990) explains that power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere (p. 93). Power is not acquired or merely available to those thought to be 'in power,' like the sovereign or minister, but enacted by all. As power weaves through the social body, its task is to normalize, surveil, exclude, discipline, classify, and regulate the subject, which is a central focus of Foucault's scholarly work (Foucault, 1977, 1982). According to Foucault, power is not a stable, individual, or categorically negative. It is not something "that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds onto or allows to slip away" because "power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 96). Foucault (1978/1990) clarifies that where there is power, there is also resistance. Resistance cannot come from outside the power relations that produce us. Instead of resistance that comes from one place and moves in one direction, a "single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary," (pp. 95-96), Foucault's poststructural redescription of resistance explains that all power relations can also

produce resistance. Resistance is everywhere in the power network—points, knots, focuses, or refusals spread over time and space.

Building on this, Braidotti (2018) theorizes power in terms of its relations, causing both “entrapment (potestas) and empowerment (potentia)” that work together to produce subject positions that are “necessarily trans-individual, collective and hybrid” (p. xvi). Braidotti (1994) calls these subjects “nomadic subjects” (p.7) who are becoming in the dynamic networks of power. In short, Braidotti characterizes power as both negative and positive. Power is dispersed, fluid, and embedded in everyday practices and interactions that produce a malleable subjectivity able to navigate dominant power systems while embracing a multiplicity of identities and perspectives, including non-human others.

I decided to talk with students about the Benin bronzes because the object introduces them to a network of power circulating through the museum that reinforces dominant power structures as it also seeks to overturn them. I did not want to introduce students to objects that were either “good” or “bad” but provide an example of how power circulates through the habituated museum assemblage while also introducing possibilities for alternatives. I wanted the students to consider all the possible opportunities and the role the museum plays as it normalizes and is disrupted. Initially, I felt as though just having the students articulate their understanding of the issues and the way power influenced the objects as the objects influenced the museums would be enough of a discussion. The students, however, continued to surprise me.

One student raises their hand and suggests that, if the objects don't get returned to Benin, then maybe the British Museum should pay the country all the money they made from selling the stolen objects to other museums. This seems to energize some of the other kids in the group. They consider if money is more important than the physical objects

because the artists in Benin can always create more. Some of the students offer that money and Bronzes should be returned, but the introduction of a financial element seems to galvanize the majority of the students because now the bronzes can stay in the museums for other people to learn from, but something is done to make right what happened when the goods were stolen.

We continue in our discussion for a few more minutes, and most of the students have started raising their hand to join the discussion, as though being asked to solve this complicated problem has activated them. One student in the front raises his hand. He hasn't said anything yet, but instead thoughtfully listened and drew a detailed warrior on his map. I call on him and ask everyone to be quiet to listen to what he is going to say. He looks at me when everyone quiets down, and then he shifts his body so he is no longer facing me at all, but his body is instead positioned slightly towards the group. He says he still thinks the objects should go back, and then he offers his classmates a question: "Wouldn't you be upset if someone took something from you?"

This question disrupts the trajectory of the discussion. The students all pause and consider, and I am struck by the fact that this is the first time a student has done two new things at this stop. The first is that a student asked a question of the other students in the group, disrupting the give and take flow of me as a facilitator and the students as participants answering and discussing based on my prompts. It is a moment of disruption, a transversal moment that challenges and destabilizes established structures of meaning, identity, and power in the group. Braidotti (2013) views disruptions as essential to processes of transformation because disruptions

create openings for critical rethinking subjectivity, power, and societal norms and offer possibilities for new ways of being and an embodied, embedded relating to the world. This disruption becomes a moment that breaks with entrenched systems of power, allowing for new forms of agency and subjectivity to emerge.

The second element of this moment that stands out for me is the way that the student posed the question with an embodied response. He moved as if his body understood the shift in perspective, the disruption he was proposing. Li and Ross (2021) described transformative validity as an embodied experience where “knowing, being, and becoming are inseparable” because “knowing accompanies the experience of being: knowing as being or being as knowing, with a deep relational root. Thus validity cannot be a ‘thing’ to ‘achieve’ or ‘threat to address’” (p. 394). This is a characterization of validity as an embodied recognition of a transformation. The sense of “knowing as experiential/being” is something I witnessed with this student. It was a pedagogical moment that was felt materially, as a process, as an “event of the body” (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 25). In this interaction, I started to develop an understanding of posthuman justice as something slight, a shift that is an embodied event of becoming differently. There are these knowing-being-becoming moments of recognition or transformation that happen for students/with students/among students talking about art that emphasize an element of becoming aware of a multiplicity of ideas, slight justices, and experiences manifest in the body.

TWEAK: CARTOGRAPHY II

Cartographic practices begin with a politics of location, and continue with the asymmetrical, embodied, embedded, and negotiated identities of subjects-in-becoming as they connect and create affirmatively. These practices and interactions are informed by an ethics that cannot be separated from a politics “which addresses social, collective, cultural, and economic life and their possibilities for change” (Grosz, 2017, p. 1). According to Grosz (2017), ethics in a posthuman ontology are not an epistemological morality or set of principles or practices that lead to a universal goodness. Instead, an ontoethics “cannot *but* address the question of how to act in the present and, primarily, how to bring about a different future from the present” (Grosz, 2017, p. 1). Similarly, Braidotti describes affirmative ethics.

Affirmative ethics foreground a “logic of *and* rather than a logic of *either/or*,” creating a technique “oriented toward positive difference, following the connections and relations between bodies and materialities” (Flint & Tate, 2023, p. 90) to create something new. Braidotti’s (2019a) affirmative ethics seek to move beyond critique to affirmative creation informed by the following ethical rule: “it is important to be worthy of our times, the better to act upon them, in both a critical and creative manner” (p. 3). In summary, it is important to empower others to actively engage with the world affirmatively, with a politics that focuses on transformation, difference, and becoming.

For Braidotti, affirmative ethics is a refusal to engage in binary, hierarchical, humanist thinking. She (2019c) explains “affirmative ethics...is a practical exercise in going beyond that disempowering feeling of being disoriented and diminished” because negativity causes a retreat

to established rules of thought where, “it looks like you’re thinking, but you’re only repeating” (p. 471). Braidotti (2019d) says: “It is about what kind of affirmative assemblages we are capable of sustaining, knowing that their political force lies in actualizing ‘collective imaginings’” (pp. 47-48). The creation of affirmative transversal collective assemblages emerges from affirmative ethics linking critique and action. Affirmative ethics is a collective creativity that manifests a sense of hope on the horizon, a distinction about who we (collectively) are becoming in the present.

The refrain of “it looks like you’re thinking, but you’re only repeating” echoed through my head as I completed my inquiry like a sticky warning. I considered again and again if I was simply repeating what I knew instead of really activating new experiences and ways of engaging with and in the museum space. I was asking students to create maps of their visits, and while I was feeling profoundly inspired and moved by the way they represented their trajectories in the museum, I wondered: was the mapping I had the kids engaged in simply tracing existing patterns instead of generating new lines of flight? I continued thinking about affirmative creative action as I watched students activate and be activated as they traversed the art museum. I considered the unlikely places students documented again and again as they mapped, like the elevators or stairs, and I thought to myself, maybe we need to alter this approach to cartography. Maybe we had mapped the museum assemblage at a particular moment, but maybe I needed to ask the students different questions. A cartography makes connections between multiple timescales and subjectivities (Flint & Tate, 2023). So, perhaps, I needed to focus on a museum that did not yet exist—a map-to-be, a map that becomes, a map that creates.

Adding

How was I going to ask students to create a map-to-be? How could I structure my prompt and our discussions in a way that foregrounded affirmative ethics? Braidotti (2018) outlines a posthuman pedagogy informed by affirmative ethics where the point is to practice “un-dutifulness, conceptual disobedience, or creative unfaithfulness as affirmative politics, in a sustainable and productive manner” (p. xxiii). The pedagogical relationship to the non-human form needs to become radically immanent in a “becoming-world/earth or becoming-imperceptible” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xxiii). An un-dutiful praxis is open-ended, inter-relational, collaborative, and illustrated in flows of becoming from the interactions between multiple others. It requires thoroughness, labor, and imagination. I decided that my next cartographic push would be asking students what they would add to the museum, suggesting they create what they felt was missing or lacking on their tour, and what we could add together to make a new and different museum.

By asking students to add to the museum, we would be collaborating to make a future-museum that responded to what they thought or wanted to change while harnessing their imagination. Adding to the museum provided students opportunities to interrupt and reorient the museum assemblage. That is why I settled on the terminology of “adding” something to the museum as an act of cartography. If the museum had to exist, then I wanted to focus on what we could create on tours that was new, affirmative, and collective. The students would be inserting their ideas into the assemblage and making something new, adding to the map.

“Perspectives”

Before deciding that I would change the way I approached mapping the museum, I worked to structure a new tour around the idea of perspectives—how the ways we look and

experience influences the ways we understand the world. I want to note here that while my intention for the tour was changing or shifting perspectives, what happened and what I found important had nothing to do with perspectives, really. “Perspectives” was a starting place, but I let the inquiry take me where it did. As I led and tweaked this tour for each group, I realized that the plan for my tour should be more emergent and loose instead of prescriptive. If I avoided the tendency to look for answers connected to the tour theme, I found that what I asked and what the students noticed was significantly more meaningful.

As I started leading the perspectives tours, I began changing my approach to mapping because I did not want to leave cartography behind, though I was fretting about simply repeating what I had done before. I thought with Braidotti’s affirmative ethics in relationship to mapping, but it did not really click for me that affirmative ethics were impacting everything about how I was touring. Affirmative ethics became a backbone for my thinking-about-justice, and this became clearer as the tours deviated from “perspective,” or “how we look and experience things differently?,” to questions like “how do we add affirmatively? how do we create and map (with) affirmative ethics?”

I led three perspective tours in March and April, and the works of art we stopped at and analyzed changed for each group. However, there were two works of art I almost always visited, almost as bookends. The two works of art conversed broadly but unintentionally, by which I mean the contemporary artist of the second painting was not commenting or referring to the first painting purposefully, but it did function as a critique. The experience of talking with students about the works of art had the effect of collapsing time and geography and interacting in an incredibly thought provoking way, for the students and for me.

The first work of art was Frederic Edwin Church's *The Icebergs*, a large oil painting created in 1861 (Figure 22). The painting shows an expanse of ice and ocean with a broken ship mast jutting up from the painting's foreground. The artist created this work of art after his 1859 voyage to the North Atlantic, where he traveled around Newfoundland and Labrador. Polar exploration was a subject of national fascination throughout the 1800s, and the interest hinged on imperial expansion and promoted stories of individual heroism (Canterbury, 2014) Of course, who the heroes were in those stories was very limited to colonizing White men.

Figure 22

Students looking at The Icebergs with Imaginary Binoculars



The Icebergs is a docent favorite on school tours. It is big, approachable, and there is a lot to discover by looking closely. It is a landscape, which is easy vocabulary for docents to describe and define. It is possible to construct a detailed and captivating story about what is happening with students who have no experience talking about art and students who do. The painting also comes with a supply of interesting anecdotes: when it was first shown people paid 25 cents each to view it; the painting originally didn't have a ship's mast, but because of interest in polar exploration, the artist added that element to make it more relevant to viewers. The work of art is also easy to teach because it is a representational painting that engages with history, but docents do not have to talk about anything "complicated" in the painting. It does not need social or historical commentary.

Blue Turned Temporal

Blue Turned Temporal (Figure 23) is a work of art by contemporary Black artist Lorna Simpson. Created in 2019, the artwork is made from ink, watercolor, and screen print on gessoed fiberglass. It is a work that converses with the history of *The Icebergs*, its art historical and cultural significance.

Figure 23

Blue Turned Temporal, Lorna Simpson 2019



In this work, the artist incorporates images of women from *Jet* and *Ebony* magazine source material into her work by screen-printing thin strips from magazine pages into a scene of polar exploration. She douses what would be an overwhelmingly white scene, one filled with snow and ice in shades of rich, dark blue.

