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by

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**Spectrum of Participation:
Using Frames to Create Museum Theatre**

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**Spectrum of Participation:
Using Frames to Create Museum Theatre**

by

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to all the young people I've worked with, whose creativity and intelligence has brought joy to my life and given me new perspectives on the world around me.

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Abstract

Spectrum of Participation: Using Frames to Create Museum Theatre

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Museum theatre is being utilized more as education departments in museums are looking for new meaning-making opportunities that seek to place visitors at the center of the museum experience. Looking at a performance called *Blurred Memories* created by a university student ensemble and performed at a local museum in Austin, Texas over three different performance sessions, this MFA thesis document explores the research question: What factors shape how an audience responds to a participatory museum theatre performance? The reception of the performance by a mixed-aged family audience was documented through participant observation tools, pre-post surveys, interviews, and reflective practitioner field notes. My mixed-methods research design primarily uses narrative thematic analysis to construct two individual audience member case studies as a way to make meaning from my data collection. The thesis concludes with limitations about the study and the research tools, and recommendations for the field of museum theatre.

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Chapter 1: Narrative Frame

Two actors begin to build a cityscape out of everyday materials in the contemporary gallery at The Blanton Museum of Art as part of a new museum theatre play called “Stretch and Explore.” Rows of fourth- and fifth-grade museum visitors watch as baskets pile one on top of another as cans are filled with poster tubes to become towers or smokestacks. Slowly, the everyday materials of the cityscape extend across the museum floor, close to the seated audience. Eventually, the actors hand colorful painter’s tape to the young people sitting in the crowd; it’s their turn to join the art-making. The audience members, and now potential performers, offer a range of responses to the invitation. Some sit still, others leap up and start placing bright tape all over the gallery floor. After some time the sacred space of the museum is transformed into a vibrant cityscape, as archways of pencils, cardboard and paper rise above a decorative pattern of tape in an array of colors, while others watch from the floor.

Russian educational theorist Lev Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism argues that students learn most effectively in a social environment when they are able to construct their understanding in dialogue with their environment, with peers and with others who are more skilled than they are (*The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky* 163). Vygotsky specifically describes the area in which learners can accomplish more with help as an individual’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky describes the ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent

problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (*Mind in Society* 86).

In the museum theatre play “Stretch and Explore,” created in the fall of 2014, an audience of young people was invited to explore their ZPD as artists when—mid-performance—they were asked to use everyday materials to build and make art in and on the floor of the contemporary galleries in the museum. Results were mixed. When asked to participate, some audience members froze, unsure how to respond to the breaking of the “fourth wall¹” and the invitation to make art, while in other performances audience members got caught up in the act of building and creating an abstract cityscape. After staging this performance, I wanted to further understand our range of audience responses. I wondered how and why audience members choose to engage with participatory moments in a museum theatre performance in different ways.

My MFA thesis describes and analyzes audience engagement during a new participatory museum theatre performance for a public art museum in central Texas. In the fall of 2015, *Blurred Memories* was developed to work in conjunction with *Strange Pilgrims*, an experiential art exhibition at Laguna Gloria, which is part of The Contemporary Museum in Austin, Texas. *Blurred Memories*, which I created with a university student ensemble, was part of Laguna Gloria’s “Saturdays Are For Families”—a monthly series meant to engage children between the ages of two to eleven. My practice-based research on audience engagement in participatory museum theatre

¹ In their book *Dictionary of Theatre Terms: Terms, Concepts and Analysis* Theatre Scholars Patrice Pantz and Christine Shantz define the fourth wall as the imaginary wall that separates the audience from the stage (154).

asks: What factors shape how an audience responds to a participatory museum theatre performance?

This broad research question shapes my investigation into the audience's experience of *Blurred Memories* over three different performance sessions. The reception of the performance by a mixed-aged family audience was documented through participant observation tools, pre-post surveys, interviews and reflective practitioner field notes. My mixed-methods research design primarily uses narrative thematic analysis to construct two individual audience member case studies as a way to make meaning from my data collection. My research had Internal Review Board approval by The University of Texas at Austin under study number 2015-09-0034.

My approach and worldview for this practice-based research project are deeply influenced by the work of UK educational theatre scholar Anthony Jackson and media and cultural studies scholar Jenny Kidd, whose ten-year longitudinal *Performance, Learning and Heritage* research study documented and examined the impact of museum theatre in heritage sites across the United Kingdom with specific focus on the range of visitor responses to museum theatre.

Key findings from the multiple museum theatre performances analyzed in this groundbreaking study were organized into four major categories: visitors and audiences; performance, interactivity and participation; learning and heritage; and authenticity (Jackson and Kidd "Performance, Summary" 8). Jackson and Kidd offer a dynamic framework for participation as a way to understand how and why visitors might choose to engage in a museum theatre performance that is based on an understanding of how the unique nature of a museum space impacts audience participation. They reference

sociologist Erving Goffmann's work on human cognition as way to understand a process by which individuals organize social experience into "frames" (43 Goffmann qtd. in Fine and Manning). Building on Goffmann's findings, Jackson suggests that "all kinds of social encounters are given shape and meaning by the frames we construct around them or that are indirectly constructed for us as a part of the cultural context in which we live" (Jackson, "Positioning the Audience" 55). Jackson further suggests that three distinct impact points dictate the direction of a museum theatre performance and the audience's response to that performance: the space or institutional frame; theatrical conventions or outer performance frame; and performance choices or inner frames (Jackson, "Engaging the Audience" 9). Jackson and Kidd's research also explores the impact of physical distance between a visitor and the performance, outlining an audience's "Tiers of Engagement" as a key way that an audience provides important information to the performers:

The givens of the space and of the ways the performer inhabits that space and addresses his audience will set the parameters, but the audience constantly adjusts, re-adjusts, and makes choices where it can. In part, this is to do with developing a degree of trust in the performers, judging 'what's in it for me' and making a kind of cost-benefit analysis. (Jackson, "Engaging the Audience" 9)

Jackson's description of the physical shifts an audience member makes to position themselves in relationship to the performance is significant because it highlights where visitors make decisions in relationship to the dramatic choices made. Each tier within the physical space signals the amount of engagement a visitor is willing to have in or with the performance. In the following document, I use Jackson and Kidd's "interactive frames" as way to understand the data collected on my observational tools: photographs, videos, interviews and my own field notes. I begin with a brief introduction to the background

and significance of museum theatre and its related theatrical practices. I also consider how current issues in contemporary museum education shape the pedagogy and practices of museum theatre.

Museum Theatre and Museum Education

According to the International Museum Theatre Alliance, museum theatre is “a specific kind of interpretation that employs fictional activity to communicate ideas, facts and concepts” (IMTAL.org). The term “museum theatre” is broad and encompasses a range of theatrical techniques including performances of scripted pieces, improvised pieces, living history, reenactments, educational activities presented by performers, or pieces created by youth (Bridal 2). As a form of educational theatre, museum theatre is inextricably connected to learning objectives, since it is often connected to museum education departments, national or local education standards, or used as a forum for dialogue in current museum practices (Jackson and Kidd, “Performance, Summary” 4). However, Catherine Hughes, museum theatre artist and scholar suggests “It is primarily a difference in venue that sets museum theatre apart from other forms of educational theatre” (“Theatre Performance in Museums” 3).

According to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, professor and scholar in museum studies, “knowledge is well-understood as the commodity that museums have to offer” (*Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* 2). In her text, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, Hooper-Greenhill claims that the way museums function today are based in ideas that grew out of 19th-century European culture. She specifically characterizes museums’ pedagogic approach to learning as being one of “didacticism [based] on the

conviction that placing objects on view was sufficient to ensure learning” (2). In other words, Hooper-Greenhill suggests that through viewing objects, information and pleasure would be derived. Terry Zeller, scholar and professor of art in describing development of museums in the United States through the political and social history of the late 19th century, explains that art museums are a product of commercial and industrial expansion (11). In his essay, “The Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Art: Museum Education in America,” he describes three philosophies in early American art museums that offer insights into museum education today.

The aesthetic philosophy of education can best be understood through its founder Benjamin Ives Gilman, secretary of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In his 1918 book *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method*, Gilman articulates the ideals of the aesthetic movement when he states “a museum of art is primarily an institution of culture and only secondarily a seat of learning” (Gilman qtd. in Zeller 29). While Gilman argued enjoyment in museums came first and learning or instruction was secondary, he also believed that museums were sacred spaces of contemplation, stating that “a museum of art (is) in essence a temple” (Gilman qtd. in Zeller 30). Scholar and professor Tony Zeller points out that Gilman is still widely quoted today and that his pedagogical views still have importance in the museum world. A direct contrast to Gilman was his contemporary, John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Museum of Art. Dana believed that museums should be educational and relevant to the communities they serve. He viewed museums as valuable if they were useful and exhibited items that exemplified a community’s history, the applied arts, and exhibited commercial handmade products in order to elicit contemplation for “common things” (Dana qtd. in Zeller 35). Finally, Paul

Marshall Rea is an advocate for what Zeller describes as the social mission of museums. Rea published a study in 1932 based on research compiled from 120 American museums from 1910–1930 that included his own observations about the impact of museums after the Great Depression. He argued that museums should be community-centered. Rea determined that it was important for museums to reach all classes, and that this could be accomplished through smaller neighborhood museums. Rea insisted that “what the visitor gains of pleasure or instruction is the final criterion of the social importance of the museum” (Rea qtd. in Zeller 39).

Paul Marshall Rea’s visitor-centered perspective on museum education can be seen in museum education practices in the last thirty years. Placing visitor’s needs in a place of prominence in museum practice aligns with current focus on meaning and sense-making² in education. Since the late 1990s, museum education programs have used socio-constructivist approaches in their object interpretation, including more participatory and interactive museum practices. Museum educator and scholar George Hein captured this movement in 1998 with the publication of his popular book *Learning in the Museum*. In a chapter titled “The Constructivist Museum,” Hein argues that an effective constructivist museum environment conducive to learning must (1) consider the various learning styles of visitors; (2) entice visitors with objects and exhibition themes that engage their prior knowledge and make connections to the familiar; (3) provide opportunities through socially mediated learning; and, (4) consider the design and layout of the space itself in order to create the comfort necessary for visitors to learn (158). He specifically states that much of this happens through the design and layout of the exhibition spaces. In several

² Sensemaking is a process that doesn’t seek to lead the learner to a correct answer but instead values the meaning that was made without using words to describe it (Aukerman qtd. in Dawson and Lee 22).

sections of the chapter, he advocates for tools to help facilitate the learning in a constructivist museum—such as maps, labels and guides, and benches (Hein 158).

We can see a growing trend on visitor focus reflected in scholarship published during and before Hein’s book. Danielle Rice, in her article “Museum Education: Embracing Uncertainty,” describes the impact of visitor-related research in the late 1980s. In 1987, the John Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts led a study that sought to examine visitor experiences with 11 art museums. In the study, museum staff conducted focus groups with visitors and non-visitors; it marked a shift in the importance and value that museums placed on the visitors’ experience, particularly their perceptions and experiences of art (Rice 18). John Falk and Lynn Dierking’s 1992 book, *The Museum Experience*, offered another prominent examination of why people visit museums and what they take away from a visit. In it, they developed a model to explain the complexity of the visitor experience called “The contextual model of learning” (25). The model argues that each person who arrives at a museum is ready to make sense of museum objects, materials and the information they will encounter; they do this through their prior knowledge, experience and interests, or what Falk and Dierking call *personal context* (79). However, the well of experiences that the personal context comes from is from a personal history that has been socially constructed. This is part of the *sociocultural context*, which includes the social interactions that occur in a museum (Falk and Dierking 28). The *physical context* of the museum also adds to the museum visitors’ experience, including the architecture, objects and artifacts held within that space. Falk and Dierking stress that these contexts are not static and at any one moment one context can be prominent for a visitor (28). If anything, these interwoven

contexts can give us a clearer view of the complexity of the visitor experience and how a visitor may perceive new interactive and participatory approaches being used in museums today.