By including Black figures into the historically white, male genre of monumental landscape painting, Simpson points to the exclusion of Black people as heroic subjects within art history and the dominant narratives of history. I first included these two works of art on my

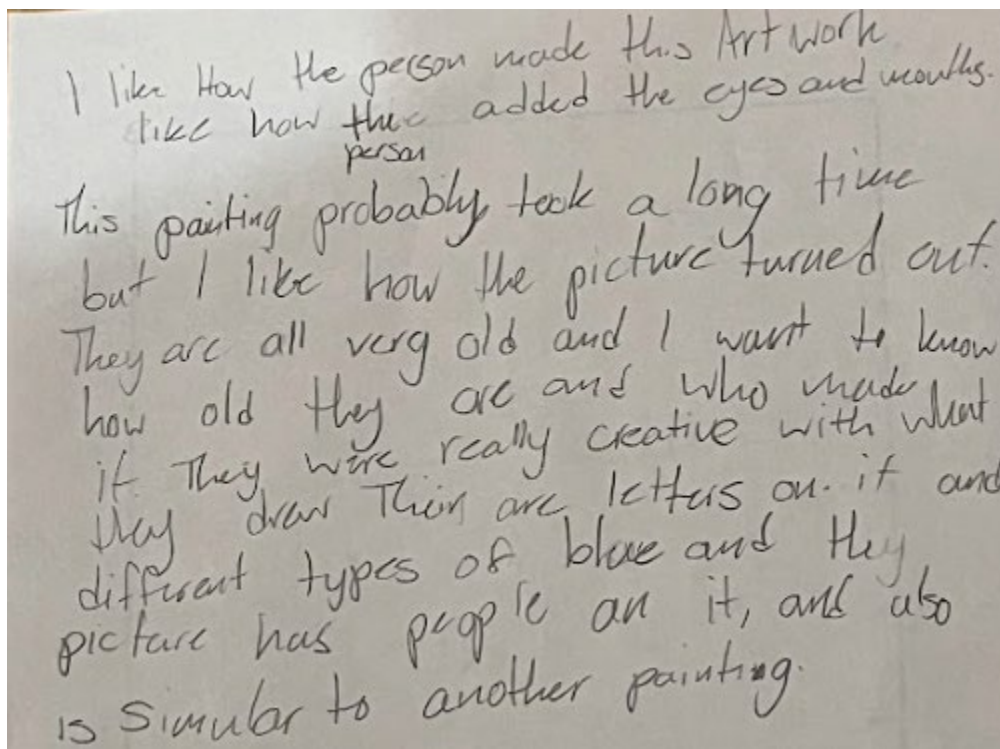
perspectives tour because I felt Simpson was introducing a critical perspective on art history, and even museum collecting practices, that would help students on tours recontextualize what was going on in the two paintings. I hoped they would think about the art and the art museum itself as more open to interpretation and reconsideration than they might have originally. I also printed out pictures of Lorna Simpson sitting with a painting similar to *Blue Turned Temporal* to show the students. Later I added a printed picture of *The Icebergs* with an image of its artist to further juxtapose what was different about the art, artists, and their perspectives.

At first, I would start a tour at *The Icebergs* and finish it at *Blue Turned Temporal*, stopping at 2-3 different, changing works of art in between. When I got to the final work of art, I asked students, “Does this remind you of anything we’ve looked at before?” The first tour of students really struggled to visually connect the two works of art (this is when I started bringing supplementary images). Once I hinted at the connection, students began remarking on similarities and differences. I would introduce Simpson with her picture and ask, “why do you think it is important to know who the artist of this artwork is?” Then, I would ask why she would make a work of art that referenced the past, and why did they think artists chose to do that in general. I asked students what her unique perspective was and what they could find in the painting to back up what they thought. After our discussion, the first group of students on the tour finally decided that “she is making art inspired by someone else because she wants to show something from a different perspective.” This is what I wanted them to realize, of course, but I did not know if they were really coming to that conclusion on their own or if the way I structured the tour was, in a way, feeding them the answer I was looking for. After that, I decided not to repeat the tour but try something different and see what emerged.

I started asking students to write down their reactions to *Blue Turned Temporal* first so I could see what they were noticing and thinking without me directing the conversation (Figure 24). They observed the screen-printed additions and the women's eyes. They wondered who created the work of art, and they did make connections to the previous work of art. They noticed the color blue vividly (Figure 25).

Figure 24

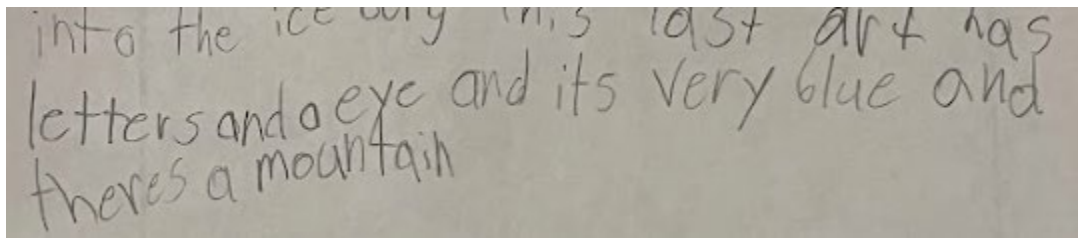
Excerpt of Student Written Response April 11, 2024



I like how the person made this Art work
 like how ~~there~~ ^{person} added the eyes and mouths.
 This painting probably took a long time
 but I like how the picture turned out.
 They are all very old and I want to know
 how old they are and who made
 it. They were really creative with what
 they drew. There are letters on it and
 different types of blue and the
 picture has people on it, and also
 is similar to another painting.

Figure 25

Excerpt of Student Written Response, April 11, 2024



Using their written responses as a starting point, I then let these observations drive our discussions, and the students came up with deeper, more thoughtful observations than the “it shows different perspectives” that I had been trying to elicit. One group thought the screen-printed eyes included were to represent multiple artists who would want to represent themselves but maybe could not or did not in the past. Another group wondered if the work of art was by multiple artists because Simpson was using found materials. The final group really focused on the inclusion of Black women into the landscape thinking that Simpson was including those elements to represent time and to “show Black people in art and to honor them.”

A Blank Square

Once we finished our discussions about *Blue Turned Temporal*, I asked students to add to the museum. I passed out a sheet of paper with a blank square on it, or, if I had already passed out a piece of paper for a written response, asked students to flip the paper over to where they would find a blank square (Figure 26). Then I asked students what they would add to the museum. I introduced the activity in my tour plan with the following phrasing:

Now that we’ve talked about the importance of including everyone’s perspective, I am interested in your perspective on this museum and how you would change it or make it better. So I would like you to make a drawing where you add something to the museum.

I asked students to think about:

- If you want to change a work of art
- Add art that you didn't see
- Make art about something you think is important that wasn't represented in the museum

Figure 26

A Blank Square



I wanted to invite students to think critically and make something new. We had engaged in critical discussion, and I introduced adding to the museum as something positive (though I acknowledge that in itself is subjective) that would be a response to the complicated art museum assemblage. For this final drawing, I sometimes passed out colored pencils and sometimes did not (Figure 27). After 15 minutes, I asked students if anyone wanted to share what they created. I took notes about what they shared and asked if I could take a picture of their drawings.

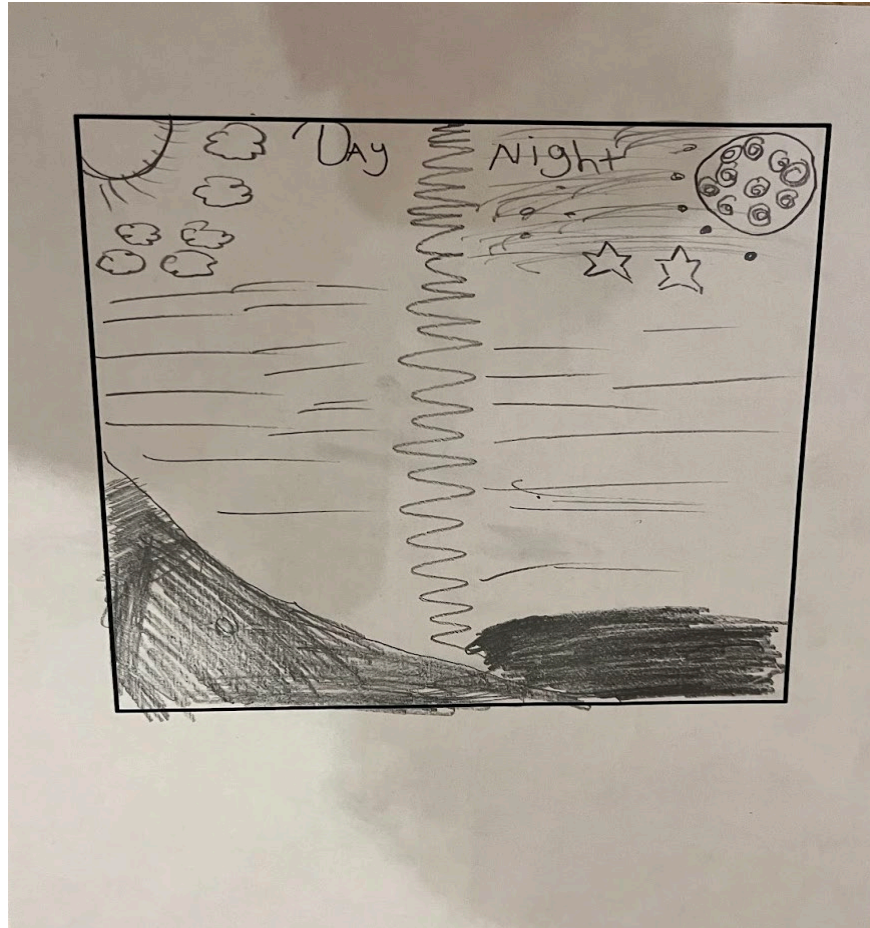
Figure 27*Students Adding to the Museum*

Discussing affirmative ethics, Braidotti (2019c) asks what acting affirmatively would look like. She queries, “What do we need to do to extract margins of possible action that would enable us to trace what we are in the process of becoming within such a system and construct patterns of alternative becoming? (p. 477). In their responses to adding to the museum, students articulated traces of a museum-to-be, what the museum is in the process of becoming. Their observations and drawings are interspersed throughout the following analysis.

“I wanted to show all different kinds of people so people would understand that being different is good and they can see themselves.”

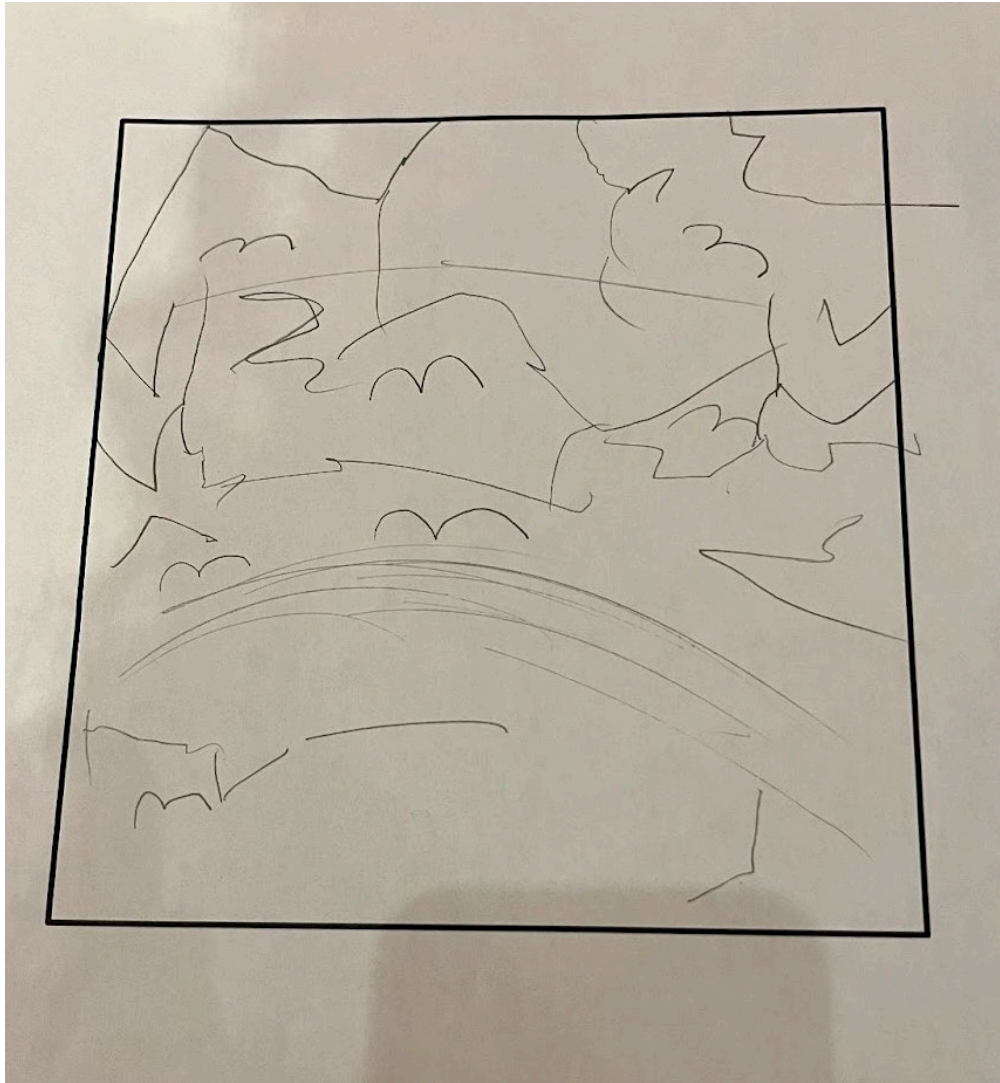
Affirmative ethics “increases our ability to relate and take in the world.” (Braidotti, 2019c, p. 474). It does not ignore the problems of the present but instead engages with the difficulties of “now” to create alternative ways of “becoming-otherwise” (Nardini, 2014). In this response, the student thinks about different ways for the museum to include and reflect an understanding of the world and humans that is affirmative, “good.” The student also emphasizes “being different,” and introducing difference opens new opportunities for un-thought potentialities, clarifying the spaces of the museum where possible futures may be created.

Enacting an affirmative ethics includes tracing the negative, especially the networks of power involved, to better forge new possibilities. That is, you cannot focus towards the future if you are stuck trying to re-orient the past. Braidotti (2019c) suggests, “we need to borrow the energy from the future, if the present conditions do not allow us to act affirmatively” (p. 479). By acting affirmatively, it is possible to move past good/bad binaries and rework negativity outside of this kind of dualism, transforming binaries into something different (Figure 28). Complicating binaries, combining, and borrowing to create something new from the art museum was a repeated theme for the students when adding to their map.