Over the last ten years there has been a curatorial shift in museums towards participatory and interactive exhibitions and education practices. In her 2010 groundbreaking book, *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon, designer and director of the Santa Cruz Museum, outlines ways that museums can involve visitors as co-creators in exhibitions both in the process and product. Simon offers a multi-directional approach that invites visitors to create, respond, dialogue, and engage with museum content and with one another. Called “me to we,” Simon’s five-stage museum exhibition design sequence explains how museum visitors can begin to engage with content in a more social and participatory way. “me to we” includes:

- Stage 1: Individuals engage with or consume content
- Stage 2: Individuals interact with content
- Stage 3: Individuals’ content becomes available to others
- Stage 4: Individuals’ interactions are networked for social use
- Stage 5: Individuals engage with each other socially (Simon 26)

In stages one and two, visitors individually consume content. By stage three, experiences begin to connect visitors with others, as they can see how their content relates to others’ content. Simon compares stage four experiences to the Worldwide Web stating, “A successful [stage] four experience uses social interaction to enhance the individual experience; it gets better the more people use it. The social component is a natural extension of the individual’s actions...” (Web March 20 2007). Stage five experiences are where visitors interact with one another around content on the web; often, this engagement occurs through bulletin boards and listservs (Web March 20 2007).

Simon thinks of visitors as individuals, honoring their unique responses, inviting museums to get to know their interests and desires, and encouraging museums to design exhibitions accordingly: "...you don't start from the top down to design a participatory space. Transforming a cultural institution into a social hub requires engaging individual users and supporting connections among them" (26). Simon also thinks of this progressive sequence as flexible, able to accommodate the needs of a wide range of individuals. There are people who can "jump from stage two to stage five, whereas some people may feel most comfortable never moving beyond stage three" (Simon 27).

Later in the book, Simon offers suggestions for institutions wishing to engage in large-scale participatory projects that involve community stakeholders. She organizes the types of partnerships into four main categories: (1) contributory—visitors make a contribution within parameters laid out by the institution; (2) collaborative—visitors are active participants in projects originated by the institution; (3) co-creative—visitors and staff work together from the outset to define a project and deliver it together; and 4) hosted—an institution makes its resources or facilities available to an external group to mount their own activity (Simon 191). Simon is emphasizing a radical restructuring of shared power and control between museum visitors and staff through participatory practices in museum spaces. These practices correlate with the critical pedagogical and constructivist approaches found in applied theatre practices in museums. In this next portion of my background and significance, I will describe how the practice of applied theatre also meets the unique needs of the modern day museum.

Museum Theatre as an Applied Practice

In their collection of case studies, *The Applied Theatre Reader*, applied theatre practitioners and scholars Sheila Preston and Tim Prentki describe applied theatre as:

a broad set of theatrical practices and creative processes that take participants and audiences beyond the scope of conventional mainstream theatre into the realm of a theatre that is responsive to ordinary people, their stories, local settings and priorities. (9)

Applied theatre uses the pedagogy and practice of theatre to engage participants in moments of praxis—reflection on action in the world to change the world. Applied theatre’s “broad set of theatre practices and creative processes” can look different depending on context, location and population (Prentki and Preston 9). Applied theatre is often explored as a form of activism or social change through a participatory theatre practice that is facilitated with and/or for a community. Applied theatre scholar, Helen Nicholson in her book *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, suggests that one of the priorities for those working in applied theatre or drama is to demystify the arts by encouraging people from many different backgrounds and contexts to participate actively in drama and theatre, whether as reflexive participants in different forms of drama workshops, as thinking members of theatre audiences, or as informed and creative participants in different forms of performance or theatre practices (10).

Recent scholarship on museum education that suggests the performing arts and embodied practices are valuable learning tools in museums, aligns with the literature on applied theatre. For example, George Hein’s chapter “The Constructivist Museum” in his book *Learning in the Museum* offers a parallel argument to theatre educator Nicholson when he discusses the use of drama and theatre to engage the learner through different modalities in museum settings to meet their needs. He explains that drama can engage a

visitor physically through participation, while a theatrical performance usually engages a visitor “emotionally and intellectually” (Hein 168). Many performances of museum theatre have strong connections to a particular form of applied theatre called Theatre-in-Education or T.I.E.

Chris Vine, Theatre-in-Education scholar and professor, writes in *Learning Through Theatre* that T.I.E.’s roots began in post-WWII England out of a desire to focus on regional theatre combined with a growing focus on theatre for young people. The form and its popularity expanded in the 60s and 70s in the United Kingdom into a recognizable theatrical form that responded to the needs of schools and community by using interactive, theatrical performance to engage and teach youth about the world in which they live (Vine 5). Chris Cooper, artistic director of the renowned T.I.E. theatre company Big Brum, defines T.I.E. as work where “the dramatic art of theatre [is used] to explore values, by dramatizing the human condition or behavior so that the audience makes meaning through experience” (44).

According to Vine in *Learning Through Theatre*, the methods and techniques used in T.I.E. are diverse but generally include some form of the following:

Elements, in a variety of permutations, of traditional theatre (actors in role and the use of scripted dialogue, costume and often scenic and sound effects); educational drama (active participation of the students, in or out of role, in improvised drama activities in which images and ideas are explored at the students’ own level); and simulation (highly structured role-play and decision-making exercises within simulated ‘real life’ situations) (6).

Participation is the one of the key elements to this form of theatre, and audience/participants become wrapped up in the story and are then asked to make a decision or give advice to a character in the performance. Throughout a T.I.E. program,

participants are given agency to determine how they engage in each interaction, “placing audiences at the center of their own learning” (Vine 7).

In his article “Positioning the Audience,” Anthony Jackson articulates that the aesthetics of T.I.E. are linked to its educational objectives. Focusing on the participatory nature of T.I.E.’s performance, he writes “...the very audience participation that is central to T.I.E. must be seen as part of that aesthetic; the actor/audience divide may appear to have been eradicated but the ‘specialness of the artistic form still remains—not in a blur but through a carefully contrived set of frames in which not only the actors but the pupils too can be immersed in and detached from the action” (Jackson 53). To further explicate his thinking, Jackson uses the term “frames,” adapted from the work of sociologist Erving Goffmann in his influential text, *Frame Analysis*. Goffmann suggests that the social encounters we experience are given meaning by the frames that are either placed or that we place around us as a part of the cultural context that we live in (21-22). Jackson’s argument is that the participation is carefully contrived and planned when it is well executed through a thoughtful use of frames. He argues “if we pay heed to the aesthetics, we shall also stand a chance of getting the education right” (“Positioning the Audience” 54).

In the Performance, Learning and Heritage report, Jackson and Kidd found that participation was central to the enjoyment of the performance for adults as well as younger audiences (11). Participation in museum theatre can mean everything from verbally responding as an audience member to moving through the galleries with the performance. While many museum visitors expressed enjoyment in being actively involved in a drama, they also found that the extent of the audience’s engagement and

learning would depend on the way the experience is framed (Jackson and Kidd, “Performance, Summary” 13). This includes how the visitor is “inducted into becoming a willing audience member or even an active participant,” “the audience contract,” which references the implicit or explicit agreement for audience participation between audience and performer/s; and, how much choice is in the hands of the visitor during the performance (Jackson and Kidd, “Performance, Summary” 13).

When looking at audience participation in museum theatre, choice and control become key factors in shaping the level and quality of participation. “Power and authority in most instances of participation remain squarely with the institution and/or the performers who represent it, even as they are articulated as evidencing a move toward dialogue, communication and the sharing of authority” (Kidd 206). In other words, Kidd argues that although those involved in creating and performing participatory museum theatre believe that the performance leaves real choice in the hands of the audience, it may not. Examining where control and choice impact an audience’s experience of a participatory museum theatre performance is central to understanding more about how museum theatre functions within a museum education program. Most interactions will remain in control of the actor, but it takes sensitivity and skill to make those interactions valuable and meaningful for visitors.

In this chapter I started with a short introduction describing recent research into the field of museum theatre, and related theatrical practices and how current methods in museum education are aligned with the pedagogy of museum theatre. In Chapter Two, I describe the development of *Blurred Memories* for The Contemporary Museum. Specifically in this chapter I focus on the goals and the framework used to develop the

performance. Then, I explore the creation of the research tools used to analyze the performances and the data and the findings they produced. I conclude my thesis with Chapter Three, which offers a final synthesis of my discoveries along side my recommendations for the larger field of museum theatre.

Chapter 2: Investigative Frame

Skye: This is it! (*Pauses and looks at the photos.*) This story is my favorite memory of visiting Laguna Gloria with Grandma.

Lyra: Even if she can't remember the details, this is still a great story.

Bobbi: This is beautiful, Skye. Do you know what you want for your cover?

Skye: I want the cover of the book to be something that represents our time together today. (*Begins searching around the ground by the tree.*) Something like this (*Picks up a branch.*) All the long leaves are important parts of the branch. They show how all of you helped create the book.

Ashe: Here, let's find some good light so I can take a picture of it for you.

In the performance *Blurred Memories* that I created with a university student ensemble, the main character of the play, Skye, creates a book for her grandmother that includes her favorite story about a trip they took to Laguna Gloria. She builds this story after the audience has helped her describe her photographs and categorize them. In the next chapter I describe the process of building the play *Blurred Memories*, which includes intentional moments of audience participation. I then share my data and findings about the performance before heading into the conclusion in Chapter Three.

The Development of Blurred Memories

In the fall of 2015, I facilitated an independent study course in Museum Theatre at The University of Texas at Austin for a mixed group of three undergraduate and graduate students that culminated in an original museum theatre performance for Family Day at The Contemporary Museum. Two of the students in the project had prior experience with theatre, and one student had prior knowledge of museum education. The goals for the semester-long course were (1) to identify and critically analyze museum theatre and

drama and theatre practices in museum settings and (2) to explore the roles and skills needed to create a museum theatre performance that met the goals of the partner institution. The student ensemble explored theories of constructivism and interactivity in museums and readings from key theorists in museum education and applied theatre, including Anthony Jackson, Catherine Hughes, and Susan Bennett, among others; they also read and analyzed museum theatre scripts from the United States and the United Kingdom.

The students and I created an original museum theatre performance for “Second Saturdays Are For Families,” an event with art-making activities and performances that are geared towards families at The Contemporary Museum in Austin, Texas. Our performance was developed to engage family visitors with *Strange Pilgrims*, an experiential art exhibition that was located at both Contemporary sites, their downtown location—The Jones Center and Laguna Gloria—and continued at the Visual Art Center on The University of Texas at Austin campus.

According to Catherine Hughes, museum theatre director, performer and scholar, “Essentially museum theatre has no goals apart from those of the institution within which it takes place and its own dictate to be good theatre” (*Museum Theatre* 51). I agree with Hughes’ assertion that any performance of museum theatre must share these dual artistic and educational goals. Our site partner at The Contemporary Museum was Abby Mechling, associate educator of Family and Community Programs. At our first meeting, Mechling stated that she wanted to ensure our performance accomplished three things: (1) Connect with a work of art titled *Swan Cycle: Chapter One* by the collective Lakes were Rivers, part the exhibition *Strange Pilgrims*; (2) Connect with the art activity that

she would create for ‘Saturdays Are For Families’; and, (3) Reach a target audience of 2–11 year-olds since that was age range of the “Saturdays Are For Families” audience (Field notes 7 Oct. 2015).

These goals became our primary focus for the development, facilitation and assessment of our museum theatre performance. The student ensemble and I developed additional goals for the performance based on our research about the work of art, salient readings on museum theatre, generative ensemble activities, as well as our personal goals.

As part of the process of the development of the production, each participant took on a role as an actor/facilitator and an additional role as stage manager, playwright or dramaturg in the production. The playwriting and devising of the performance occurred during a five-week period after the opening of the exhibition *Strange Pilgrims*, so we could base the performance on the artwork. The artwork used as source material for the performance was *Swan Cycle* by art collective Lakes Were Rivers—a two-part installation installed in the historic Driscoll Villa, a building that was once home to philanthropist Clara Driscoll (Web March 27, 2015). The exhibition focused on Clara’s history. Part one was a series of photographs and a painting installed in the main room, formerly the Driscolls’ ballroom. The photographs in the exhibition were taken from memorabilia found in the Driscoll Foundation archive, and most images were considered “re-photography,” or photographs of photographs. In a small room towards the front of the house in the villa, a video created by Lakes were Rivers ran on a loop; the video showed a large ice sculpture of a swan melting on the grounds of Laguna Gloria. The sculpture of the swan—so out of place between tropical plants on a dirt path—left visitors

with the knowledge of Clara Driscoll's history on the property with its privilege, and patronage. Through the mediums of photography and film, this two-part installation sought to make a comparison to archives themselves, which offer a biased perspective of the past (Cayton "Lakes Were Rivers" Bio).

Once we saw the art, the ensemble and I sought to define the goals for our museum theatre production. Looking at the re-photography and the photographed objects in the installation, the ensemble and I agreed that the ideas behind the artwork were quite complex for young people. Abby Mechling, associate educator of Family and Community Programs at Laguna Gloria, had mentioned that Lakes Were Rivers driving question behind the creation of the artwork was, "How do spaces remember?" (Field notes 22 Jul. 2015). We also knew that the collective Lakes Were Rivers connected to the medium of photography as a way to interpret history ("Lakes Were Rivers" Bio). After we had spent more time with the images of the objects, and re-photography we were intrigued by what causes someone to value one photographic image more than another, as one might value an object worth archiving. We knew Abby wanted to facilitate a cyanotype print activity after the museum theatre performance, as part of the Family Day activities so the performance ensemble and I wanted photography to be an essential part of the performance we created. We decided that since photographs encapsulate memories, memory might be a better way to elucidate the subjectivity of history.

With the photographs/artwork situated in the Driscoll Villa, initially, it seemed very important to locate the performance near *Swan Cycle: Chapter 1*. Moving through the Driscoll Villa, the ensemble and I felt it was impossible to stage the performance inside the space since photographs placed on the floor took up the majority of the main

room. However, the landscape itself has memories, and stories. Clara Driscoll had a strong connection to the landscape of Laguna Gloria. With its expansive 14 acres overlooking Lake Austin and much of the original landscape intact, we felt the property itself could be a central focus for key themes explored during the museum theatre performance.

Developing Blurred Memories

As previously discussed, museum theatre is a form of Theatre-in-Education or T.I.E. In T.I.E. the direction of the piece is predetermined, both by the facilitators and the script. However, the work attempts to include moments of decision-making and agency for the audience to increase their engagement and learning based on constructivist and critical theories of learning. Jenny Kidd furthers this idea when she suggests that choice and control become important considerations during a theatrical performance where participation or interactivity is a key factor (206).

In making our T.I.E. performance, *Blurred Memories*, the student performance ensemble and I used three key questions to guide our creative work as a performance ensemble: (1) *How can we use artwork to explore visual literacy skills?*; (2) *How can the audience make a personal connection to the artwork?*, and (3) *How can we help foster a more meaningful personal connection to Laguna Gloria for the audience/museum visitors?* (Field notes 22 Oct. 2015). Eilean Hooper-Greenhill in *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* argues that the way a work of art is displayed “is the major form of pedagogy” in an art museum (4). The art display, she suggests, represents the viewpoints of curators and museum professionals. Further, she argues, the visitor’s

meaning-making of the exhibition is dependent on their prior knowledge and experience with the subject matter (Hooper-Greenhill 4). For these reasons, we thought the re-photography, positioned on the floor of Driscoll's former ballroom might be confusing for the young people who attended the exhibition and our performance. We decided to create a new set of "accessible" photography, connected thematically to Laguna Gloria. We chose to include constructivist activities within the action of the play to help the young audience members understand how to engage more productively with photography (e.g. including how to describe images, categorize photographs, and assess critically across a number of examples).

As a way to explicate the choices made by the ensemble as part of the development of *Blurred Memories*, I call on ideas that define participatory performance from Jenny Kidd's essay "The Costume of Openness: Heritage Performance as a Participatory Cultural Practice." In this essay, Kidd differentiates between interactivity and participation using a framework that describes specific ways an audience might be engaged during a museum theatre performance. Kidd's four tiers include: (1) controlled verbal response, (2) scripted bodily participation, (3) contextual interactivity, and (4) negotiated interactivity (Kidd 205).

In *controlled verbal response*, the first tier of Kidd's framework, the performer engages the audience through first-person address, often performed as a monologue³, which may (or may not) evoke a type of confirmation of engagement or call and response from the audience. Pedagogically and artistically, a *controlled verbal response* moment of interaction does not require a specific type of audience input to be successful or to arrive at a conclusion (Kidd 210). In other words, the actor will say the same words and

³ A monologue is a speech by a character to himself (Pavis and Shantz).

do the same actions during this portion of the dramatic action no matter the audience response.

The second tier of Kidd's framework is called *scripted bodily participation*. In *scripted bodily participation*, the traditional boundaries between audience and performer begin to blur and the audience may be asked to embody the dramatic narrative. Kidd explains that although the audience participates in the dramatic action of the play (often physically as well as verbally), the control over the outcome of the verbal/physical action remains with the performer (212). This type of interaction and participation suggests that while a museum visitor may choose whether they want to participate, actively, in the dramatic action, the predetermined outcome of the interaction means the level of actual choice and decision-making is quite limited and superficial.

The third tier of Kidd's framework is *contextual interactivity*, which focuses on the audience's relationship to the environment. Kidd describes *contextual interactivity* as moments of interaction for the audience that are the result of "virtual environments... It is the setting, the circumstances the particularity of the encounters, and the way in which they weave together that dictates the experience" for the audience (213). It is important to note that in *contextual interactivity* there is no suggestion that the visitor explicitly take on the role of performer. This type of performance refers to heritage and historical sites where the audience is immersed in a specific time period and/or place.

Kidd's final tier is called *negotiated interactivity*. In this tier, audience members have more power over the interactions, and can choose if they want to perform or not. Kidd explains that "this form of interactivity references opportunities in which an audience (or audience member) can negotiate engagement, maintaining at least a notional

level of control over proceedings, whilst on occasion taking on the role of performer” as well (213). For Kidd, the tier of *negotiated interactivity* means that “the role of audience member becomes one of constant negotiation, decision-making and self evaluation”; it is a “more active mental state” for the audience, although “physical participation is not always required” (213).

According to Kidd, it is difficult to offer visitors substantive choice and agency within genuine interactive moments in a museum theatre performance (210). Negotiating how each moment or “beat” within the play might offer a different type of interaction and participation for the audience became an important topic for the student ensemble and me as we developed *Blurred Memories*. We realized that although we wanted a script that leaned towards *negotiated interactivity*, due to space and time restraints it was more realistic to create a performance that fell into the *scripted bodily participation* category as way to provide our young audience members with opportunities for real choice and engagement during the performance experience.

Laguna Gloria—with its acres of beautifully landscaped property and trails along Lake Austin, and its contemporary works of art situated among 100 year-old trees—became a key factor in our final shaping of our museum theatre performance. We decided to perform *Blurred Memories* outside in the amphitheater of Laguna Gloria in an area right next to Lake Austin. The space posed both challenges and advantages to the development of the play. After weeks of exploration, a storyline for our production emerged. The play opens with the main character, Skye, upset because she wants to make a book for her grandmother about their favorite place, Laguna Gloria. She wants to use photographs that she took of the natural landscape in her book but she doesn’t know how

to put it together. Skye gets help from the audience and three characters that she meets on the grounds of Laguna Gloria: Ashe, Bobbi and Lyra. Ashe, a photographer, helps her read and decipher her photographs. Bobbi, a collage artist, helps her categorize them; and Lyra, a songwriter, helps her turn the photographs into a story for her grandmother. Ashe, Bobbi and Lyra each teach Skye—and the audience—how to observe carefully, how to invite a multiplicity of perspectives, and how to value your personal story. This occurs through a script that slowly scaffolds an increased level of audience participation throughout the play.

As a way to clearly structure and define the development of the dramatic story arc in our script, the ensemble created distinct moments of action, or beats, where significant events and discoveries occurred. According to Professor and Director of Acting Bruce Miller in a play, a beat signals to an actor that there is a shift or a change in the story, or a character's objective in the story (314). Beats serve as markers and objectives for actor/facilitators in a T.I.E. play script, just as they do for actors in a traditional play that does not include interactive moments. However, in T.I.E. a beat often signals a shift in educational intention as well as dramatic action. As a result of the choice to structure our museum theatre production through distinct beats, the actor-facilitators and I were able to specifically define the essential objectives of each moment (both dramatically and educationally) and how to meet the needs of our young audience. The final beats used in the story development of *Blurred Memories* are listed in *Table 1: Blurred Memories Story Beats* below.

Table 1: *Blurred Memories* Story Beats

Beats	
Beat 1	Eight count movement sequence
Beat 2	Skye's monologue
Beat 3	Skye asks audience for help
Beat 4	Skye meets Ashe
Beat 5	Skye shows Ashe her photos
Beat 6	Skye realizes her photos are ruined
Beat 7	Skye identifies a photograph with whole group
Beat 8	Skye and Ashe identify photos in small groups
Beat 9	Skye and Ashe share out with whole group
Beat 10	Skye asks to look at photos on the ground
Beat 11	Bobbi introduces herself
Beat 12	Bobbi explains how to make categories
Beat 13	Actors facilitate making categories in small groups
Beat 14	Each group shares out category to the whole group
Beat 15	Lyra introduces herself
Beat 16	Skye catches Lyra up on the process so far
Beat 17	Lyra plays her song
Beat 18	Skye shares her story about Laguna Gloria
Beat 19	Eight count movement sequence
Beat 20	Closing: Skye invites the audience to find an object

This table shows the beats of our performance *Blurred Memories*. The beats of the performance served to mark key dramatic action and educational objectives. Since there would be flexibility in following the script due to the participatory nature of the play, the actors needed to know which plot points were the most essential parts of the script. Since the dramatic action and educational objectives are linked in a T.I.E.-based performance,

both needed to be represented in the beats for the actors. The full script can be found in Appendix A of this document.

Event Frames and Positioning the Audience

According to the findings of Jackson and Kidd's *Performance Learning and Heritage Report*, interaction and participation emerge as memorable and enjoyable parts of the museum visit (12). However, Jackson and Kidd suggest that when moments of audience participation and interactivity are constructed through the use of museum theatre, findings indicate that consideration must be given to how the museum "frames" the museum theatre event and how the performance "inducts" the audience into the performance story and world ("Performance, Report" 13).

Specifically, Jackson suggests that participation and interaction in museum theatre performance is shaped by three key factors: (1) the institutional frame; (2) the outer performance frame, and (3) inner performance frames ("Engaging" 16). In building our museum performance, the ensemble intentionally scaffolded each of the interactive activities embedded within the story. Through this process, we considered the social context of the visitors and increased the depth and breadth of engagement throughout the duration of the performance. Each beat (or section) of the play was structured to engage the audience further with the story and to increase the audience's ability to make choices that authentically impact the plot. In his explanation of how a "frame" offers insight into the audience experience of a museum theatre play, Jackson correlates museum theatre with photography. He says:

just [like] framing a shot with a camera, we have to account not only for what is contained within the frame but also for the *point of view of the onlooker*. In

identifying the frame we must inevitably consider the position of the audience in relation to it—its point of view, and the attitude to the events that may be implicit in the frame (“Positioning” 55)

Jackson reminds us that, as with any work of art, it is the audience’s point of view that defines and can shift the meaning of the work. This emphasis on the perspective, both intellectual and physical, of our young audience members guided the creation of the performance, whether the actor-facilitators were facilitating a dialogue around multiple ideas for category names or recognizing who was standing farther away from the photographs during an activity, we were always considering the position of our young audience.

In the final section of this chapter, I share my analysis and discussion of the data gathered related to the performance. To organize my findings, I use Jackson’s three frames for a museum theatre performance, which include the institutional frame, the outer performance frame, and inner performance frames. Next, I give a detailed description of each frame and use it to examine the intentional choices that were made in the creation and performance of *Blurred Memories*. I particularly consider the relationship between the performance frame and our perception of the level and quality of the audience’s engagement throughout each performance based on findings from my observation tool, and still image and video documentation.