Figure 28*Transforming Binaries*

“I drew night and day because I wanted to show different elements I saw in each painting, but I wanted to combine them.”

In the second response, the student combined elements from the two works of art highlighted in this section to confront the anthropocentric nature of the museum and the tour I led (which I have continued to reflect on). Seeing the absence of “living things,” the student added migrating birds, creating a map for a future museum that emphasizes a more relational understanding of all beings and the world (Figure 29).

Figure 29*Migrating Birds*

“I used parts from the paintings we looked at, a mountain and water, and I added migrating birds because what I noticed was that there weren’t any living things in the paintings and I wanted to include them.”

When I think about a posthuman justice informed by affirmative ethics, I consider justice as a small push, an active (re)adjustment. It is a reconsideration or an alternative process of

creating. Braidotti (2019c) explains, “the patterns of becoming ‘otherwise other’ are not identical, but zigzagging, diverse. They converge in affirming the possibility of a here and now that would be liveable, that would be sustainable, and affirming” (p. 479). There is no exact same way to add to the museum or to map a change.

“I drew something mysterious because I wanted to make something even more mysterious than this (Lorna Simpson) painting.”

Pursuing an ethics of affirmation involves acknowledging the real struggle of the present and creating something virtual. In many ways, I think it is also an acknowledgement of a process to think and act and make towards “something else.” In this last response, the student emphasizes mystery and the unknown, deterritorializing the art he saw and his experience of the museum on his tour. I enjoyed this emphasis as I reflected on my own process of adding to the museum assemblage cartography. In a memo from March 19, 2024, I wrote:

D & G say “Do not even lines of flight, due to their eventual divergence, reproduce the very formations their function it was to dismantle or outflank?” and “But the opposite is also true. It is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map*” (13). So I am thinking about the way the “museum map” is a tracing, and I want to insert things into the tracing of the art museum’s process of territorialization. Blips and ruptures, new ideas, the additions of things somewhere. I wanted to emphasize the way that these new cartographies interplay with the established map—the transversal lines of flight head out but the map continues being reproduced, but this time even that has changed.

I was thinking about ways to work with students to create something new out of maps and processes that already exist. I was emphasizing ways to make things together with students, moving from individual maps to collective reimaginings. Braidotti (2019c) states that acting with affirmative ethics is “collective praxis and together we are capable of reactivating the negative, reworking it, transforming it, reformatting it” (p. 474). In fact, creating affirmatively is a practice of rethinking and remaking. It is a continuous process that I was living and doing throughout my inquiry and enacting collectively on tours with students as we traversed and discussed the art museum. In these acts of adding and tweaking the museum and the corresponding shifts in being and knowing, we experienced unfolding together. We created new connections on the map, new entry ways, and new museums-to-be.

A Flicker, Swish

I found a book in March 2024. It's not so much that I found a book at a bookstore or a library. I didn't pick it up randomly from a table. I found a book on my bookshelf. I took it out from the library way back in June 2023. I had left the book in a stack and then shifted it around my desk with a bunch of other books I had read or not. It was on my desk and under my desk and near my desk and finally on a shelf above my desk where it waited ten months for me to find it. Or maybe it finally found me, finally connected with what I was doing in a way that I couldn't even think of before.

I found a book in the midst of leading tours for my inquiry, while my running list of words grew and changed shape, the order shifting, the similarities in the words starting to describe a conception of posthuman justice that was slight, physical, bodily, significant.

I found a book, and what is crazy is that I had already read part of the book. I cited a photocopied chapter shared in a class in my comprehensive exams, in my prospectus. I had obviously planned on reading it based on the excerpt; but, instead of reading it, I checked it out of the library, brought it to Texas, and then moved it around. I shuffled it. I didn't open it—just one book of many. Until, I was ready to read it. Until, I was thinking about justice operating on the level of subtle actions carrying transformative potential. I didn't find *The Minor Gesture* (2016) until I was ready to think with it, which is a moment in my inquiry that has stayed with me, that happened outside the museum but is still a part of it.

It is strange, really, to spend so much time thinking and creating and analyzing in an ontology of becoming, where the agency and interconnectedness of human and nonhuman matter

is apparent, and then to find a book in this way. I could have read the book again and again, at any time, picked it up and flipped open the cover. But I did not. It was as if it was waiting. Then there was this moment when what I was thinking of, doing, and listing interacted with the book, and finally I found it/it found me. I cannot pretend I was the only subject acting. Finding the book was a pivotal part of my inquiry, an important flicker, a swish in perspective.

REARRANGEMENT

This section starts with two stories. The first is how I met Frank.

I met Frank when I was 16 or 17. I was in the Minneapolis Institute of Art, entering the threshold in the museum's contemporary galleries. I remember the bright white walls and gleaming wood floors and how everything seemed like it glowed. In my memory, the ceiling was incandescent with large skylights, like if I looked up, I would see clouds drifting. This can't be true, of course, because an art museum would never directly expose art to the sun. It was one of the most ethereal moments of my life, and my brain seems to have altered my memories to match.

I walked in and was caught off guard by the peering man with rumpled hair and thick, clear plastic glasses. He had a beard and wore a grey button-down shirt. His expression was ambivalent - a mix of haughty indifference, vague boredom, maybe a touch of sadness. He looked at me like he was caught mid-sentence, starting to say something but deciding not to continue. He was perfectly framed by all the whiteness on the walls.

I walked up to him, more boldly than was normal for me because at that time museums still made me feel tentative, intimidated, hushed, and I was a teenager, perpetually unsure and shuffling between feeling like I belonged and like I never would belong

anywhere. I was surprised by how much I wanted to be in the space with him, not nervous, but tugged towards him with a sudden knowing what to do and where to go. I got closer, peering back, daringly meeting his gaze.

And he was a painting. A painting! He was an oversized black and white painting rendered in photographic detail. Photorealism is what it is called; I learned the term that day. It was amazing the way this person who was depicted so expertly impacted me like he was a fully corporeal human and simultaneously shocked me with the realization that he wasn't even a photograph imbued with the certain something that comes from photography. Instead, he was a work of art constructed by some artist's careful hand.

*I bought a poster of Frank that day, and he has come with me to many places over the last decade: dorm rooms, a tiny New York City apartment with almost no walls to hang him on. I've never left him behind. He's in my kitchen now, companionably gazing, framed despite a huge rip that extends to his collar. The corners of the poster board are folded and pin-pricked with holes from so many thumbtacks and pieces of masking tape. I can map my decision to study art, to work in museums right back to the first time I met Frank. He has a talismanic quality for me - I'm never **only** looking at Frank, if you know what I mean.*

My second story is about beheadings (Figure 30).

I meander through the galleries observing docents leading their tours. I drift from group to group, focusing on what I overhear and the moments I happen to experience. I turn a

corner and run into a cluster of students at a large oil painting of a still life. The docent asks the students to identify all the different objects in the still life. She instructs, "you can just call things out with this one," and the students do start calling out parts of the painting: grapes, a shell, a lobster. I watch this interaction and think about how often the docents must stop here in this awkward corner.

Suddenly a student breaks away from the group, wandering over to a smaller painting to the right of the still life. He looks quizzically and then heads back to the group. A little bit later, another student pulls away from the group and heads to the second painting. Their friend follows, and the two look at the second painting, pointing out the artwork's subject: Judith placing the severed head of Holofernes into a bag held by another woman. Behind Judith, the decapitated man's body appears caught in a moment, arm outstretched and blood spurting from his gaping throat.

Figure 30*Beheading*

Those students return to their group, but in another minute, another pair of students breaks off, as if compelled to the other work of art. I write in my notes: “The drifters! The grapes vs. the beheading” (November 30, 2023). This dynamic continues: the docent trying so hard to get the students to look and engage with the still life painting, and the kids individually or in small clumps, flowing to the other painting. The kids stop and gesture and get closer and observe and sometimes whisper, so engaged with this small painting. It is really funny but also amazing to witness the way the students gravitate to the beheading painting. They’re drawn to it. The painting captivates them long enough to make them linger and then return to the group and then approach again. It is like the

painting has an orbit and students keep catching it, and they leak from their tour group connecting to the museum assemblage briefly but repeatedly.

These stories demonstrate the vital nature of art. Visitors to art museum galleries become intimately entangled with the objects that, for lack of a better term, speak to them, call to them, catch their eye.

Feminist New Materialism in Art Museums

Art educators Emily Hood and Amelia Kraehe (2017) explore new materialist interpretations of art museum experiences, advocating for visitors to wander the galleries until something calls out to them, jarring them, impacting the body's senses and altering their original disposition. They explain, "From a materialist point of view, it [the jarring feeling] is indicative of a vital force of our own matter that lies just below the surface of awareness" (p. 37). They argue that getting caught up and entangled with not just the idea but the material of art is a central part of the experience of learning in museums. New materialist theory argues that the world and history are produced by material forces, from the physical and the biological to the psychological, social, and cultural. It contends that if there is no distinction between the physical world and the discursive, a new materialist ontology opens up the possibility to explore how all matter interacts, and how non-human others, like plants and works of art, can be vital, and interact relationally.

Art educator Sayers (2016) argues that new materialism provides a useful counterpoint to the social constructivist learning frameworks prevalent in museum education because it takes into account the agency of matter, in this case the art object, and, rather than silencing matter as social constructivist theories might, "it enables new configurations within which the material and

the discursive combined” (Barrett & Bolt, 2013; Haraway, 1991, as cited in Sayers, 2016, p. 136). She notes that using a new material framework creates a complex task for educators who are used to looking at and talking about art as a social process where ideas are formed through interactions between people, and “bringing a new materialist framework to this exchange enables regions between artwork and viewer to be more productive. By not mediating the work through constructivist scaffolding, the art has the power of affect” (Sayers, 2016, p. 137). In other words, new meanings emerge in the *intra*-actions of participants, educators, artworks, sociocultural discourse, the physicality of the museum space, the disciplining rules and surveillance of the gallery space.

Braidotti and Feminist New Materialism

Braidotti’s neo-materialism conceptualizes nonhuman others as active agents in their own right, capable of influencing and shaping the world. “Why is matter so intelligent?” asks Braidotti (2013, p.60). She answers: “Because it is driven by informational codes, which both deploy their own bars of information and interact in multiple ways with the social, psychic and ecological environments” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 60). In this way, for Braidotti, the world and all the human and non-human subjects that comprise it are part of relational networks that are not fixed or stable but instead in a constant state of intertwining. She argues, “this understanding of matter animates the composition of posthuman subjects of knowledge as embedded, embodied and yet flowing in a web of relations with human and non-human others” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 47) that is always creating the world. This means everything in the world is becoming simultaneously in new and unpredictable ways, together.

Art and Bench

While the vital nature of matter is something I have both experienced and observed before and during my inquiry, I wondered if there was a way to realize it on my tours and activate the art objects with students differently. Braidotti (2013) describes how subjects form complex assemblages where each element—human or nonhuman—plays an active role in the dynamic flow of becoming. I wanted to experiment with art on my tours in ways that might cause transversal collective assemblages, as Braidotti describes, to materialize in the embedded and embodied dynamics between students, tours, art, and the discursive and relational forces that are all active in the museum assemblage.

As I read and considered ways my tours might incite activation or disruption with the art objects in the museum, the enabling restraint of the museum assemblage materialized places where students engaged with art differently already, and I realized my main goal again wasn't to cause the kids and artworks to interact differently but to instead identify minor gestures that shift the field, “alerting the valence of what comes to be” affirmatively (Manning, 2016, p. 6), to cultivate the conditions that would create a rearrangement of (re)action between students and the art objects.

During my tours, the museum had a work of art on view in the galleries named *Bench* by Iraqi-British architect and artist Zaha Hadid, that was both a sculpture and a bench. When we walked by or stopped at nearby objects, students inevitably approached the sculpture/bench, recognizing it as something more than the other works of art but feeling unsure about if they should approach or touch. Around the sculpture they became both hesitant that they might be disciplined for interacting with the bench in a way that was “inappropriate” and excited by their discovery of a new type of artwork. They were drawn to it. Again and again student groups on

tours would approach it collectively, and hover around it. They were waiting to know if it would be ok to touch it and sit on it. I would tell them that this object was both a work of art and a bench, and they would immediately sit down (Figure 31).

Figure 31

Art and Bench



“We’re Part of the Art”

Instead of just continuing to watch students interact with the bench, I started asking the kids questions about what they were experiencing. I asked, “what is happening in the space between you and the art?” I wanted students to think critically about this affective experience they were having, and I wanted to hear the ways the experience was different from everything

else they would or could do in the gallery space. In response to the question, “What is happening in the space between you and the art?,” students answered, “the space gets small and then opens between us and the art,” and “it [the space] moves in the way the bench moves.”

I invited the students to sit on the bench in the way it was asking them to, to interact with it the way they felt was right (Figure 32). They would move from sitting, mostly motionless, to laying and moving their hands over the glossy shape of the bench. As they inhabited this state of flux, I asked them what they were experiencing. Students reported: “there are many different shapes on each side so that changes who can sit and how.” Another student countered, “we’re a part of the art.” The students and the matter of the object became collective, processual.