Assessing the Impact of our Collective Work

In order to investigate what factors shaped audience engagement in a museum theatre performance, I developed several varied observational tools to use during our three performances that were based on examples from the field of museum theatre. While much of my research practice was based on the significant contributions of Jackson and Kidd's ten-year study of museum theatre in the United Kingdom, I also looked towards successful museum programs in the United States. The Denver Art Museum has a unique education program that includes collaboration across the curatorial, designs and education departments (Web). Its "Kids and Family Programs" includes innovative programming like museum theatre. With that in mind I was inspired by an executive summary from the Denver Art Museum about a museum theatre program created by Lindsay Genshaft, the museum's coordinator of Community and Family Programming⁴.

Based on an exhibition called *Becoming Vincent Van Gogh, the One Last Letter: analysis and summary* from the Denver Art Museum was influential in shaping the development of the questions that were used by the actor-facilitators and on the observational tool used during the performance. The Denver Art Museum used museum theatre to engage visitors about Van Gogh, his life and his impact on other artists (Genshaft 3). I was particularly drawn to information on the observational tools used for this program because the main messages were similar to key ideas and goals for our museum theatre performance, including: (1) you can make your own meaning about art, (2) artists are inspired by what they experience and by other artists, and (3) how do we talk about the art we're looking at? (Genshaft 5) The tool also sought to track audience engagement in several iterations of the same performance. Indicators of engagement in

⁴ Lindsay Genshaft is a graduate of the Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities Program; Genshaft wrote her MFA thesis on museum theatre.

the tool include the level the audience “tracked the performers and the art with their eyes” and “sharing personal information voluntarily” (Genshaft 3).

Questions were an important way that *Blurred Memories* engaged the audience and scaffolded risk. For example, Skye asks the audience early in the performance: “Have any of you ever made something for someone you love?” (1.1 Arffmann and Tacaderas). The executive summary of *One Last Letter*, the museum theatre program at the Denver Art Museum, helped me to think about the ways in which questions that “Describe, Analyze, and Relate” could provide specific types of engagement for audiences. For example, the summary noted that “Describe” questions worked well in the beginning of a performance such as: “What do you notice in this painting?” while “Relate” questions, such as “How does this work of art make you feel?” worked better at the end of a performance (Genshaft 5). The executive summary also suggested that a key factor in determining engagement was the audience’s sense of personal relevance with the material being presented; this was something I hoped to research as well.

In order to investigate what factors shape audience engagement in museum theatre, I developed several tools to assess audience engagement, including an observation tool and a pre-post survey. The pre-post survey was developed to capture the audience experience with the interactive moments of *Blurred Memories* (see Appendix C). The observation tool was used to track several audience members’ engagement throughout the performance (see Appendix B). The audience observation tool included two main sections. Section One dealt with the first seven beats of the performance, and Section Two focused on the last eight beats of the performance. The tool asked about specific kinds of engagement, whether the audience member was “focused on actor-

facilitators i.e.,: eyes, body” or whether they “respond[ed] to questions in the performance”(Observation Tool). It also asked for specific behaviors, noting whether and audience member stood “closer to a photograph or actor,” or if the researcher thought the audience member “understood how to participate in [that] section of the performance” (Observation Tool). Researchers were asked to rate audience members on a Likert scale from one to five, one being “Not at all” and five being “Extensively” (Observation Tool). In the box where the researchers placed the number there was room to add comments that explained the number being given.

The research team had seven members and included educators in the field of drama and theatre for young people. On the day of the performances the entire research team met to discuss the assessment process prior to the first show. During this time they discussed how to select a participant in each audience group (ideally a young person) and how to ask for written consent from each adult and verbal consent from each child that would be observed. Next, they reviewed the pre-post survey questions. Finally, they reviewed the observation tool.⁵

Institutional Frame: Context Determines Position

Jackson describes the institutional frame as “the institutional context that the performance event is located and which it will be read and understood” (“Engaging” 16). This is what sets up and frames the entire theatrical event. He goes on to explain that the institutional frame includes everything from the art or artifacts and architecture of a

⁵ It is important to note that due to time constraints, the tool was not piloted prior to its use nor were the assessment criteria for each observational item normed across research users. The impact of this choice will be explored further in the discussion section of this paper.

museum to its locale and the larger sociopolitical place that it has within a community (Jackson “Engaging” 17).

As introduced earlier in this document, the context of Laguna Gloria, or the institutional frame of the museum site, heavily influenced the decisions the ensemble made about how to frame the drama. Laguna Gloria’s location in an affluent part of Austin, called Tarrytown, and the location of the work of art, “Swan Cycle” by Lakes Were Rivers in the Driscoll Villa brought themes of privilege and wealth to the surface. For this reason the ensemble from the museum theatre class and I were drawn to the video of the ice sculpture, a swan melting on the grounds on Laguna Gloria. It was evocative, and symbolized a once wealthy now faded empire. It brought back the initial question guiding Lakes Were Rivers creation of the piece “How do spaces remember?” We also noted the shifting landscape of the property and new branding of The Contemporary as a part of the Austin art scene (Web March 27, 2015). The Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Garden meant that contemporary artists’ work was integrated in a tranquil natural landscape. The interaction of art and nature was captivating, and inspired the museum theatre performance that we would create.

Outer Frames: Position Determined by Space

Jackson introduces the outer performance frame by explaining that it “is that which marks out the theatre event itself as theatre and signals where and how the audience will position itself, and the role (if any) expected of the audience members” (“Engaging” 17). He explains that this is the space where the theatre performance takes

place, and whatever creates the performance frame. In the wider scope of drama and theatre in museums, the outer performance frame becomes particularly significant because of the nontraditional spaces (usually galleries) in which museum theatre often takes place. Since the performance itself is usually somewhere on a spectrum of participatory practice, everything including the formality of the space and how the audience is situated matters.

The grounds of Laguna Gloria, where we performed *Blurred Memories*, defined how the audience situated themselves and responded to our performances. The space used for the performance was a naturally constructed amphitheater with a flat concrete space at the bottom, where performers could be seen from all angles of the raked seating area. The amphitheater was tucked away from the Saturday family event and located along Lake Austin. Handmade way finding signs directed visitors to our location, offering visual cues that suggested a performance to increase foot traffic to the show. By using a space that had stadium seating with staircases on either side, audiences had easy access to comfortable places to sit, and they could choose their proximity to the actors. As I will discuss later in the document, Beats 1 and 2 of the performance asked the audience to watch and observe, and Beat 3 is the first time the audience is asked to participate by asking a question. This was done intentionally to carefully scaffold participation so that the young people in the audience who may not have felt comfortable with an interactive engagement model of performance could ease their way into the world of the play.

Data from the observational tools showed that the grounds of Laguna Gloria, along with the level of audience interaction and participation in the performance, shaped

the level and quality of audience engagement throughout the performance. *Blurred Memories* began and ended with all of the performers doing an eight-count movement. Skye, the main character, stays on stage to address the audience. When a character nearby gets her attention, Skye moves to a different location, far off stage and to the left, which requires the audience to move to see and hear her, as well as a new character. Also, all of Skye's props and photos refer to the natural landscape and art around her. At one point in the performance when Skye asks a young person what a blurry image in a photo might be, she replies, "Maybe it's stone that my mom's sitting on" (Observation Tool).

Inner Frames: Scaffolding Participation

Jackson suggests that the inner performance frames exist by explaining that "within the performance there are usually one or more inner frames operational only once the performance...around the site has begun" ("Engaging" 17). These frames signal significant changes in relationship with the audience, and often include invitations for interaction during the performance itself.

Jackson's 1997 article, "Positioning the Audience," written prior to his research from 2001–2003 with Kidd, describes how these specific theatrical frames function in T.I.E. performances such as museum theatre. In his earlier exploration of participatory frames, Jackson describes participation from the viewpoint of the student or young person.

Jackson states:

- A **Narrative Frame** tells the story sometimes through a direct address by actor-facilitator. During this time, conventions of the play are reinforced and the

background is often shared. Audience members can be in role. However, little to no participation happens in this frame.

- In the **Investigative Frame**, events are happening either in the moment or as flashbacks to be analyzed and discussed. Audience members can be in role, and may be participating in a task with the characters.
- In the **Presentation Frame**, the actor-facilitators behave as they would in a conventional play, although the play does not need to be naturalistic. Audience members are positioned as viewers; they are not onstage.
- In the **Involvement Frame**, the actor-facilitators interact with each other and audience members. Events occur in “real time,” and characters and audience share the same space. The audience can affect and influence the performance in this frame (58).

It is important to note that there may be more than one frame being used at any given moment. This is because one frame may act as a holding frame while another frame becomes active (Jackson, “Positioning” 56). For example, a narrative frame may act as a holding frame while, through an investigative frame, the audience analyzes a flashback.

The discussion of Jackson’s inner frames are relevant here because the target audience for our performances were two to eleven year olds. The inner frames were key to understanding the engagement of the young people in our audience. I use Jackson’s exploration of the four frames within the larger frames as a way to examine how specific choices about audience participation may have impacted their level of engagement. I revisit the beats to *Blurred Memories* and map their connections to each of these frames in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Relationship between beats within the Inner (macro) Frame and the four (micro) Positional Frames

Beats		Frame
Beat 1	Eight count movement sequence	Presentational
Beat 2	Skye's monologue	Narrative
Beat 3	Skye asks audience for help	
Beat 4	Skye meets Ashe	
Beat 5	Skye shows Ashe her photos	
Beat 6	Skye realizes her photos are ruined	
Beat 7	Skye identifies a photograph with whole group	
Beat 8	Skye and Ashe identify photos in small groups	
Beat 9	Skye and Ashe share out with whole group	
Beat 10	Skye asks to look at photos on the ground	
Beat 11	Bobbi introduces herself	Narrative
Beat 12	Bobbi explains how to make categories	Investigative
Beat 13	Actors facilitate making categories in small groups	Involvement
Beat 14	Each group shares out category to the whole group	
Beat 15	Lyra introduces herself	Narrative
Beat 16	Skye catches Lyra up on the process so far	
Beat 17	Lyra plays her song	Presentational
Beat 18	Skye shares her story about Laguna Gloria	Narrative
Beat 19	Eight count movement sequence	Presentational
Beat 20	Closing: Skye invites the audience to find an object	Involvement

In determining what factors shape how an audience responds to a participatory museum theatre performance, it is useful to begin with an examination of how the audience is invited to engage within the performance and the inherent “understanding” that comes with this invitation or induction into the performance. Jackson in his essay “Engaging the Audience...” explores this idea when he suggests that:

There is also an unwritten ‘audience contract’: a moment where a visitor agrees (literally by sitting down, or internally by deciding to join in) to ‘contract-in’—if you agree to participate, by implication to agree to give license to the actors (within reason) to take you on their metaphorical (sometimes actual) journey through time and space. Importantly, you can...opt out of that contract...or change your level of engagement. (9)

Jackson argues that although an audience member may make an initial decision to participate, their participation can be renegotiated at any time. In *Blurred Memories*, induction occurred for many visitors when they came and sat down in the audience before the show even began.

When I first coded my data, which tracked audience behavior via an observation tool, I codified the findings into three types of observed engagement behavior: physical, verbal, and visual. I used magnitude coding, to delineate the findings between high, medium and low levels of each type of engagement behavior, and examined this information with the Likert scale coding completed by the researchers and the open-ended items from the observation tool in conversation with my research notes, but felt that no clear patterns emerged. When looking at the Likert scale, the young people engaged on a relatively high scale throughout the performance. However, when I looked at individual participants’ engagement closely along with photographs and video footage, I learned more about nuanced participation. I decided to reconsider my research question:

what factors influence how audience members engage with museum theatre in different ways, using Jackson's inner frames. The result was a case study analysis of two specific audience members who represented key behaviors displayed by many of the young audience members.

In the next portion of my analysis, I track two audience members and their levels of engagement over the course of a single performance of *Blurred Memories*. I begin by describing the overall context of the performance in question. Then, I introduce basic background on the audience members, and discuss how their participation levels shifted throughout the performance in correlation with the specific beats of actions and types of participatory frames.

Carol's Journey: A Case Study

Twenty-four audience members attended the first performance of *Blurred Memories* on the morning of Saturday, November 14, 2015. At the start of the initial performance, all twenty-four visitors were seated in the outdoor amphitheatre. Carol, an eight-year-old girl, attended the performance with her claymation class, accompanied by her teacher and two teaching assistants. The class, composed of seven young people, came to the performance together and was seated in a single row in the audience. The class was approached prior to the performance and asked if they wanted to participate in a study for research purposes by three researchers who were observing audience members during the first performance.

Blurred Memories begins with an eight-count movement series performed by the entire actor-facilitator ensemble. At the start of the show, Carol was sitting in the second

center row of the outdoor amphitheatre looking at the performers⁶. Afterwards, the performers scatter to their starting positions and Skye steps forward to begin her monologue outlining the events that frame the drama. This narrative frame establishes the story for the audience. Skye soon begins to talk directly to the audience, gradually introducing audience participation, and a space for the audience to share their prior knowledge with her first direct question. Below are Skye's scripted lines and Carol's physical and verbal responses to her words, captured through the observation tool and video documentation. These moments occur during Beat 3 of the performance.

Skye: Have any of you ever made something for someone you love before?
Carol: (nods head)
Skye: I see some people raising their hands—can you raise your hands if you've made something for someone you love?"
Carol: (raises her hand high)
Skye: What did you make? (calling on Carol)\
Carol: I made a book!
Skye: You made a book!?! Well then, you're an expert!
Carol: (smiles)
Skye: (takes other audience answers)
Carol: (turns her body towards other audience members and looks at them as they respond)
Skye: Since all of you have so much experience making things for people you love will you help me make my book for my grandma?
Carol: (nods her head)

Next, Skye notices another character, Ashe, taking photos near a tree on the far left side of the amphitheatre; she asks the audience to join her near Ashe. Motioning towards him, she tells the audience to follow her and walks briskly away. Photographs show Carol running ahead to follow Skye as she walks towards Ashe. Carol is one of five young people who are standing close to Skye and Ashe right away as these two actor-facilitators meet one another and continue the dramatic narrative.

⁶ These observations were made from photos and videos that were taken during the performance.

Carol is front and center when the story continues and Skye reaches into her large envelope and pulls out oversized photographs of Laguna Gloria to show Ashe. Skye is frustrated to discover that her images are out of focus; the photos were taken too close to the objects, so it is difficult to decipher what each object is. Ashe asks to see a photograph, and he describes the photo as a rock, adding “You just have to think of it in the simplest terms, like shape and color” (Performance 1). It is at this point that Skye takes the photo Ashe has been holding and leads the audience through a sequence of questions asking them about what colors they see, what shapes they see, and, finally, what they think the image might be; this is the investigative frame. Carol shares what colors she sees and observes during this time. Skye pulls out another photo and goes through the same process again, and Carol points out a color she sees in the second photograph: “Whitish yellow” (Performance 1). When the group is finished describing this photo, Skye asks them what this photograph can be, listening to multiple perspectives and reflecting those ideas back to the group. The actor-facilitator works to value audience members’ insights, ideas, and their prior knowledge in her responses. However, at the end, Skye says, “You know, I think I took this picture because my grandma and I loved to build fairy houses by this tree” (Performance 1). Skye wants to make sure to relate the photos back to the narrative. She then asks Ashe if he will help identify the photos with her, splitting up the audience and photos in half, although most of the young audience goes with Skye; a total of eight young people. Carol, Lottie, and another young person named Jackson go with Ashe.

We are still in the investigative frame when Carol observes the photos with Ashe, the actor-facilitator, in her small group. Carol does not choose to verbally share ideas or

raise her hand while they look at the first photograph. Ashe asks the young people to describe what colors or shapes they see, and then he asks them to title the photograph. The actor-facilitator's intention behind asking for a photograph title is to allow the young people to make a personal connection to the artwork. Next, Ashe pulls out a second photograph and asks again, "What colors or shapes do you see?" Carol is the second young person to share; she responds with "Brown speckles" (Performance 1). Another young person describes the photograph as looking like a toe, Ashe begins to ask the kids to make a title for the photograph. Immediately, Carol shouts "Footopia!" Ashe repeats what he hears: "Footopia?!" laughs, and says, "That's awesome" (Performance 1). Ashe hands the photo to Carol, who is smiling, and then holds up a third photograph and asks the group what they see. Another young person states that he sees a giant head, explaining that the picture is upside down. Ashe flips the photograph so it is positioned differently, and asks the group: "What makes you say that though?" (Performance 1). Carol points to different parts of the photograph and explains what she sees: "There's its belly and there's its head!" (Performance 1). Ashe asks the group to give the photo a title, and a young male titles the photograph "Big belly button?" This causes Carol to laugh (Performance 1).

After each audience group comes together to share one or two photos from their investigation, Skye leads the whole audience down toward Lake Austin to organize the pictures for her book. While Skye looks at the photos, a new character, Bobbi, who is working nearby, becomes curious about the group's work. Bobbi is a collage artist and offers to help the group organize the photos. In order to explain how this is done, she offers to organize the photos based on some of the terms they already know (i.e.; shape and color). The audience members begin handing Skye and Bobbi photos. At this point, Carol begins to move forward to hand Bobbi "Footopia." However, she stops when Bobbi announces that she has enough photos to complete the category.

Skye begins asking the audience group to identify the subject of photos that are hanging on a string beside her and Bobbi. With the photos identified, Bobbi and Skye ask the audience to come up with a title for the group of photos. Several suggestions are given like, "the garden" and "the tall tree." Bobbi writes one title down and verbally validates all titles offered to support multiple perspectives. When Bobbi is finished, Skye announces: "This is how you [the audience] can help," and announces that between her, Ashe and Bobbi they will all take some photos and make some categories with small groups (Performance 1). Carol has been observing this process, quietly at this time.

Carol is in Skye's group with two other young people. Skye and another young person define categories as groups. In this group, Carol is an active member, helping to group like photos together: "This one has green" (Performance 1). But later in the process, after they name all three categories, the group has this interaction:

Skye: We're going to show the group one of our categories so which category...?

All three young people shout out different categories –
Skye: So we're not agreeing...
Carol: Why don't we all show one from each?!
Skye: Oooh...
Carol: Why don't we all show one of the pictures?
Skye: Ok, so why don't we each take one picture and hang it up? So you take footopia, you got that one, you got that one (pointing to each young person with each photo)
Skye: Could we put that in "grass"? Maybe that one is dead grass? So it all fits in one category? (Performance 1)

Each person in Carol's group takes one photo and hangs it up on the string. Then, the groups share one category from their small group with the whole group. This investigative frame ends with Skye saying: "I'm not sure where I should go next" (Performance 1). In the narrative, her confusion leads to the entrance of a new character that helps guide her to the final lesson she needs to learn in order to make the gift for her grandmother. However, this transition is quite sudden, and as Skye stands there looking confused, several young people stand around her, including Carol.

Lyra's entrance marks the climax of the play. It also marks a shift back to the narrative frame. Lyra asks Skye some questions about what she's making and Skye becomes sad explaining how it will all turn out and admitting that her grandmother is struggling with Alzheimer's. "She might not remember anyway. She had a hard time remembering who I was yesterday" (Performance 1). Lyra offers to play a song about Laguna Gloria she's been working on in order to help Skye with her book. When she begins playing, several of the young people move further away, as if suddenly self-conscious. This is also when the frame shifts to a presentational frame. Carol responds by taking a walk around the entire front part of the space to stand behind the rest of the

audience, and then moves back to stand several feet away from Lyra just a few measures into the song.

Lyra's song inspires Skye to use the photos to tell a story, which she shares with the audience. As soon as Skye is talking again, Carol is right next to her. Skye animatedly tells her story while passing photos to Ashe and Bobbi, who are placing corresponding photos on the clothesline one by one. Meanwhile, Carol is close by watching and right in the action. At the very end of her story, Skye grabs a branch for Ashe to photograph for her cover and Carol is across from her. The performers begin transitioning into the eight-count movement sequence, another presentational frame Carol watches closely. At the very end of the performance, Skye makes an announcement to go and choose an object to bring to studio eight for the art activity, and Carol runs up to Skye for help to look for a natural object.

Lottie's Journey: A Case Study

Lottie, similarly to Carol also arrived with the claymation class to watch the initial performance of *Blurred Memories*. Sitting in row two of the outdoor amphitheatre with the rest of her class she nods her head when Skye asks her first question directly to the audience: "Have you ever made something for someone you loved before?" When Skye asks to see a show of hands, Lottie raises her hand, but lowers it when Skye clarifies that a raised hand is for someone who is willing to share. Lottie quickly follows Skye to the tree to meet Ashe, being the first audience member standing near Skye, but pauses when they are almost there and looks around, waiting until two other young people catch up before running ahead to the tree with them. Once she is at the tree, she watches the actors.

When Skye holds up the first photograph and asks the group of twelve young people to describe what they see, Lottie is facing Skye and the photograph. She raises her hand to share. Her eyes look between the photo and whoever is speaking, whether it's Skye or an audience member. But by the time Skye holds up the second photograph, Lottie changes the position of her body so she is facing Lake Austin and can no longer see the photograph; her eyes shift focus from place to place—sometimes on the ground, sometimes on Skye, sometimes straight ahead—and she jumps up and down.

Skye splits up the audience into two groups, and Lottie moves quickly to Ashe. In Lottie's small group with Ashe and two other young people describing and analyzing photos, Lottie's eyes are very focused on the photographs and on Ashe. After the group analyzes one photograph she raises her hand and shares for the first time. Ashe follows the same sequence of questions that he did for the first photograph. He asks the group, "What about this one, what kind of shapes and colors here?" (Performance 1). Lottie shares: "There's white and it looks like a toe" (Performance 1). Ashe repeats what he hears. Lottie smiles a lot and her body language suggests ease and comfort in her small group.

The next big shift for Lottie comes just before the next time the frame changes. Just before the involvement frame begins, Bobbi is introduced to the audience and models how to categorize Skye's photos. She does this by asking the group for some photographs. While Bobbi is taking some photos from the audience and is hanging them up along the string, Skye is asking the audience what each photo is. "What did we say this was?" (Performance 1). Skye identifies one of the photographs with the audience as a

tree trunk when Lottie approaches Bobbi and hands her a photograph, saying, “This is tree bark” (Performance 1). Bobbi takes the photo and hangs it up with the other three that are already hanging on the string.

When Skye decides the audience can help by working in groups to categorize the photos, Lottie joins Bobbi’s group. Lottie responds to direct questions asked by Bobbi (Observation tool). She physically stays next to Bobbi during this section, with her eyes on the photographs. Lottie does not share out the categories for her group, but she holds photographs, and stays with her group observing the performers and the young people that are sharing.

When the involvement frame ends and Skye is confused about what steps she should take next in making her book, Lottie is right next to her, and shows her two photographs. When Lyra enters three seconds later, Lottie moves towards her, holding both photos out for her to see. Lyra bends down to get a better look.

However, once Skye starts explaining the steps she’s taken with the audience thus far to make the book, speaking at length to Lyra and marking the start of the presentational frame, Lottie moves ten feet away. As Lyra begins to play a song about Laguna Gloria, several of the young people step away from her, but Lottie slowly inches closer.

Lottie also moves closer to Skye as she is telling her story inspired by Lyra’s song. At the end of Skye’s story, Lottie remains physically close to the actors while they stand around Ashe, who is taking the photo for Skye’s book. When the final eight-count movement begins, which ends the play, Lottie’s body becomes still, and her eyes watch

the performers closely. At the very end of the performance, Skye makes an announcement in character for all audience members to choose an object to bring to studio eight for the art activity. At this moment, Lottie walks over to Skye, along with a group of other young people to look for natural objects on the grounds.

After the performance, the young people from the claymation class had to leave quickly, and so Carol was not asked any questions about her object. Lottie was asked about her object and had the following dialogue with one of the researchers about what she had found:

Researcher B: What is your object?

Lottie: A stick

Researcher B: Why did you select this object?

Lottie: I like the design and texture it had.

Researcher B: What does it help you remember?