Figure 32

“We’re a Part of the Art”



After the students moved all around the bench, trying out certain poses in different places, I asked, “Why is it important that there is art like this, that you can touch or sit on, in the museum?” The students had thoughtful answers: “So people get to interact with the art, and it gets used,” and “I can feel that the bench is smooth and shiny and slippery so I can understand it better.” One student suggested that it was important that there is artwork like the bench “so we can experience the art in a different way.” A final student offered that the artwork was important because, “the first rule of art doesn’t apply - we can touch the art!” The sculpture invited the students to interact in an unexpected multiplicity of ways.

The students co-created with the art museum assemblage as they “became the art,” becoming relationally. At the same time, the student interaction with the object created a cacophony of deterritorialization, where the disciplining major actions of the art museum, the process of controlling and displaying a repository of objects, was interrupted, disrupted, and altered. The binary between student and art came undone, overwhelming the strict binaries between human and non-human that exist in the gallery space. Accepted orientations were rearranged and questioned. My questions provided a pedagogical spark for students to articulate their experiences.

At this work of art, the students and non-human art objects engaged in becoming together, forming new and temporary worlds that resisted the more disciplining power of the art museum. When the tours would move on, the students carried the experience of that moment with them, and the bench always seemed to reform, becoming quiet and contained: “Art” once again.

When You See Me

One work of art I included on my tours elicited a multiplicity of responses from the groups I accompanied on my tours. A mixed media collage on canvas entitled, *When You See Me*, by contemporary Black artist Deborah Roberts, depicts a group of Black boys traversing a flat, white background (Figure 33). The seven boys are collaged like assemblages: their clothes are composed from flat colorful shapes, and their faces and bodies are layered, magnified cutouts from magazines or photographs. In a field note about the work of art from January 23, 2024, I wrote: “This artwork is SO STICKY, but it is also very hard to manage.” The students on my tours provided complex, political interpretations of the piece again and again and again. It was something I had never experienced before. Teaching with the artwork to adult audiences, I heard interpretations of the work that suggested the boys were walking to school, heading to church, on their way to family events.

Figure 33

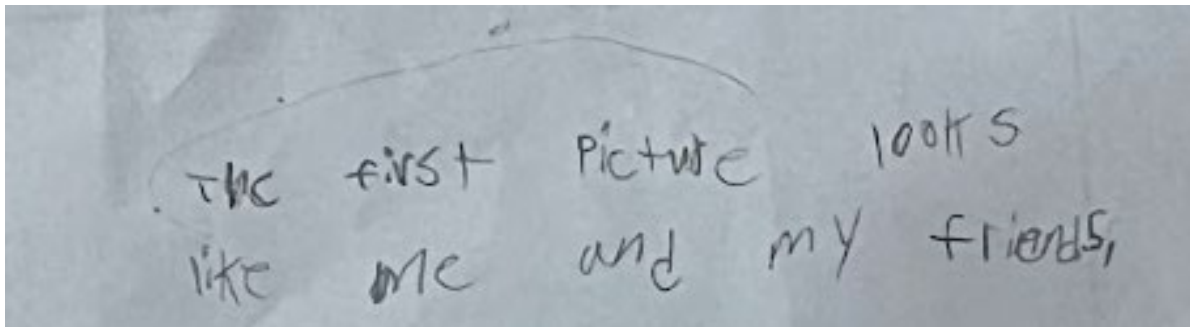
Emily Teaching with When You See Me



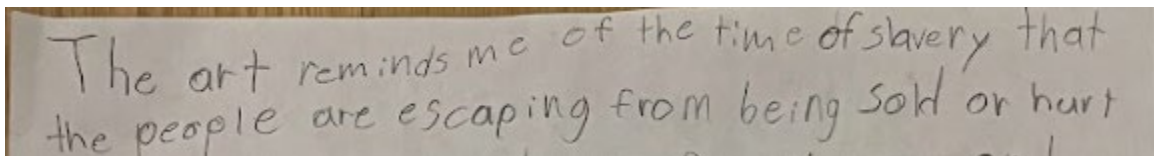
For students, the subjects of the artwork were: protesting generally, younger versions of civil rights leaders, walking away from a racist encounter, or protesting racism. After hearing a few tour groups offer these ideas about the painting, I started having students write about the work of art, and, finally, ask the artwork a question. When I had students write their responses to the work, they wrote the varied thoughtful suggestions below (Figure 34, 35, 36).

Figure 34

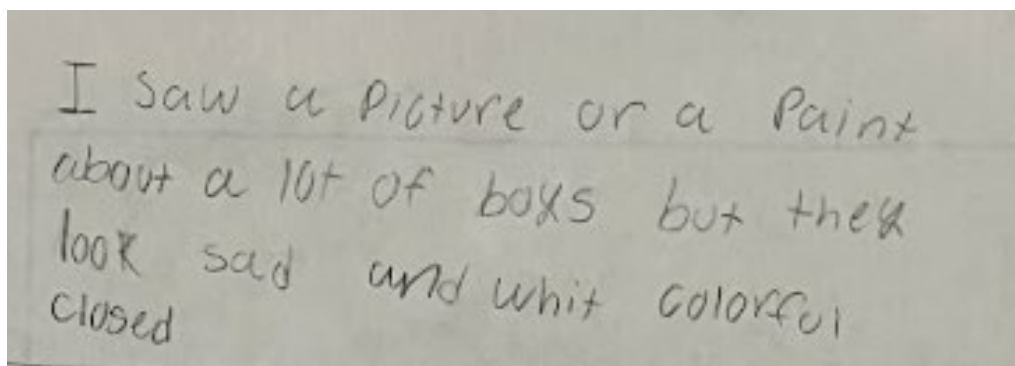
"The First Picture Looks Like Me and My Friends"

**Figure 35**

"The Art Reminds Me of the Time of Slavery that the People are Escaping From Being Sold or Hurt"

**Figure 36**

"I Saw a Picture or Painting About a lot of Boys but They Look Sad and with Colorful Clothes"



Students alternatively saw themselves, recognized historical figures, and they interpreted the thoughts and emotions of the kids in the picture. I originally chose the work of art because it portrayed a group of children, as kids respond very well to works of art about other children, but my engagement with the work of art totally transformed into something other than what I expected. For students, the work continually “brought care and attention to the fragilities, entanglements, and uncertainties of life in the Anthropocene,” (Rousell, 2021, p. 4), or, the present time, where Braidotti (2019a) argues it is essential to recognize the tangled nature of humans with non-human entities (animals, plants, machines, and the Earth itself) and emphasizes responsibility toward the planet. Subsequently, discussions about the work of art presented fraught paths to walk as a facilitator.

Sometimes clumsily, I countered assertions about references to slavery and civil rights with questions about whether or not the boys might be from the present, even the future. I asked what they might protest today? Could they be addressing racism in the present? Braidotti posits that new materialism relates to the “complexities of the present,” where multiple temporalities coexist, including the past's lingering legacies and the future's affirmative potentialities. For Braidotti (2019a), the present engages in critical, posthuman thinking, which “is the conceptual counterpart of the ability to enter modes of relations, to affect and be affected” (p. 124), recognizing and actualizing the transversal relations of all life forms, both human and non-human.

Fox and Alldred (2019) position Braidotti as a part of a group of scholars who have developed or adopted social and political elements to their new materialist frameworks that “can be used both to research the social world and to seek to change it for the better” (p. 4). New materialism offers a reorientation to the materiality of life and struggle, and the recognition that

in a flat, immanent ontology, where “all matter or substance is one and immanent to itself” there are new ways to bring about change (Braidotti, 2019, p. ?). In other words, everything is necessarily relational and contextual rather than essential and absolute. This opens up new ways to think about change and become affirmatively.

Importantly, Braidotti (2018) identifies the push to understand and change that Fox and Alldred explain. She argues, “vital matter is driven by the ontological desire for the expression of its innermost freedom (*conatus*) to persevere in its existence and endure” (2018, p. xv). Her materialist approach suggests we must “move beyond identity and make it imperative to look at the broader picture. It focuses on the complex workings of the system of human exceptionalism within neoliberal, biogenetic and cognitive capitalism” (Braidotti, 2022, p. 111). That is, in the posthuman framework, anthropocentric ethics must be countered by showing how nonhumans (as part of assemblages) have their own forms of agency and can affect others in ethical ways. She argues that capacity to affect others and be affected interdependently creates space where these ethics come into play because “the interrelation is shaped by an ethics that starts with the recognition of the vital importance of the transversal connections to multiple others” (Braidotti, 2022, p. 137).

As I continued conversing with students about *When You See Me* throughout my inquiry, students directed conversations about the work of art to their own understanding of their power and agency as kids. One student clarified that they thought that, because the subjects of the artwork were children, they could not be protesting because “kids don’t have a lot of power to change adults’ minds.” I parlayed this observation into a conversation by asking the students: “What should adults listen to kids about more? And, why do you think adults don’t listen to kids more?” More often than not, I started my tours at the work of art because it provided such varied

moments for discussion. Manning (2016) argues, “for an object to become artful in the context of the gallery, it must be capable of inventing its own value. Even more so, it must be capable of activating it” (p. 71). This work of art activated students, collapsing the personal and political, “carrying the potential for variation” (p. 71) in multiple ways, open to flux. The artwork challenged anthropocentric ethics, inspiring students and me to engage with the present and political more directly, ideating ways to challenge entrenched ideas about power and binaries like child/adult and past/present.

It All Moves Together

“The challenge today is how to transform, or deterritorialize, the human-non-human interaction in pedagogical practice” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xxiv).

While I had experienced and observed the ways that human and non-human others interact in the museum, thinking about how to include and adapt that for a posthuman pedagogy of justice, of becoming, was very difficult. However, the experiences materialized in unexpected and challenging ways. Braidotti (2019a) states: “we are indeed becoming posthuman ethical subjects. We do so by overcoming hierarchical dichotomies and cultivating instead our multiple capacities for relations and modes of communication in a multi-directional manner” (p. 63). To engage with this element of posthuman theory, I had to be open to communication and influence from the museum assemblage itself as it both restricted and generated openings around the works of art, and I had to listen and learn from the works of art themselves. In this kind of pedagogy, there is no single teacher, learner, participant, observer. It all tangles together, which creates opportunities to move collectively and transversally. It required a re-orientation, an ongoing rearrangement, from what was expected to things that had not yet been thought, to what might be, to what is just, to what could be created.

The Issue of Language

In their edited volume, *Posthumanism and Educational Research*, Snaza and Weaver (2015) assert, “it is impossible to think, criticize, and write about a system except from inside it. One must always inhabit the discourse one wishes to throw into question” (p. 3). I considered my positionality with/in the museum assemblage throughout my inquiry. As a posthuman subject experimenting in my inquiry, I was “a neo materialist, grounded thinker of dynamic and complex social and discursive processes, but with a keen eye for issues of social and political justice and a commitment to affirmative ethics” (Braidotti, 2018, p.xv). I was becoming in relationship to my tours, I was affecting and being affected by the students, museum spaces, the sounds of tours and learning, the works of art, the theory I was reading and the writing I was doing. It was all creating me, relationally, collectively, transversally.

However, I was not just behaving in affirmatively ethical ways, orienting myself toward justice and becoming. In some ways, I was repeating the normalizing structure of the museum, whether I wanted to be or not. My subject formation was not without a certain kind of injustice, and there were many ways I participated in territorializing existing patterns on my tours, catching myself on the strata. For example, the issue of language. The students who participated in my tours were all from a school district where 48% of students do not speak English as their primary language (Rodrigues, 2023). I only speak English. This meant that on almost every tour, there were students who might not have understood me, students who needed to translate for their classmates, and students who asked me for descriptions and definitions of words that I could not provide. It is one thing to recognize words for colors and numbers on tours, but it is

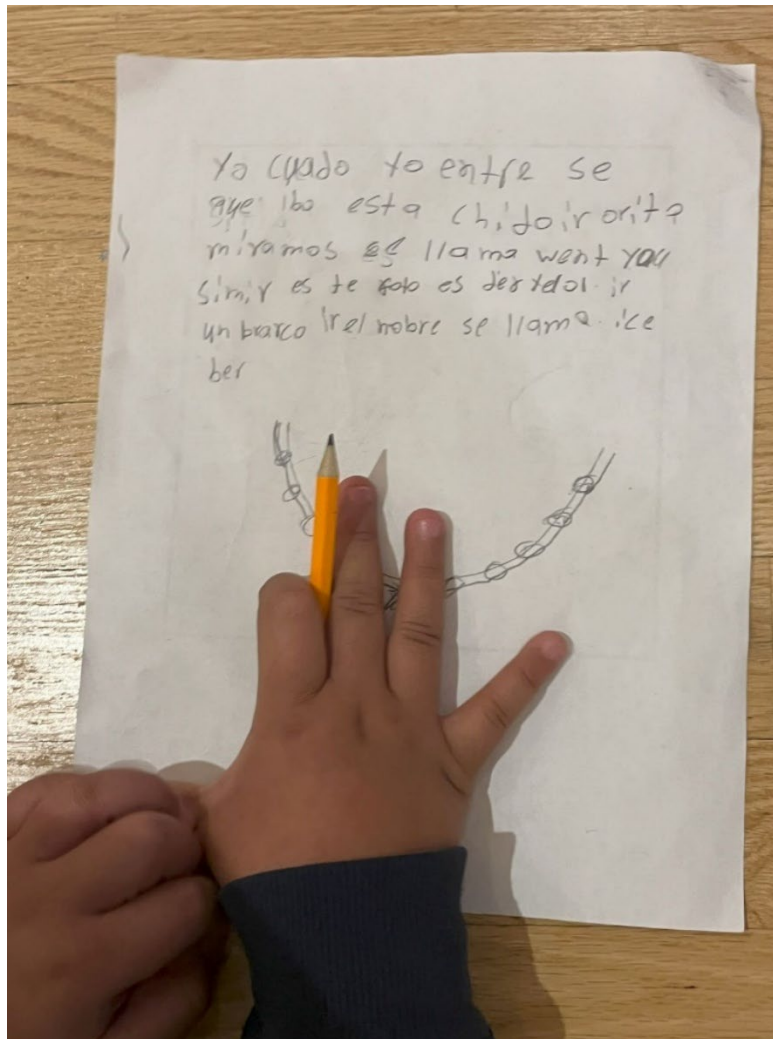
something else to quickly figure out how to explain and ask questions about an artwork depicting deforestation and climate change.