Lottie: Someone wanted to make a book for her grandma so she asked for help. She saw people. They came to help. They sang a song. Then it made the other girl who made the book have an idea. Then they danced at the end. (Observation Tool)

Analysis of Carol and Lottie: Examining Audience Engagement Through the Inner Frames

The data below will be analyzed through a discussion of the inner frames. According to Kidd, research frames are essential to the success or failure of a museum theatre performance (218). This is because clear use of frames can either support the audience members' agency in making decisions throughout a performance, thereby leading to greater recall and a positive experience of the performance, or leave them feeling manipulated (Kidd 218). Connections between the type of inner performance

frame (e.g., presentational, narrative, etc.) and the behaviors of the two case study audience members suggest that the sequence of the frames matter in engaging young people. Furthermore, that transitioning in and out of the investigative or involvement frames is more difficult since audience members respond differently in these moments.

Blurred Memories begins with an eight-count movement, a presentational frame, which meant that many audience members were showing their engagement with their eyes and their bodies. It was noted by Researcher A during the eight-count that Carol “Watches intently from her seat” (Observation tool). Researcher B did not write in a comment for Lottie, but she was given the highest mark in the observational tool for engagement at this point of the performance. In *Blurred Memories*, careful scaffolding of questions in the beginning was meant to provide young people with opportunities to participate at their own pace and comfort level. These moments of induction set up expectations that this was a participatory performance. Seeing Lottie raise and then lower her hand at the beginning of the play seemed to suggest that she wanted to listen, engage and respond to the story, just not verbally, at least not in the response to this specific question at this early point in the performance. Her decision to run ahead to see what would happen next in the performance could suggest that she had decided to join in on the action of the play, whether or not she was comfortable with verbal participation. Examination of both participants suggests that moments of induction were effective in setting up expectations of the play. This is important as Jackson and Kidd state many audience members “are wary until they gain some reassurance of exactly what they are letting themselves in for” (“Performance, Report” 10). The idea here is that without those

expectations being set up clearly in the beginning of the performance visitors usually respond with “anger, confusion, embarrassment, or simply do not ‘buy in’ to the experience” (Jackson and Kidd “Performance, Report” 10).

Carol’s amount of engagement in the next few frames of the piece is indicative of the majority of the young people at the first performance and expresses the thoughtful transition of narrative to investigative frame. Her desire to continue to share verbally in a whole group and then in her small group suggests that she understands the activity and the direction of the dramatic narrative. When the group moves down toward the lake to learn how to make categories in the involvement frame, Carol’s engagement continued and she participated in her small group, offering ideas and suggestions for how the group could problem solve.

The changes observed in the quality of Carol and Lottie’s participation suggest that the audience may have had difficulty transitioning from an involvement frame, where students are occupying the same space as the actors, back to a narrative and then presentational frame. The researcher tracking Carol’s engagement noted that she “ran away when the song started, seeming self-conscious to be so close, but came back after a moment” (Observation tool). Lottie also moved far away from Skye and Lyra during the presentational frame. This may be partly due to the fact that in this moment the interactive space returned, rather abruptly to a stage space without much cueing to the audience about how to navigate the shift in intention.

Choice and Control

Another key factor that shaped the audience engagement was the level of choice and control within the interactive moments in the play. For example, Lottie's engagement is different than Carol's in certain activities and suggests a different kind of comfort with them. In the first whole group activity, she was observing, but her full attention was given in the small group with Ashe. It is here that she verbally shared what she saw in a photograph, laughing and smiling at the comments she hears. In the involvement frame, her approaching Bobbi one-on-one to add another photograph suggests she understands how similar characters of texture, shape and color might be used to categorize photos. In her small group with Bobbi, her ability to observe dialogue between other young people and Bobbi suggested to me that she had her own way of tuning in. One of the findings that Jackson and Kidd discovered from the Performance Learning and Heritage report was the importance of the amount of choice an individual audience member felt that they had in a participatory museum theatre performance ("Performance, Summary" 13). Lottie's engagement from the beginning of the performance, when she was raising her hand and then lowering it, but running to follow Skye soon after, suggests that there were moments when she felt comfortable participating and stepping away. Similarly, the first time the young audience analyzed photos in the investigative frame, Lottie's choice not to share and turn and look away from the photos but then to share in her small group again, suggests that she felt able to make the choice to observe or tune in and out of the performance as she felt comfortable. Choosing to engage in a museum theatre performance impacts the kind of experience an audience member has, and as Jenny Kidd

states, those experiences can be enjoyable and lead to a greater recall of the performance being “vivid, urgent and can genuinely change their attitudes towards the subject matter” (218). Lottie’s final summary of the performance was the most in-depth description of any of the young people who came that morning. It suggests that she had the ability to choose how she participated and it positively impacted her experience of the performance.

Socio-constructivism and Prior Knowledge

As discussed earlier in this paper, Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism informed the learning design aspects of *Blurred Memories* educational content. Scholar and educator Jeffery Wilhelm describes socio-constructivist teaching as a process wherein the facilitator lends expertise and skill to participants over time: “show me, help me, let me” (23). *Blurred Memories* employed this approach in its dramatic structure. For example, in order to set up the investigative frame, Ashe announces to the audience what one of Skye’s photos is explaining: “You just have to see it in the simplest terms, like shape and color” (Performance 1). Skye then turns to the audience and asks them: “What shapes do you see?” (Performance 1). Skye facilitates with the entire audience how to use that vocabulary to describe the photographs, and then uses those descriptions to make predictions to determine the subject of the photograph. Then the audience practices using the vocabulary to describe and title the photos in two small groups with Skye and Ashe. Afterwards Bobbi instructs the audience how to categorize photos, and then the young audience members work in small groups to

practice the skills they learned. Afterward, there are representatives from each group who share out a category they developed in their small groups with whole group. Finally, at the end of the play, Skye grabs a branch with leaves on it for her cover, stating: “All the leaves on these branches represent all of you because you helped make this book” (Performance 1). After the closing Skye invites the audience to go and find an object that represents their time together so they can make their own photographs in studio eight.

All three actor-facilitators used socio-constructivist facilitation methods to engage the young people. For example, Ashe, in the first investigative frame, invites young people to share the shapes and colors they see, often asking a clarifying question that sounds like “What do you see that makes you say that?” (1.2.5). He then asks them to title their images. This is an open-ended question that elicits a number of responses. The goal was to support young people in the audience to make a personal connection to the photographs and to Laguna Gloria. Carol names one photograph that the group decides looks like a toe: “Footopia” (Performance 1). This is because the actor-facilitator asks his small group, “If we could give this photo a title, what would it be?” (Performance 1). After Carol titles it, Ashe supports her answer by repeating the title and responding authentically, laughing and saying: “That’s awesome” (Performance 1). Ashe gives Carol that photograph to hold and she continued to hold it during other activities, suggesting that she made a lasting personal connection with that photograph.

Tim Preston, applied theatre practitioner and scholar, states “...if genuine participation exists through co-intentionality, the relationship nurtured by the facilitator or artist is crucial and therefore their sensitivity and skill in working ‘with’ participants

and enabling democratic ownership of creative mediums is key” (Preston 129).

Participation in a museum theatre performance, which is a form of applied theatre, is in part created through a socio-constructive facilitation style that invites young people to slowly move into a position of power and decision-making about the learning. By allowing the young people to name the photographs, the actor-facilitator was supporting ownership with the photographs and with the subject matter.

This type of socio-constructivist facilitation style can be seen during the categorizing activity in small groups. In this section of the play Carol offered a solution to the fact that each young person wanted to share a different category and Skye accepted the proposal offering a way to make it work. During a final interview with the student ensemble, the actor-facilitator playing Skye reflected on how she navigated this facilitation moment and her thinking behind it:

I feel like because of this whole constructivist thing I’m learning right now I tried to approach it like, ‘Okay, we have a disagreement, let’s fix that. How do we? Now what?’ Everyone took a picture and then made a new category. So, trying to not have a heavy hand on it, (thinking about it) like as a team, what do we do?
(Final Interview)

Choosing to accept and use the solution offered by a young audience member, allowing that choice to have an authentic impact on the action in the performance, was an important moment of engaging that young person. In “Positioning the Audience” Anthony Jackson makes the argument that a strong T.I.E. performance is one where the aesthetics of the art from aligns the educational and artistic goals of the performance. By supporting Carol’s idea through a socio-constructivist facilitation style it not only moved

the scene forward and the educational objective of that moment forward but it kept Carol invested in the performance.

In this chapter I analyzed and discussed how intentional use of frames, and transitions has an effect on audience engagement. I described how providing the audience with clear expectations and opportunities to choose their level of involvement leads to a positive experience of a participatory museum performance. I also described how a socio-constructivist dramatic structure and facilitation strategies benefitted participation throughout the performance.

In Chapter 3, I end my thesis document as I began with a return to my guiding research question and framework for this document. I conclude with thoughts about the complex nature of audience engagement and participation within museum theatre performance. Specifically, I share the limitations of my research and my future recommendations for the field of museum theatre.

Chapter 3: Closing Frame

In this final chapter of my thesis I return to my research question: What factors shape how an audience responds to a participatory museum theatre performance? Specifically, I explore how the experience of creating *Blurred Memories* has led me to make some broad conclusions and recommendations about that ways that participation, interactivity and engagement operate within a museum theatre performance. Even as I state these discoveries, I must admit I am left with a lot of questions about my work and the generalizability of my findings. I begin with a brief discussion about the limitations of my study, and then I close with some recommendations for the field.

Limitations

Originally, I saw the creation and performances of *Blurred Memories* as an opportunity to collect data from young audience members and the adults who came with them to the performances. I knew from previous experiences creating museum theatre that researching this participatory art form was immensely valuable. Also, having spent so much time analyzing Jackson and Kidd's research, I felt that there were some gaps in the field, particularly when it came to researching museum theatre about contemporary works of art.

However, once I began to code my data I saw how difficult it was to track engagement using my observation tool. Each individual researcher in my six-person research team had a subjective viewpoint on what engagement looked like. Although there were general notes about observable behavior (e.g., audience members looking,

moving, and responding verbally) taken by the researchers, they offered a wide range of interpretations of the same behavior that were often in disagreement with one another. It was clear that the criteria of the observation tool needed to be defined and refined with the research team prior to the performances. In the future, I will give as much weight to the clarity and positionality of the research team as I do to how I position the audience physically and aesthetically within the work.

Blurred Memories was created with the intention that while the play ends dramatically with an eight-count movement, the piece itself ends with the audience taking a found object from Laguna Gloria and using it to make a cyanotype print in studio eight, one of the art studios at Laguna Gloria. This moment was considered the final part of the longer socio-constructivist educational objective; the moment where “we let” (or invited) our young audience make something of their own. They have learned the tools by looking at Skye’s photographs and they practiced those skills in large and small groups. They have categorized photos, again in large and small groups, and at the end collected an object to make their own “memory” photograph of their day at Laguna Gloria. Jackson and Kidd, in the *Performance Learning and Heritage Report*, cite educational theorist David Kolb’s learning cycle to describe the ending moment in a museum theatre performance where the audience makes sense or interprets the experience “conceptualizing and generalizing the issues the performance raised” (Kolb qtd. in Jackson 55). Jackson builds on this argument when he suggests that this is the moment “that we find the most revealing indicators of the values and meanings audience members have drawn from their experiences” (Jackson and Kidd “Performance, Report” 55).

Although Jackson argues that this experience can occur long after a performance, the intention was always that our performance of *Blurred Memories* would link up to Abby Mechling's art-making activity. While there were people who went from the performance to the studio, the impact of that final activity on those who were a part of the play is not represented in my research documents due to the researchers' need to be ready for the next performance. In my final interview with Abby Mechling, I asked her about what she noticed about the young people who attended the studio eight activity after the play.