In all the ways I wanted to create collectively and challenge existing networks of power, I was also reinforcing them. I was realizing the museum as an excluding place, and a primarily White space that functions “to mediate the white logistics of continuous acquisition, improvement, and self-possession as the presuppositions on which notions of ‘society,’ ‘community,’ and ‘the commons’ are formed” (Rousell & Hussey-Smith, 2024, p. 265). As a subject, I was always in relation to and relation with the assemblage of the art museum, and, even as I worked in ways to counter and critique the museum space, I could not stop myself from reproducing it.

Braidotti (2006) asserts that “thinking is a nomadic activity, which takes place in the transitions between potentially contradictory positions” (p. 199). I tried my best to navigate between the contradictory positions I inhabited in my inquiry, and I practiced what Manning and Massumi (2014) call “immanent critique” which means to “inhabit one’s complicity and make it *turn* - in the sense in which butter ‘turns’ to curd (p. 87). I critiqued my own subject-formation as I led tours and worked with students, and I tried to find ways to work in the middle of our language barriers. I invited students to complete exercises in any language they wanted, looked up words, asked students to co-lead with me, encouraged them to ask questions of their classmates, and considered conversation about art differently, conceptualizing it as more relational and embodied (Figure 37, 38, 39). I imagined ways to engage in a collective-critique with students, even if our language was not the same.

Figure 37

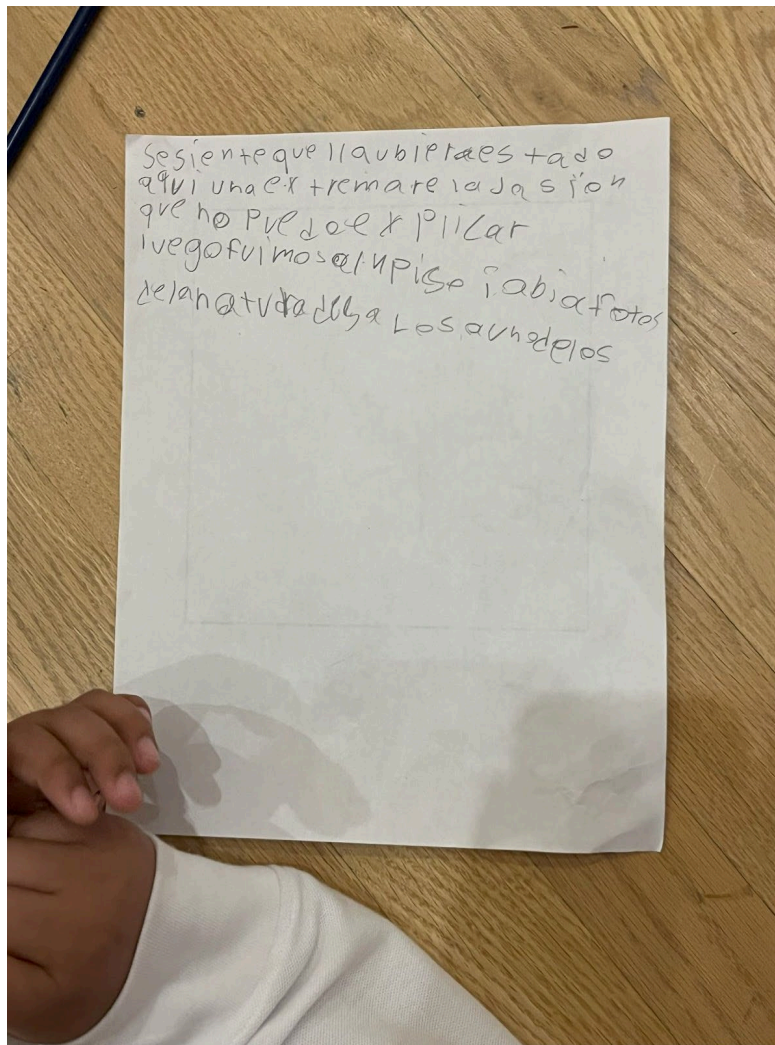
“When I Entered, I Knew It Was Going to be Cool and a Little Weird”



Note. Translation: “When I entered, I knew it was going to be cool and a little weird. We saw the one that's called “When You See Me” and this photo is of a boat and a man and its called “Ice Berg.”

Figure 38

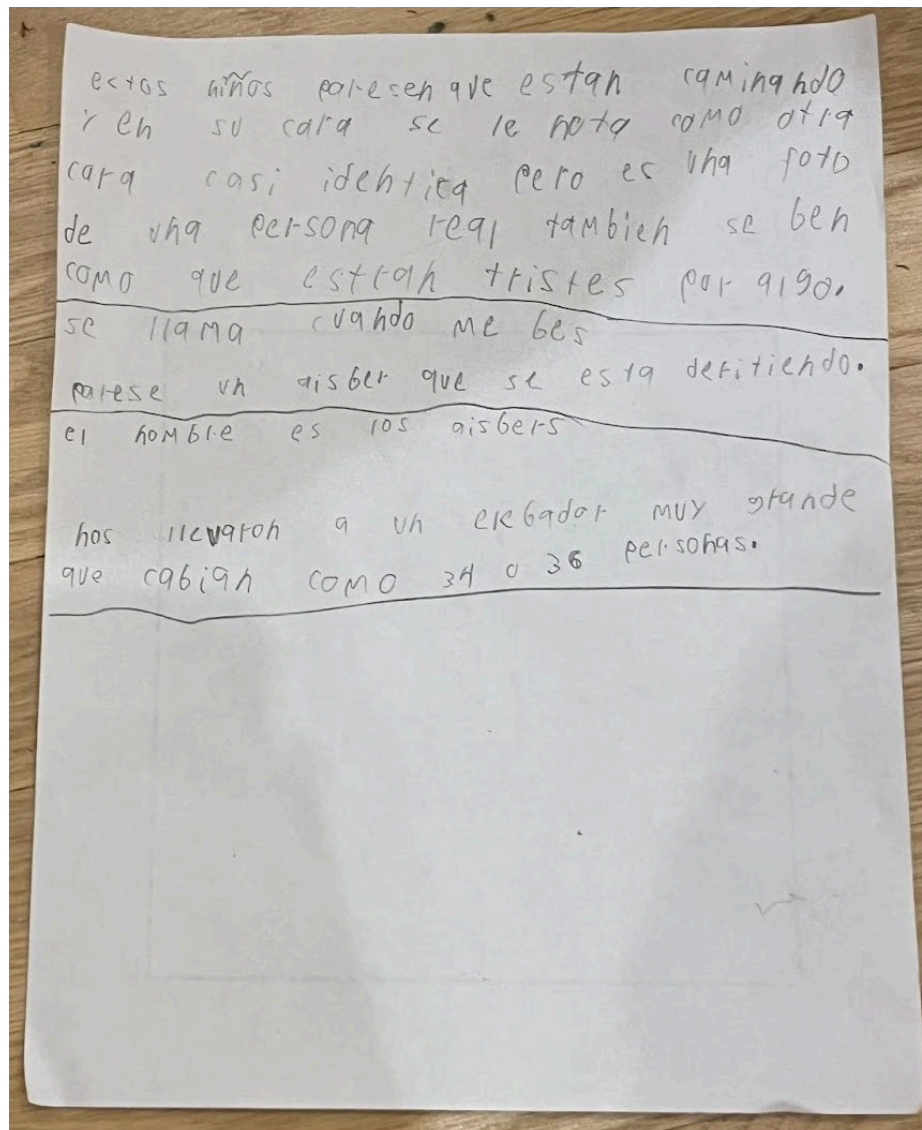
“It Feels Like I’ve Been Here Before. One Extreme Relationship That I Cannot Explain.”



Note. Translation: “It feels like I’ve been here before. one extreme relationship that I cannot explain. Then we went to a floor where there were photos of nature.”

Figure 39

"They Took Us in a Big Elevator That Could Fit Like 34 or 36 People."



Note. Translation: "These kids look like they are walking and in their face you can notice how it looks like someone else who looks almost the same but it's a picture of another real person.

They also look like they're sad for some reason. It's called "When You See Me". It looks like an iceberg that is melting. The man is the icebergs. They took us in a big elevator that could fit like 34 or 36 people."

Most of all, I realized that I had thought myself into a binary: what I could understand and what I could not through language, when really it was much more complicated than that. I began understanding how Braidotti (2019) describes posthuman subject relational affectivity producing “a shared sense of belonging to, and knowledge of, the common world we are sharing” (p. 47). So, the issue of language opened my inquiry up, shifting and moving my inquiry in new and just directions even as limitations pressed into my subject-in-becoming.

BRIEFLY: SOMETHING NEW AND SOMETHING NEW AND SOMETHING NEW

During the events of my inquiry, students continuously realized *the new*, ideas that had-not-yet-been-thought. Engaging with students in this process was like a continuous unspooling, where each tour unraveled a new idea or proposition, a new way to think. In this section, I position examples of how the students materialized *the new* on their tours in dialogue with the texts that helped me articulate my own idea of small justices and a pedagogy that might enact them.

Minor Gestures

In *The Minor Gesture* (2016), Manning inquires into a movement that transforms the field of relations. This movement is what she calls the minor gesture: a small, almost unperceivable transformation, or a “force that courses through it [the major], unmooring its structural integrity, problematizing its normative standard” (Manning, 2016, p. 1). The minor gesture draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/1987) concept of the minor. The minor is more than a chance variation, it is contingent on the major where it is located, but it opens up space for multiple experiences and manners of expression. The minor gesture is emergent, and its subtle nature precedes more perceptible social changes. For Manning (2016), the major is “a structural tendency that organizes itself according to the predetermined definitions of value” (p. 1), and the major addresses social change through grand gestures. However, it is the minor’s changeability and transversality that creates opportunities for the new to emanate.

“Finding” and reading *The Minor Gesture* gave me a concept to think with as I reflected on the unfolding events of my inquiry. I was composing a list of words that tended toward the

minute, the fleeting, the brief while simultaneously noticing that I was beginning to describe posthuman justice to myself as active, embodied, and moving. The posthuman justice I was experimenting with on my tours was gestural, it swished. It sounded and turned.

More importantly, these minor moments of justice were present all the time, “coursing through all events” (p. 66). Manning reiterates that the minor is not opposed to the major in a binary or dichotomy. Instead, the minor and the major are “variabilities in differential co-compositions” (p. 66). While there is more value placed on major gestures, because they carry with them “a degree of the spectacular,” Manning asserts there is a need for practices capable of opening up the field so that minor gestures might emerge, activating difference. This spoke to the way that the art museum assemblage and the transversal assemblages of students and school tours interacted as fluctuations between constraint and rupture, form and flow.

Thinking with the minor gesture made my questions about how not to re-form and how to stay undone make more sense to me, even as I played with them. I started thinking about ways to open the major up to the minor, shifting my perspective from an unconscious binary (the art museum assemblage/the school tour transversal assemblage) towards an understanding of all these actions working together. There could be no major change without the minor, there was no minor without the major, and that is what makes the minor important. My role as a participant/spectator/educator/learner meant I needed to work on developing techniques, pedagogies of posthuman flow, that resisted the minor’s immediate capture by the major, creating the conditions for something new.

Living Variation

In one chapter of *The Minor Gesture*, Manning (2016) discusses the concept of the minor in relation to weather patterns:

The movements of the sun on a terrace in the late afternoon.

The smell of red in the fall.

The weight of closed skies in a dark february winter.

The moodiness of shadows on fresh snow.

The light after the rain. (p. 64)

She explains that in the minor gesture of a weather pattern, for example, the smell of red in the fall is a multiplicity of things, while also being none of them alone. The weather pattern, when it emerges, “is the activating of a certain minor tendency that resonates across time. This tendency is a gesture felt in the event both as absolutely singular and otherwise too imperceptible or background to ascertain” (Manning, 2016, p. 65). The variability of a single gesture is infinite and immanent. Manning continues, “a minor gesture is a gesture that tweaks the experiential to make its qualitative operations felt, a gesture that opens experience to its limit” (p. 65). As I worked on my inquiry, I kept a lookout for the new, the opening up for becoming, and found the moments and motions of becoming to be overflowing and multiple in interpretation and experience.

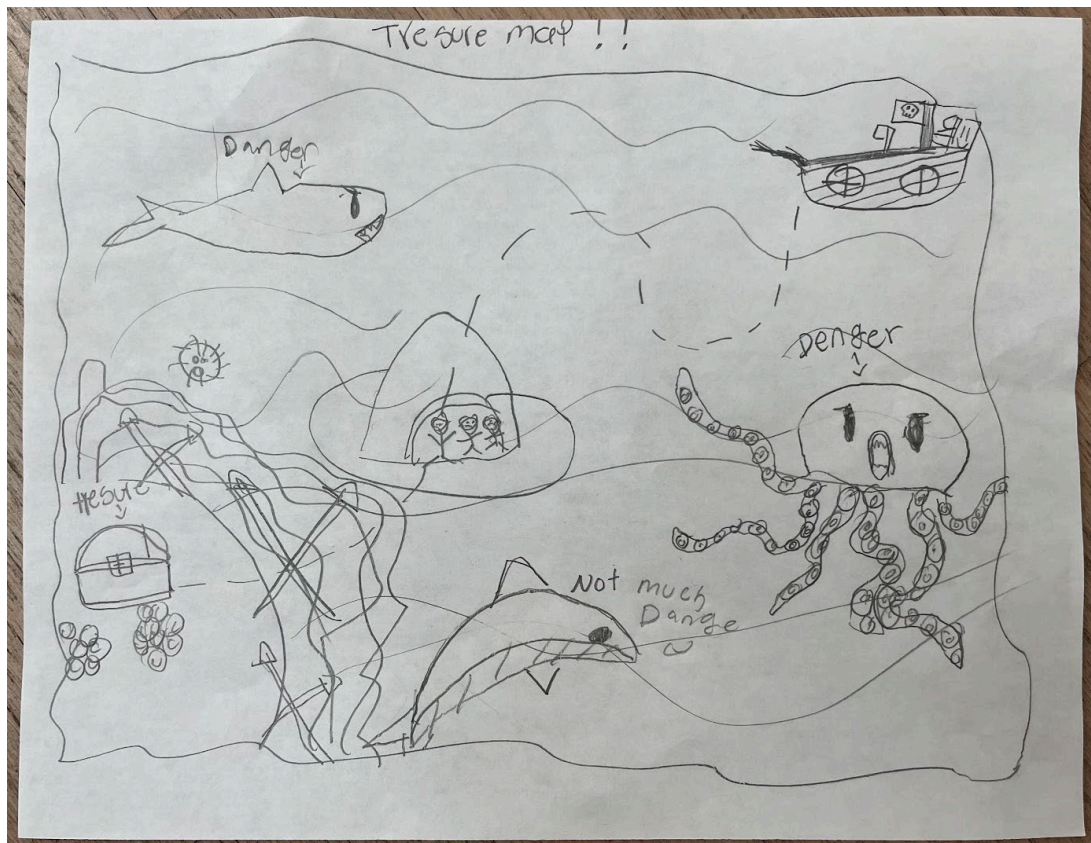
Manning (2016) asks, “if art is one way that the crossing of the threshold occurs, how does the passage from the multiple to the multiplicity occur?” (p. 69). And to propose an answer, one of many, I return to the Benin Bronzes. While one student operationalized the slight shift towards justice, the multiplicity of ways students engaged with the object shows object-variation that remains “lively with the incipient memory and the imperceptible traces of its passage from one site to another, the sites not only physical but also conceptual, sites of memory, of anticipation, of attunement” (Manning, 2016, p. 72). The discursive investigation of the object on

our tours opened up the space for students to create new variations: ideas, imaginings, conceptual returns.

The following image shows one student's map of the experience of the museum (Figure 40). They crafted an imaginary map, where the tour felt like a subaqueous quest to find hidden treasure. The map includes dotted lines to convey movement through space, but the student travels via pirate ship, and the artworks they encounter morph into animals both dangerous (an octopus) to more friendly (a fish or dolphin). The map itself indicates a cartographic multiplicity, where the imaginary and the real flatten providing new ways of considering the art museum itself. Why limit the experience of being in the museum to a singular understanding when it can exist as an almost totally new space, becoming in so many unexpected ways?

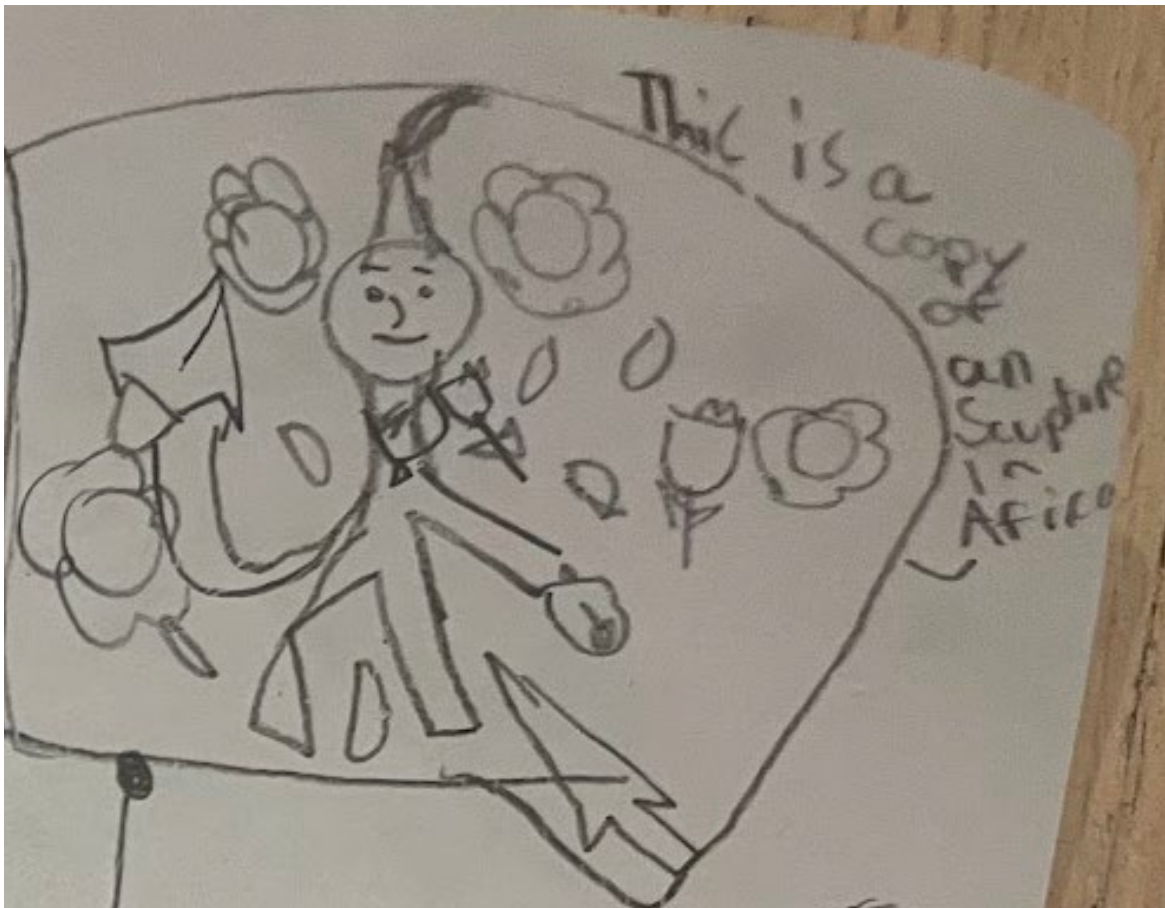
Figure 40

Museum Visit Treasure Map



In addition to creating an imagined, sensorial cartographic space, the map also shows an engagement with the Benin Bronze, the only work of art from their tour that is displayed representationally. The student who created this map indicated that the trio of figures bubbled in the center of the map represented the Benin Bronzes. Here, the student has totally reconceptualized what is happening/might happen to the objects. They are uprooted to the imaginary, set adrift. They are important enough to embed in the totally imagined but sensed world of the transversal experience of exploring the possibilities of posthuman justice in the art museum.

On another tour, a student conceptualized the Benin Bronze in a new way (Figure 41). This student added a drawing of the object to their map, indicating it as a stop with a dot and a line that stretches from another line representing the tour's path. Around the student's drawing of the artwork, they wrote, "This is a copy of an sculpture in Africa." This student used their map to create a new solution for the complicated history of the object.

Figure 42*Detail of This Map Includes a Copy***Doing Little Justices**

Over the course of my inquiry, I kept another list that tabulated instances of justice in poststructural and posthuman writing. It included conceptual forays into socially just pedagogy (Braidotti, 2018; Gabrys & Pritchard, 2018), justice-to-come (Derrida, 1994; Shefer & Bozalek, 2022), radical futurisms (Demos, 2023) and doing little justices (Rousell 2020, 2021). This list of concepts and terms helped me figure out where my ideas were situated within a larger theoretical conversation, where it seemed that many different scholars were working to rethink the concept of justice. I explored and read on each one, sometimes fruitfully and sometimes in total

misadventure, ending up immersed in a different thinker with a different orientation and philosophical lexicon and lineage to uncover. Sometimes, on the other hand, exploring other conceptualizations of posthuman justice were useful and thought provoking.

In one of my readings, I came across Rousell's (2020, 2021) concept of "doing little justices" (114) and saw an immediate resonance with what I was noticing in my own inquiry. According to Rousell (2021), doing little justices is "a speculative process of creative experimentation and negotiation in the pursuit of unforeseen openings and potentials for coexistence" (p. 119). He identifies the need for a renewed conception of justice in the posthuman world. He explains "doing little justices as a way of enacting micropolitical interventions into everyday patterns of thought and behaviour" (Rousell, 2021, p. 114). *Doing little justices* is conceptually immanent; it puts forth an ethics rooted in material interactions, events, social interactions, and moments of experience that go beyond human knowledge and comprehension. Though I was not thinking with this concept as I existed in my inquiry, there are many ways that Rousell's *doing little justices* converses with my inquiry and discovering his concept late in the process of completing my inquiry was both instructive and reassuring in terms of what I was finding.

Rousell reimagined the concept of justice as part of his doctoral project *States and Territories*. The project combined 12 collaborative environmental artworks—large, glass multimedia cubes situated across Southern Cross University's (SCU's) campus—and pedagogical experiments, including talking with students in the philosophy of law and primary education programs. Rousell (2020) describes the cubes as "conceptual pivot points for a series of data events that were collectively produced" (p. 1397) with students and academics in the learning environment. The project was meant to enact small, political interventions into everyday

patterns of environmental thought, learning, sociality, and behavior. Rousell's (2020) experiments with *doing little justices* began with conversations that problematized issues such as climate change, human exceptionalism, ecological sovereignty, and environmental justice.

An essential component of Rousell (2020)'s concept of *doing little justices* is that it can be plugged into "other assemblings of disciplines, studies, concerns, practices and ideas without losing its consistency as a conceptual proposition" (p. 1403). He proposes that the constant is the act of embodying the speculative possibilities of nonhuman rights, and he suggests that affective capacities represent the practice of a little justice, one that reshapes the real potential for new ways of thinking and becoming to emerge. This points toward an ethics that exists both through and for itself (you perform justice by contemplating it, and you understand justice by acting on it).

Engaging with justice through an ethics that exists both through and for itself complemented what I was doing and experiencing on my school tours. The moments of small justices involved an act of *doing* and worked in a multiplicity of ways as students encountered and engaged with ideas on tours. Reading Rousell's (2021) discussion of the ethics of *doing little justices* – you perform justice by thinking it; you understand justice by acting on it – reminded me of the looping nature of my inquiry: I proposed something on a tour, the students interacted with it and changed it, looping it back toward me, which then looped through what I was reading and understanding and looped out again. I was not teaching justice but enacting it collectively with students and the museum on the school tours.

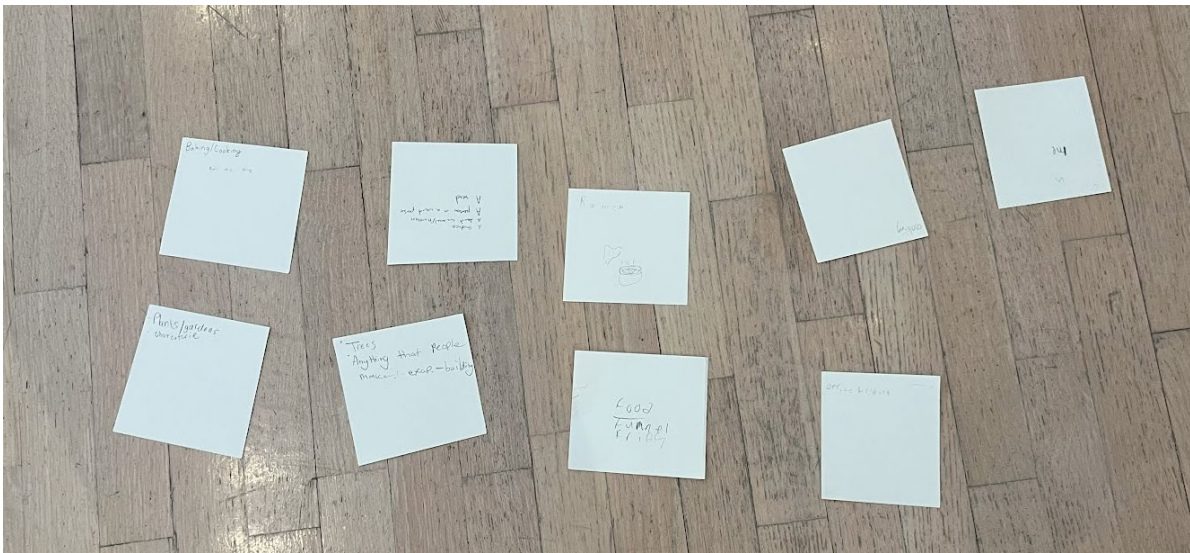
New Kinds of Art

During a tour on April 30, 2024, I have an idea. I am with a group of students gathered around Bench. We have just talked about it being a work of art and somewhere

to sit. I reach into my bag of supplies and fish out small, square pieces of cardstock and pass them out, one per student. I ask the students to write down the name of something they think could be art in a museum, but that we might not think of as art. As they finish writing I ask them to organize their cards on the ground in front of us (Figure 43) so we can see all the things that should be added to the museum.