Mechling said:

You could tell. The kids who had been to the performance first that came to us were thinking about it in a different way for sure; they were using the language. They were referring to creating memories... finding things to remember—the language that you used came into the studio afterwards and that was the impetus for their project. (Personal Interview)

When I expressed my frustration at our inability to capture the young audience members' experiences at the final activity after the performance, Mechling responded that:

No! It was good. I feel like then [Saturdays Are For Families] becomes a lot more self-guided and they concentrate on the steps. But, one thing I would've liked to do was make our activities more adjacent. (Personal Interview)

Space was another issue where Mechling, our site partner, saw an opportunity for improvement. Having our performance next to the final activity would have been ideal. Likewise, having the performance near the Driscoll Villa where the art was located may have further enhanced the experience. However, the space of the outdoor amphitheatre worked for the frames of our performance, but our inability to be close to the final art activity and the work of art itself in the Driscoll Villa does still bring up questions about

what might have been gained if we had found another way to navigate the challenges of the location for the play.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Looking towards the future, I believe that museum theatre is valuable for museum education departments to use as a tool to make meaning with and for visitors. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill professor and scholar of Museum Studies, in her book, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, published in 2002, says that today, in museums teachers are encouraged to use educational styles that support individual learning styles and constructivist learning approaches (6). She goes on to say that what is meaningful to each visitor can vary, and makes a point about social inclusivity, stating: “If museums wish to become socially inclusive, alternative perspectives need to be recognized, acknowledged, and made both visible and audible” (7). She is not alone in this opinion. Nearly fifteen years earlier, in 1989, Peter Vergo professor and scholar of Art History and Museology, wrote: “The very act of collecting has a political or ideological or aesthetic dimension which cannot be overlooked. According to what criteria are works of art judged to be beautiful, or even historically significant? What makes certain objects, rather than others, ‘worth’ preserving for prosperity?” (2). Although much of what Vergo was referring to was the acquisition of art that belonged to particular nations, and cultures procured through colonization, within this question he is also asking us to interrogate our appreciation and veneration of objects held in museums. Contemporary museum educators have pushed this concept further, suggesting that we need to give equal

attention to *how* we exhibit as we currently give to *what* we exhibit. This can be done through innovative and thoughtful exhibition design. Nina Simon, museum director and designer, argues for the “human” aspects of the museum visitors’ experiences:

I no longer feel like the ‘best’ forms of participation are unfacilitated. Like many engineers, I think I was overly presumptuous about what design could do on its own. Since 2010 I have seen, again and again and again, how valuable human facilitation is to the participatory process. Humans empower each other. Make space for each other. Invite each other in. Cheer for each other. (Web 2.0 March 4, 2015)

I agree with Simon. I believe that a socially mediated museum experience, when it is facilitated and designed well, can offer a visitor a different point of view as well as a different way to process the meaning of a work of art, object or exhibition.

In the *Performance, Learning and Heritage Report*, Jackson and Kidd explain that, in museums today, there is a new focus on how knowledge is constructed and on visitors and how they make meaning (12). This goes hand-in-hand with “interpretive practices which also increasingly embrace consultation and even co-production with audiences...(and) it can also challenge visitors expectations of what visiting a museum involves in terms of the range of voices that are licensed to speak, including the voice of the visitor herself” (Jackson and Kidd “Performance, Report” 13). In other words, the interpretive practices used in museums are also becoming more visitor-centered. Jackson and Kidd go on to suggest that museum theatre can be a strong fit, since it can engage visitors through participation and co-production of ideas, and it invites a multitude of perspectives (“Performance, Report” 13-14).

In my attempt to learn more about audience participation through development of this performance, I struggled in choosing the form of museum theatre for this project.

Eventually, the ensemble and I chose a performance based in T.I.E. techniques because of its synchronicity with educational objectives and ability to provide a space for agency for young people through participation. Theatre-in-Education includes moments of interaction and participation where participants help to shape the drama; I wanted to know more about how these moments might shape a visitor's experience of a museum theatre performance. The application of Jackson and Kidd's research on the theatrical frames in T.I.E. and museum theatre provided a depth of intentionality to my work in this project that deepened my own understanding as an emerging artist making museum theatre. Simply focusing on where and how the audience is positioned, physically, in the dramatic narrative and within the educational objectives of a performance has invited me to reconsider how and why a young person might choose to participate in a museum theatre performance. When I created my first museum theatre performance: "Stretch and Explore" two years ago, I was focused on the moment where the line between audience and artists no longer existed, where the actors literally lifted the line of tape that separated observer from performer and artist right off the floor, and threw it away, and everyone was creating art together. For *Blurred Memories*, I was able to expand and complicate the shifting relationship between audience and performer within a single museum theatre performance. Jackson reminds us that:

...the very audience participation that is central to T.I.E. must be seen as part of that aesthetic; the actor/audience divide may appear to have been eradicated but the 'specialness' of the artistic form remains—not in a blur but through a carefully contrived set of frames in which not only the actors but the pupils too can be both immersed in and detached from the action. ("Positioning" 53)

The infrastructure of a T.I.E. performance allows a balance of immersion and detachment from performers and audience/participants. In the development of *Blurred Memories*, I was not trying to obscure any delineation between performer and audience member; I was trying to clarify and refine it with intentional framing.

Appendices

Appendix A: Script

Blurred Memories

SCRIPT

A soundscape plays, characters move together within it. An 8 count movement begins in a diamond shape with Lyra and Bobbi standing on either side of Ashe who is in front of Skye. Their movements are fast and frenetic. Together, but separate. Lyra and Bobbi move after 4 quick repetitions. Ashe continues for 2 more repetitions then falls out of the line up as Skye reaches out towards the audience arms outstretched. Then she grabs her heavy backpack filled with too much stuff, and holding a notebook. She looks flustered and does not notice the audience.

Skye : Alright Skye, this is the spot. One of our favorite places. I'll just start making the book right here. You got this. This is going to be the best gift ever! Ok, I have all these pictures in this envelope, I can just sit down and look at them and begin right? Oh...why am I so nervous?

She starts looking at her surroundings, everywhere but at the audience, she's lost in thought and getting more and more frazzled

Skye: It's just a book. Grandma loves books. There's so much we used to do here at Laguna Gloria and I just have to put it in the book. Great, so where do I start? Oh, with the drive here. I didn't take any pictures of that. I get carsick. Oh! With the title. *Peacocks, Picnic, Art, and Bugs.* That's terrible. Oh! The cover. I should have painted a cover. Grandma loves that. I didn't bring paint. How could I forget the paint? Oh cheese Skye what were you thinking! I've never even done this before. (*Shakes her head.*) Oh! I got it! Maybe I should ask for some help? (*Looks around and is surprised to see the audience.*) Hey! You all look like you know some stuff! You're in a big group so you've gotta right? Oh wait...first things first, my names Skye! (*Shakes hands with some people in the audience.*) I was born in May and I love Oreos, oh but yeah...

So here's the thing. My grandma's birthday is coming up and it's gonna be great because I LOVE birthdays and I love my grandma, but who doesn't? (*..thinking to herself.*) So I'm making her this book about the times we came here together. Laguna Gloria was our special place (*Sits on*

stool.) We used to come here all the time. My grandma loves art and nature and she loves Clara Driscoll who owned Laguna Gloria until like the 1940's and then donated it to be a place for the arts, she was a firecracker like my grandma! We haven't been able to come here as much...but I want to make her this gift to help her so she can remember it when she isn't here...Everything is going to go in this book! Our walks on the paths, how we used to collect stones and then toss them in the lake and make wishes. The twigs that we would use to build fairy houses...the peacocks! Gotta have those. I came to take some photo's last weekend so I have everything I need *(Gets anxious, starts taking out the materials.)* I was wondering, have any of you ever made something for someone you love? Would you raise your hand if you have? (If needed: Have any of the adults ever done that?) Because I just don't know how to start. I just have so many stories! How do I put them all in? I would love your help today.

Goal: Set up expectations this is a participatory show

After the audience responds, Skye is delighted but notices Ashe climbing a tree, taking photos of the bark

Skye: That guy is taking pictures! I bet he would want to see my pictures! Let's go show him. Please follow me. This way! *(Skye begins to try to get Ashe's attention from far away.)*
Excuse me! *(Ashe doesn't respond.)* Hey! Excuse me! *(Skye marches up to the tree where Ashe is focused staring at the bark.)*

Ashe: Sshhhhhhhh. I'm taking a picture.

Skye: Of what?

Ashe: This tree.

Skye: Why are you so close to it??

Ashe: I'm focusing on my favorite part. The bark.

Skye: That's....that's...that's...weird.

Ashe: ummm...

Skye: Sorry! Actually no it's just..really..weird.

Ashe: Who are you?

Skye: Oh cheese! Hi! I'm Skye. I love Oreos and I also have some photos that I'm using to make a book for my grandma.

Ashe: That's cool. My names Ashe. Are those that photographs for your book? (*Ashe points to Skye's envelope.*)

Skye: Yeah. My mom just printed them for me at home. I haven't looked at them yet. (*Skye opens her envelope.*) Let me show you. (*She begins to look at them and whispers.*) Oh No. (*Louder.*) Oh no!!! (*Skye begins furiously flipping through the photos.*)

Ashe: Hey uh, what's the matter?

Skye: (*Skye shuffles the photos around frantically shaking her head.*) No!

Ashe: Skye?

Skye: They're ruined! I can't believe how bad these are. These are the worst pictures ever! What even is this! If I can't figure out what this is, how will my grandma be able to know what it is? *Ashe grabs a pair of glasses from around his neck and begins to look closely at the photos in Skye's hand from where he is in the tree. As he's looking, Skye throws them down and plops on the floor defeated.*

Ashe: Hey. Those don't look half bad. Can I see one?

Skye: Why!? They're the worst.

Ashe: Well let me see. Hand me one.

*Skye makes a face and grabs a few photographs and stands up as she shoves them in his hands.
Ashe begins studying them*

Skye: I came here a week ago and I took all these pictures all on my own. I wanted to put them in the book about Laguna Gloria. I took pictures of EVERYTHING that day. There were these cool rocks, (*getting lost in her story.*) we loved rocks. My grandma and me we would find them by the paths, and we would use them to make houses for bugs and we'd have picnics and...

Ashe: THIS ONE! *Ashe has switched his glasses and is focused on one photo. He shows it to Skye triumphantly.*

Skye: Huh?

Ashe: Yes! This one. It's a rock. Really close up, so I can see the texture of it.

Skye: Texture?

Ashe: Yes, the way something feels...

Skye: You don't see all that...from that? (*Points to the photo*) I don't see that. What do you mean?

Ashe: There's so much to see in a photograph! Here, look at this one, what do you see?

Skye shakes her head and looks frustrated

Ashe: Just start small, with the most simple detail, like a shape or color. What do you see? *Ashe looks at the audience*

Skye: You don't understand how important this is. I can't use these these photo's. Can I borrow your camera?

Ashe: Trust me. This will work. *Ashe looks at the audience.* Let's help her. What do you see in this photograph? *Pause, then if no one says anything* It's ok to say something even if it sounds really simple.

Ashe and audience look at a photograph make sure to repeat what they say so everyone can hear it. Then say "What else do you see?" If they say "Branch" or "Tree" say "What do you see that makes you say that?"

As Ashe and audience look at photo Skye gets excited.

Skye: I think I get it! Let's do another one. *(She turns to the audience.)* What do you notice? What colors do you see? What shapes do you see? So, based on what shapes or colors we've named, what might this be? How can you tell? What does this remind you of? What makes you say that? *(When everyone is done processing...)*

Ashe: I wonder why you took photo's of _____. *(Insert here whatever the photo was of)*

Skye: Cause Grandma and I used to make fairy houses at the roots of our favorite trees. Fairies happen to love trees.

Ashe: See? These pictures aren't bad at all. There's so much information in them. They each have their own story.

Skye: They do. I remember now, why I took them.

Ashe begins to notice something and take out his camera

Skye: There you go again, why do you take pictures of bark and nature up close? What do you see?

Ashe: I see the stories of bugs going on etc... *(Ashe explains that there are so many stories in the details.)*

Skye: Will you all help me figure out what is in these pictures? Let's divide and conquer. Ashe you take half of the group and half of these photos, and I'll take the other half.

Skye and Ashe split audience in half and work with them to explore stories that the pictures might have

Skye: Mr. Ashe I'd love to share with you one or two of our favorite photos, would you be able to do that as well?

Ashe: Sure!

Skye and Ashe's groups both share out one or two photo's and their identifications

Skye: Thank you so much! (*Looking at the audience.*) And thank you Mr. Ashe!

Ashe: No problem!

Skye: Let's head back to our favorite spot to look at all of our pictures. (*Holding photos.*)

Ashe: I'll walk with you. There were some photographs I wanted to take.

Skye: (*Turns to audience*) Let's go!