Figure 43

An Arrangement of Written Responses

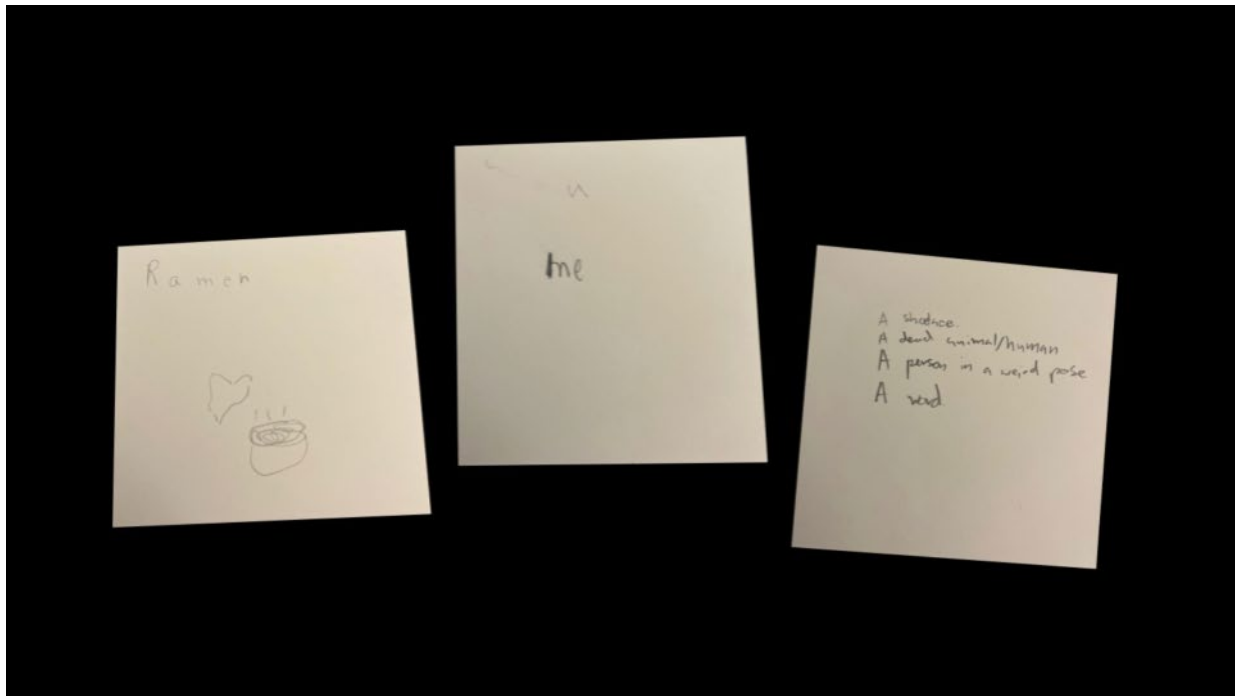


The students offer a variety of suggestions that range from things like ramen, to actions or practices like cooking. The image below highlights three of their suggestions against a black background (Figure 44). The cards say, “Ramen,” “Me,” and “A shoelace; A dead animal/human; A person in a weird pose; A word.” The students offer an inspiring assortment of new additions to the museum space that create potential for new ways of thinking and becoming to emerge.

Is this doing a little justice? It is a “collective experiment within the places and times of ‘mutual immanence’” (Rousell, 2020, p. 1392). I point at the card that says “me” and ask the students what it would be like to be a work of art in the museum, and the students laugh, looking at each other and considering it.

Figure 44

Detail of New Kinds of Art



Anomalous Pedagogy

In an earlier moment of my inquiry, I asked a series of questions: “How do we engage with the present in the mode of resistance?” (Braidotti, 2010). How can justice be thought outside conventional humanist formulations (Rousell, 2021)? How does justice fit into this space of immanence and rupture? How can we become differently on school tours? What pedagogy is possible?

I was finding my answer in the minor gestures that opened up experience to the new. Justice was small and active, always speculative and becoming, and it was also always

contingent on the major. These small gestures — whether in the form of student-created maps, reimagined objects, or new ways of thinking about justice — worked together to create a posthuman, immanent justice that was always in motion, always becoming, and always speculative. The justice I uncovered paralleled Rousell’s (2021) proposition that justice could be “as small as a movement, a word, an image, or an idea” (p. 114). These small moments of justice rejected a binary between major and minor, as Manning (2016) outlines. They are both necessary gestures, and a slight justice is essential and interwoven in the creation of the new, and a collective experience of justice.

In her discussion of “anomalous” places and pedagogies, Ellsworth (2004) asserts “pedagogies are ‘to be made rather than foreseen or predicted,’...we cannot program them in advance. But, we can attempt to bring them into existence” (p. 35). That is, pedagogy is brought into existence when “the learning self,” or subject, in “the experience of learning” (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 35) is invented, through its engagement with pedagogy’s force. In anomalous places, “the learning self” is invited to participate in experiments that create new ways to see and new things to say that do not pre-exist its involvement.

For Ellsworth (2004), anomalous places of learning are designed spaces that are provocative and promising. They are places that are “peculiar, irregular, abnormal or difficult to classify” (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 4), and she includes museum spaces and exhibitions in her discussion. She notes that some exhibitions are often intentionally designed with clear educational goals, and museum educators have shown a strong interest in exploring the connection between learning and the physical experiences within these spaces and events. However, she considers the exhibitions she highlights anomalous because their designed features and elements distinguish them from most other exhibitions. Their educational impact is focused

on engaging visitors as physical bodies, with their movements and sensations playing a crucial role in shaping their understanding of the exhibits. The museum space's pedagogical force is "concentrated in an address to visitors as bodies whose movements and sensations are crucial to their understandings of the exhibitions. The force of their pedagogies resides as much or more in 'sensation construction' as it does in the merely representational" (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 42). In other words, despite arranging museums to convey information in more traditional pedagogical ways, some museums are designed with a hinge that activates anomalous pedagogy.

Though Ellsworth focuses on the *designed* aspects of museum spaces, I would like to extend her characterization of anomalous places of learning and pedagogy in art museums to the always moving and resonating experiences of school tours that also serve to activate museum spaces in the ways Ellsworth describes. Ellsworth (2004) asks, "What places are capable of acting as this moment's 'hinge?' What environments and experiences are capable of acting as the pedagogical pivot point between movement/sensation and thought?" (p. 8). As I have argued throughout this dissertation, school tours at art museums activate the museum. They are emergent, embodied ruptures that create active, disruptive spaces with/in the museum that act as their own pedagogical hinge, prompting participants to simultaneously discover and create learning encounters.

A Pedagogy for Justice-in-the-Making

How then to consider an anomalous pedagogy of justice? Towards justice? What is possible? For Ellsworth (2004), pedagogical anomalies:

are difficult to see as *pedagogy* only when we view them from the 'center' of dominant educational discourses and practices—a position that takes knowledge to be a thing already made and learning to be an experience already known. But, when viewing them

in relation to the multiple and potentially eccentric connotations of the phrase ‘the experience of a learning self in the making,’ their force as *pedagogy* becomes more apparent” (p. 5).

In other words, Ellsworth’s pedagogical anomalies are minor, they exist on the edges, in the spaces with/in and around the major. They materialize in the “interstices between the majoritarian” (Rousell, 2021, p. 114). This is why I locate an anomalous pedagogy of small justices in the moments and interactions on school tours, working in and with the art museum assemblage, instead of finding it in the design of the art museum that is “a structural tendency that organizes itself according to predetermined definitions of value” (Manning, 2016, p. 1). An anomalous pedagogy of small justices would operate as “a cut that opens experience to its potential” (Manning, 2016, p. 201). In this small space, of transience and transformation, all participants are activated as learning selves “in the making” (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 5).

School tours themselves function as pedagogical hinges that activate smaller, transformative moments with/in the museum. A school tour can “unsettle the field through its affirmation of difference” whereas a major change to the museum might be a gesture that “choreographs the field around a truth that seeks to justify the *it is*” (Manning, 2016, 222). A pedagogy of slight shifts and small justices does not seek to dismantle the institution in these kinds of major gestures, but to spark gestures of justice that are dynamic, continuous, affirmative and deeply relational. Instead of asking, “How do we change the museum?,” this approach to pedagogy invites us to ask: “How can we move differently with/in it?”

When locating a pedagogy within small, posthuman justices, the emphasis becomes creating little, iterative, emergent moments of justice through the collective, transversal interactions on school tours in art museums. By focusing on the concept of immanence, of

becoming, small justice is positioned as an ongoing and relational process, rather than something that can ever be final or complete. Acts such as encouraging students to examine networks of power within the museum or inviting students to add to the map of the museum incite small, embodied shifts in perspective, creating space for new forms of engagement and awareness. The shifts and turns “affirm the field in its transformation”, and the pedagogy “affirms the way this transformation emboldens the in-act of experience in the making” (Manning, 2016, p. 200), of learning in the making.

The indirect ways that these places of learning address pedagogy create a space between that which pedagogy is and that which it could potentially be. These places of learning struggle to remain, themselves, “*things in the making*” (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 10). Ellsworth’s anomalous pedagogy explains a pedagogy that is in constant flux, open to multiple perspectives, and deeply attentive to the materiality of both the objects and the bodies engaged with them. In a pedagogy of small justices, the emphasis is on the act of becoming and transforming, rather than achieving a fixed or final state of justice. This requires fostering environments where students can engage in speculative thinking, experiment with new ideas, and express alternative visions of justice that work with and in the edges of dominant frameworks. It’s in the small turns, the slight shifts, that the possibility for new modes of justice arises— small justice that is creative, embodied, and speculative.

Docent Dream

I wake up from a dream on December 3, 2024, and the dream plays in my head again and again afterward. I tell my fiancé about it before leaving for work. I tell my boss about it at the museum. I tell Dr. Hanawalt about it in class. In the dream, I am standing in a massive gallery. The walls are white, the parquet floors waxed and shiny. In the middle of the gallery is a massive, elevated oval that emanates its own warm white light. On the walls hang large black works of art, like the canvases in Rothko's Chapel.

Standing around the center object are a group of docents. A large group - a legion. They are looking at me over this installation. They are waiting, expectant, a bit cantankerous. I hear them start listing perceived deficiencies in their experience as docents: not training enough, not enough art history, not enough access to curators, not enough of the "good" kids, not enough public tours, not enough social events...

I realize I am standing in front of one of the large black canvases. Maybe it is deep purple? I look at the docents, and, suddenly, I feel like I've got the answer. That it has been obvious. I open my arms wide and say loudly, "No, no, no! Don't you see? Everything we need is already here." I gesticulate wildly, motioning for them to look around at the art and us, this work on the ground, lighting and activating the spaces between all of us.

“It’s already here!” I say again. “We have everything we need. We just need to look at it. We’re not missing anything. What would happen if we started thinking about what we have before what we don’t?”

And then I wake up.

A Collection of Inside Lines with No Outside Lines

Like all anomalies, the places...appear to be peculiar only when we look at them from a particular angle of view” (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 5)

There is no way to present the implications of my inquiry; I have no specific results. There are no overarching truths or specifics on how to enact the same small justices I experienced during my inquiry. I cannot provide a specific approach to pedagogy or curriculum to follow.

So, I come back to the map, a speculative way to make justice visible. I hope my dissertation provides a cartography of both my experience and pedagogy of small justices. This text maps my thoughts, feelings, and experiences as they looped, linked, and realized new trajectories, transversals and potential lines of flight for teaching with justice in the art museum. It is a cartography of the unfolding present where I wrote to understand how justice unfolded with/in the museum and the act of inquiry. Writing became a tool not just for documenting or interpreting but for *thinking through* and *becoming with* the material and immaterial aspects of the inquiry and justice.

A cartography has no set starting point. It is inside lines with no outside lines. Entryways and lines of flight are multiple, emergent. Here, in the middle of an ongoing process of doing and writing, I can provide a mangle of inside lines that shaped my pedagogy of justice-in-the-making and expanded my inquiry outward. They are immanent cords of inspiration and frustration: images in motion, questions that shook, propositions that look backward while remaining ongoing.

I hope one inside line or another itches your brain, captures your imagination, and shifts your trajectory to the transversal and the new, so that you can find yourself already in the middle of things, experimenting, becoming-together, with small shifts towards (through) justice.

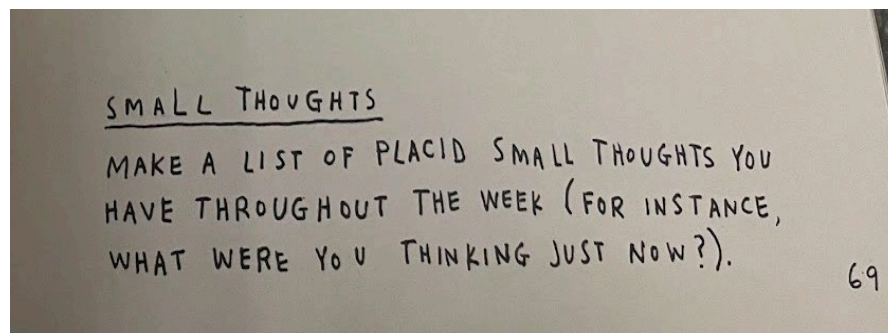
Inside Line #1

I started taking classes for my PhD in January 2020, and I am finishing this dissertation in March 2025. It has been five years full of chaos, revolution, and dark, backwards retrenchment. All around me, our institutions are dying, being gutted, complying in advance. Despite all of this, there are so many different ways that we might become.

It is hard to look at the last five years and think any major move will materialize, make change. So I have been reflecting, both in the art museum and outside of it, that it is only through the minor and the collective that change is in the process of happening. Look out for justice in little turns and swerves and slight shifts in thoughts, perspectives, and bodies. Just because a realization or moment feels slight does not mean it is not radical. In fact, I've come to believe small, minor disruptions or reconsiderations are the most radical. They are already multiple and becoming.

Figure 45

Picture of a Page in How to Be an Explorer of the World: Portable Life Museum (Smith, 2008)



Inside Line #2

“My words had been pulled through water, kicked through water, thought in water, swimming and thinking as one emerge in this pool poem, and ripple out, creating change. This is what I learnt at the pool, swimming with theory” (McKnight, 2016, p. 200).

Posthuman thinking criteria is: “non-linearity, the powers of memory and the imagination, and the strategy of defamiliarization” (Posthuman Knowledge, 2019a, p. 125).

Critical thinking, by which I mean finding new ways to think about things, ways that don’t reinforce existing ideas and structures but ways that might undo them, is central to this pedagogy of small justices. I thought a lot about what critical thinking is and entails and can be during the process of my inquiry. I like that it can occur anywhere (in a pool), sparked by all sorts of things (the sounds of school tours), and it is chronologically dishonest (This is my favorite part).

When do you find yourself realizing things are undone? How can you try and stay in that as much as you can? How do you not re-form?

Inside Line #3

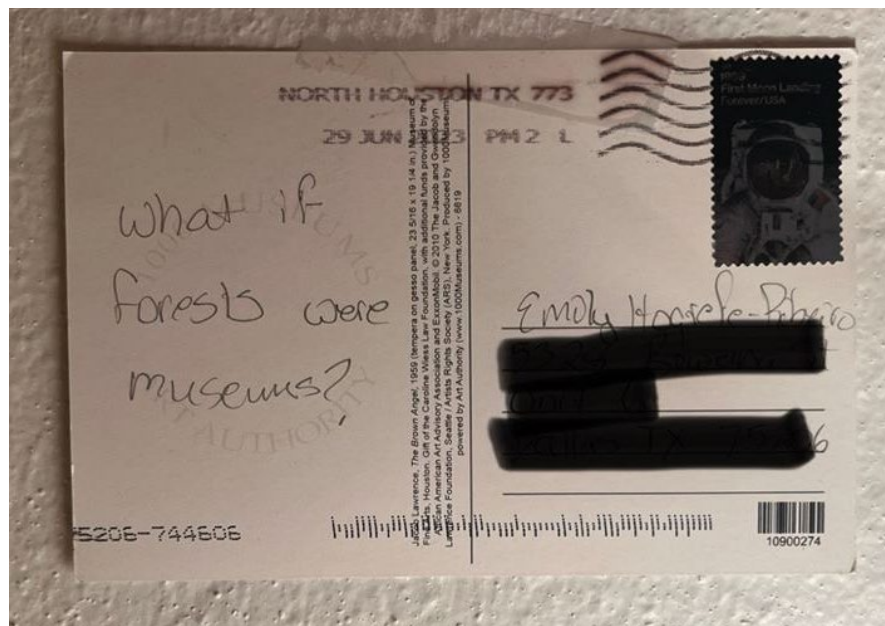
During the 2023 NAEA Museum Education Pre-Conference, the speaker posed, “What if forests were museums?” during his talk. Then, in a breakout activity, we were invited to write a postcard to ourselves, a missive from our current museum educator selves at a conference to the selves we would become when we got busy. I wrote the speaker’s question, “What if forests

were museums?” on my postcard (Figure 46). It was sent to me in June, and I feel appreciative to that Emily who was also me. I promptly taped it to my wall and thought about it whenever I felt stuck or felt like I was getting lost in repetitive systems of thought during my inquiry. “What if forests were museums?” “What if I think transversally?” “What if I opened myself up to new thoughts?”

What around you is already in the process of creating new, more just, cartographies? We don’t have to think about things the way we always have. So much can force us to think if we pay attention.

Figure 46

Postcard to and from Myself



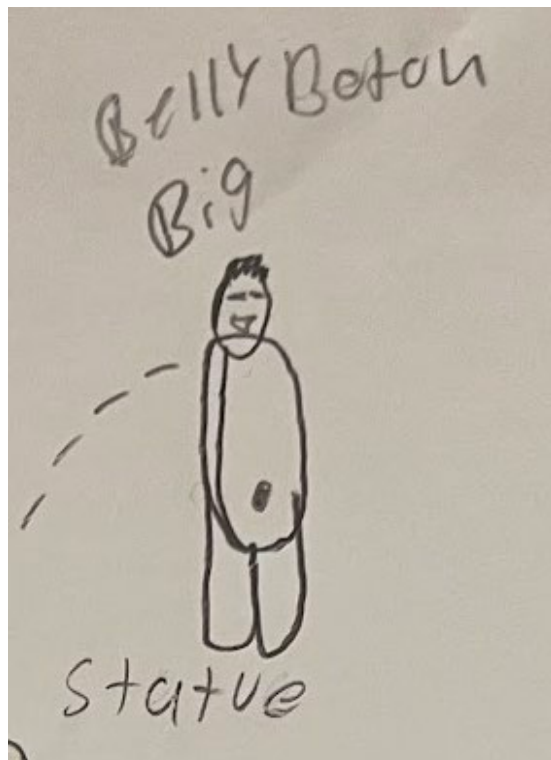
Inside Line #4

“It is important not to think of the creativity of expression as if it brought something into being from nothing ... It always takes place in a cluttered world.” (Massumi, 2002, xxix)

The image below (Figure 47) is from a student map. I printed out a picture of “Belly Button Big Statue” after I saw it because I couldn’t figure out what work of art in the museum it matched. We did not talk about a sculpture that looked like the drawing, or a sculpture with a big belly button at all. My colleagues and I have gone looking for it when we’re bored or frazzled, retracing the tour’s steps.

Figure 47

Big Belly Button Statue



This Big Belly Button man reminds me that even as I was looking to inspire small shifts and slight justices, that students were also impacting me and what I did, which would then impact the department, the museum assemblage, all of us searching for the Big Belly Button Statue, trying to see what the student saw or figure out where she imagined it. Multiplicities continue to emerge from the Big Belly Button Statue, real and imagined, seen and felt.

It is art museum education praxis to stop, look, and look carefully. This is a pedagogy of small justices too: to stop, look, and look closely. Then, ask another to stop, look and to notice — notice what is possible and what they can become, noticing in a way they have not before, notice with their bodies. And then take that wherever you go and implement it when you teach and when you learn, to understand (as much as you ever can) and inquire in small challenges and little justices, to share those multiplicities with others and become-together otherwise and new.

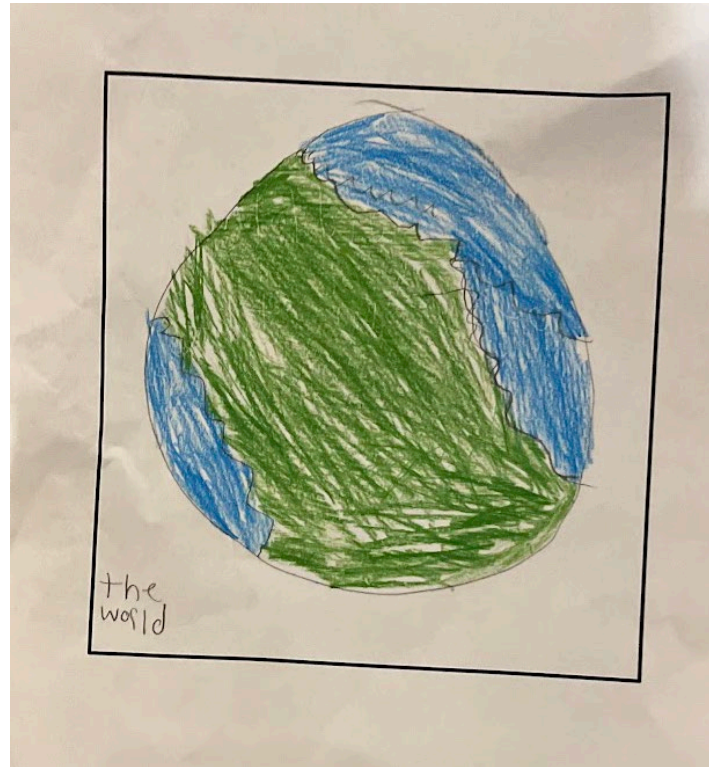
Inside Line #5

“Affirmation is not a disavowal of negativity but rather another way of working it, activating it and extracting knowledge from it” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 62).

In the art museum, create new maps for existing spaces and problems, consider how tours, single-visits, can create something new, from what we accept (and don't) from before. What does it mean for justice-focused programming in art museums to transform (Figure 48)?

Figure 48

The World a Student Added to the Art Museum



Inside Line #6

“Se siente como si hubiera estado aquí, una relación extrema que no puedo explicar.”

“It feels like I’ve been here before. One extreme relationship that I cannot explain.”

(Student on tour, April 11, 2024)

So much of what we know is determined by the shift of our shoulders.

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APPENDIX A

EXTERNAL SITE AUTHORIZATION FORM

EXTERNAL SITE AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Date:
April 10, 2024

Dear Institutional Review Board:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Emily Hogrefe-Ribeiro, under the supervision of Dr. Christina Hanawalt, permission to conduct research titled "Becoming Differently on School Tours" at the Dallas Museum of Art. We have agreed to the following study procedures:

We will allow the use of materials created from activities related to Emily's position of Manager of School Programs that occur onsite at the museum during the 2023-2024 school year. These activities include leading, observing, evaluating, and recording the Museum's school tour program.

The Dallas Museum of Art is a public museum and notifies all schools that, as a public museum, the Museum reserves the right to use photography of any individual in our education or promotional materials, in print and on the internet.

We release these materials as educational materials in partnership with Emily Hogrefe-Ribeiro's research study as it relates to her completing activities as a part of her position at the Dallas Museum of Art.

This also serves as assurance that this institution complies with all State and Federal laws regarding Human Subject Research and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Sincerely,



Stacey Lizotte
The Allen and Kelly Questrom Center for Creative Connections Chief Learning Officer,
Dallas Museum of Art

APPENDIX B

MAP TOUR PLAN

STOP 1: Suor

- Artist creates real and abstract landscapes
- The landscapes of her youth and her memories
- Each work is a specific combination of places and memories in her native Brazil and abroad

What are some different kinds of maps?

- Some can be realistic, but don't have to be

What do these maps include?

1. Words
2. Symbols
3. Physical features

Does this map remind you of this painting?

- How are they similar?
- How are they different?

What kind of place is this artist painting? What physical features might it have?

Do you think this is a map of a real place?

- The artwork contains real and imaginary elements and includes abstraction. Abstract art does not represent the way a thing actually looks

Prompt:

Intro: I am also a student, and I am working on a homework project. Would you like to help me with my homework?

I'd like you to help me by making a map of your visit to the museum - it can be real or imaginary parts, things you see, know, feel (emotions or in your body as we're moving), notice, or imagine. Your map can include words, symbols, pictures, and we will add colors.

STOP 2: Benin Bronzes

Before we head to our next stop I want you to imagine what it might be. I will share some details for your drawing:

Draw an image of a warrior.

He has:

- A fancy hat
- A Jaguar tooth necklace
- A bell (for signaling on the battlefield)
- A knife and a sword
- River leaves (healing)
- Rosettes (the sun)

How will you connect him on your map?

Where do you think he might be from?

This is a controversial object! It is part of a debate of something called “repatriation”

Background Info:

After a war with the Indigenous people in Benin, the Edo people, The British government took Benin's royal treasures as war booty, reserving some of the castings and carvings for the British Museum's collection and selling some to defray the cost of the war and provide compensation for survivors of the fallen soldiers.

The Dallas plaque is marked with the British Museum's inventory number. It originally bore the number 298 in white, which was the Foreign Office number and dates from the plaque's arrival in England in 1898.

Questions for Conversation:

- Why might the people who originally made it want it back?
- Do you think it is fair the British stole the art?
- Why might it be important that it stays at the DMA?