Ashe heads down to the water with Skye so he can help facilitate next activity

Skye heads down towards the water to work on her book with the audience. When she gets to the flat stage area she pauses and looks at some of the photos

Skye: Let's lay these out. Like this one of the tiny green city. And this one. How do they go together?

Ashe: I don't know. (*Helping her lay down the photos.*)

Bobbi: Uh, can I help you?

Skye: I gotta get these all organized...

Bobbie: Hey...here let me (*Helps Skye gather the photos up.*) These are nice...what are they for?

Skye: Oh well, they're for this book about Laguna Gloria I'm making for my Grandma.

Bobbi: Hmmm. What's your name?

Skye: My names Skye. I like Oreos.

Bobbi: My name is Bobbi Ross...and who's that?

Ashe is off to the side taking photos of the ground

Skye: That's Ashe. He does that. Hey! Ashe! *Skye goes over to tap him on the shoulder.*

This is Bobbi Ross. She's a...

Bobbi: Artist, actually, but you can call me Bobbi. I'm working on a collage over here about the colors I see out over the lake. How about I help you figure a good way to organize these?

Skye: Yes! Okay! What do we do?

Bobbi: Alright, well first. What are these photos of?

Skye: Well this one is a (Grabs a photo and uses the titles *that the audience has given them.*) tiny green city. What's this one again? (*Check with the audience.*) What did we say this one was? (*At this point Ashe has stopped taking photo's and has joined the audience.*)

Bobbi: (*Bobbi hangs the photo's up on string that's hanging from her easel to a tree*) Well, let's see how they connect...how might we put it into a group? This tiny green city, and this _____ and this _____? What do they have in common?

Skye: Hmm...I don't know. (*Skye thinks for a moment.*) What were some details that helped us give the photo's these names? (*See if the audience can get shape, and color.*)

Bobbi: Well, let's look at these for a moment. *Bobbi looks out at the audience* Can you help us?

Skye: If these photo's were in a category what might they be called?

Gets replies from Audience

Writes responses: Places photos on easel writes more than one category name

It's ok if there is deviation between shows

Bobbi: See there are lots of different options for our categories, we're just looking for similarities.

Skye: Great! Let's put these photos in categories.

Ashe: Hey! Can I help?

Skye: That would be so cool. Here, take these. Can you work with some of our friends and make some categories with these photos over there? And Bobbi would you work with another group of our friends to make some more categories over here?

Bobbi: Sure Skye I'd love to help.

Gets ideas from audience and Bobbi/Ashe/Skye writes them down on the pages of Skye's large book. Then each group creates categories for the photo's they have. They are allowed to go visit other groups to grab a few from each group if need be. If that's the case send one child with an adult like a messenger.

There are sets of images that go together like several of a picnic, several of the lake, several of trees, several of peacocks, sculptures etc...But these photos don't need to stay together. Also don't worry about each image having it's own title at this point.

At the end Skye, gets super excited and wants to know what each group came up with. She asks them if a representative from each group will share out what they did. In this moment, Skye must repeat what they say loudly so everyone can hear "Oh it's this" etc...

Skye: Woouooooow

Bobbi: These looks great!

Ashe: I love seeing how these photographs are linked together!

Bobbi: So, what are you going to add to your book next?

Skye looks at her newly categorized photographs in triumph.

We've heard music but it has stopped. In comes Lyra she has slowly joined the group and is looking at the pictures on the floor with the audience.

Lyra: Oh hey! More art on the floor! It looks awesome.

Skye: Yeah. Everyone here helped me! (*Gestures to audience and then Bobbi and Ashe.*)

Lyra: Really? That's pretty amazing! So, what's this all about?

Skye: Well, this is a book I'm making for my grandma about Laguna Gloria and all the fun stuff we used to do here. And Bobbi and Ashe and my friends helped.

Shares categories that group made with Lyra

Lyra: That sounds awesome. Oh! Which reminds me...I'm Lyra. Bobbi and Ashe huh? (*Lyra waves and says hi.*)

Bobbi: Hi! I'm Bobbi.

Ashe: *Ashe is taking a photo but then stops.*

Lyra: He seems fun.

Ashe: Oh! Hey! I'm Ashe.

Lyra: Hey! So... you are....

Skye: Skye. I like...Oreo's.

Lyra: So do I. I like to put peanut butter on mine.

Skye: I can't believe I haven't done that!

Lyra: It's a game changer. So you're making a book?

Skye: Yeah, for my grandma.

Lyra: How are you going to put all of this into a book?

Skye: I'm making this book for my Grandma...and...*Skye starts to trail off looking distracted and anxious...I'm going to put it in...like...it's just I have too much to say. How am I going to fit it all in? There's this category right, about the trees, but it's not just about trees it's about all of the things we used to do with the trees when we came to visit and I have to make sure I write about each one. So there was this one time when I was 7 and climbed this one tree and built a little home for ladybugs in it, and another time when I tried to do that again but then I fell and Grammy needed to take me home cause I hurt my shoulder and I went to the doctor and then another time when we came to Laguna and I found a tree and at the roots I built a fairy house and...*

Skye has started to get really anxious

Lyra: It sounds like you did so many wonderful things here with your grandma.

Skye: We did. *(Skye takes a big breath.)*

Lyra: Are you ok?

Skye looks distracted.

Bobbi: Skye?

Skye: Photo's! I need more photos. That would've helped right? *(Skye isn't making eye contact with anyone and she's playing with her backpack straps)*

Lyra: Hey Skye, making a book with every single thing you ever did, that would be really hard to make.

Skye: You're right. This is just going to confuse her more. I just shouldn't even try.

Lyra: No! That's not what I'm saying.

Skye: No, it's true. It just doesn't even matter...because she still won't remember will she? *(Skye gets very quiet.)* She didn't even remember who I was yesterday.

Lyra: Oh. *(Lyra says realizing what Skye is saying.)* Skye? That sounds really really hard. *(Resolved.)* I have an idea.

Lyra: I've just moved to town and I've been coming here and working on this song. I just, love this place. I was practicing over there a second ago. Can I play it for you? I think it might help. I wasn't expecting a big audience, but I'll share if... you promise not to laugh.

Skye: *(Looks at audience.)* We promise.

Lyra: Ok. It's still a rough draft.

Lyra sits down and begins to play a song about Laguna Gloria and about its natural landscape. After the first verse is finished Skye begins to pick up the photos. When the song is finished Skye claps.

Skye: Thanks. I think I figured it out. Your song reminded me of a story. And while my grandma would love these pictures on their own and all these categories, what she would really love is a story. A story about this place and our time together. *(Tells story like...)*

Skye: We used to go on picnics all the time and but there was one that I loved the best. Well, it reminds me of your story actually, cause something difficult became a good day...

Lyra: What do you mean?

Skye: Well, I got teased at school for wearing these pants. And my grandma picked me up after school and she said, no time like right now for a picnic! And then we went to the grocery store and got like, the best picnic ever cause it had the greatest snacks!

Lyra: Hmm...I wonder...were they Oreos?

Skye: How did you know that?!

Lyra: Just good at guessing.

Skye: These were double stuffed! And at the end of our picnic we found these smooth rocks and threw them in the lake and made a wish. That was the first day we ever did that.

Skye: *(Gets more excited as she reads story out loud.)* And then...

This is it! *(Pause looks at the photos.)* This story is my favorite memory of visiting Laguna Gloria with Grandma.

Lyra: Even if she can't remember the details this is still a great story.

Bobbi: This is beautiful Skye. Do you know what you want for your cover?

Skye: I want the cover of the book to be something that represents our time together today.

Begins searching around the ground by the tree Something like this *(picks up a branch)*. All the long leaves are important parts of the branch. They show how all of you helped create the book.

Ashe: Here, let's find some good light so I can take a picture of it for you.

As Ashe is taking photo the soundscape starts and then the group goes into the final 8 count movement. The four of them face each other and each move differently at first and then go into an 8 count where they move in unison movements that each have a part of their individual movement sequence.

Skye: Thanks everyone! How will all of you remember our time together today? We'd like to invite you to choose an object to remember this place and our time here at Laguna Gloria today. We will help you if you like.

Actors now become facilitators and help the audience find an object.

Possible questions to help facilitate object gathering

- How did you get here earlier today?
- What is your favorite part of the grounds?
- Think about how your object feels, is it cold, smooth, rough? How does that represent how you are feeling about your day here?
- What does your object remind you of?
- Why did you pick it?

1
Not at all
2
3
Somewhat
4
5
Extensively

	PRE-SHOW	0 MIN	2 MIN	3 MIN	5 MIN	8 MIN	14 MIN
	Beat 1 Actors Interact w/ Audience	Beat 2 8 Count	Beat 3 Skye says: “Have any of you ever made something for someone you love?”	Beat 4 Skye says: “ Follow me! ”	Beat 5 Ashe says: “ What do you see? ”	Beat 6 Two separate groups look at photos	Beat 7 Ashe and Skye move down to the water
The audience member is focused on Actors							
Follows directions if prompted by Actors							
Audience member responds to questions in the play							

1
Not at all

2

3
Somewhat

4

5
Extensively

	PRE-SHOW	START	2 MIN	3 MIN	5 MIN	8 MIN	14 MIN
	Beat 1 Interact w/ Audience	Beat 2 8 Count	Beat 3 Skye says: “Have any of you ever made something for someone you love? ”	Beat 4 Skye says: “Follow me!”	Beat 5 Ashe says: “What do you see?”	Beat 6 Two separate groups look at photos	Beat 7 Ashe and Skye move down to the water
Audience member comes closer or gathers around photograph or Actor							
Understands how to participate in this section of the performance							

1
Not at all

2

3
Somewhat

4

5
Extensively

	17-21 MINS	22 MINS	23 MINS	24 MINS	26 MINS
	Beat 8/9/10: Bobbi asks about: 8. categories & 9. Actors w/ audience in groups 10. Sharing out	Beat 11: Song	Beat 12: Skye makes/ tells her story	Beat 13: 8 count	Beat 14 & 15: Audience members are invited to select an object for the art
The audience member is focused on Actors					
Follows directions if prompted by Actors					
Audience member responds to questions in the performance					

1
2
3
4
5
Not at all
Somewhat
Extensively

	17-21 MINS	22 MINS	23 MINS	24 MINS	26 MINS
	Beat 8/9/10 Bobbi asks about: 8. categories & 9. Actors w/ audience in groups 10. Sharing out	Beat 11 Song	Beat 12 Skye makes & tells her story	Beat 13 8 count	Beat 14 & 15 Audience members are invited to select an object for the art
Audience member comes closer or gathers around photograph or Actor					
Understands how to participate in this section of the performance					

In observing the final object choosing moment before the activity, ask the audience these questions.

1. What is your object?
2. Why did you select this object?
3. What does it help you remember? (if needed)

Appendix C: Pre/Post Survey

Name of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Pseudonym or Initials of person being interviewed: _____

Pre-Performance Questions

Why did you come to Laguna Gloria today?

Have you ever been to Laguna Gloria before? Please describe

When you think about Laguna Gloria what images come to mind?

What places or spaces are meaningful to you and your family (chosen or biological) in Austin? Why?

Have you ever attended an interactive theatre performance? If so when and what was what it?

During an interactive theatre performance, how comfortable are you with moments of participation between the audience and the performers, 1 being not comfortable and 5 being very comfortable?

Post Performance Questions

If you were going to describe this performance to someone else what would you tell them?

When you think about Laguna Gloria what images come to mind?

Did you choose to participate in the performance today?

How did you participate in the performance today?

What else would you like to share about your experience of today's performance?

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Vita

Jennifer Arffmann is a recent graduate from the Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities program. Jennifer has a background in arts integration and teaching visual art through Drama Based Pedagogy at a public charter school in East Austin. As an Applied Theatre practitioner in the DTYC program, Jennifer's focus was in arts integration and devising theatre. Working primarily with youth to devise theatre about their creative writing, Jennifer spent the last three summers working with Off Center Teen to create an original performance based off of the Rude Mechanicals devising techniques. Her background in visual art and arts integration has led her to continue to work in professional development at Creative Action, and in the field of museum theatre.

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This thesis was typed by Jennifer Arffmann