

A RISK WORTH TAKING: INCORPORATING VISUAL CULTURE  
INTO MUSEUM PRACTICES

Kate Wurtzel, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2008

APPROVED:

Rina Kundu, Major Professor  
Melinda Mayer, Committee Member  
Christina Bain, Committee Member  
Kelly Donahue-Wallace, Chair of the Department  
of Art Education/Art History  
Robert Milnes, Dean of the College of Visual Arts  
and Design  
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse  
School of Graduate Studies

Wurtzel, Kate. A Risk Worth Taking: Incorporating Visual Culture Into Museum Practices. Master of Arts (Art Education), December 2008, 144 pp., 2 appendix, references, 172 titles.

As a museum educator who embraces social education and reflects on the postmodern condition, I found working within a traditional museum context to present challenges. As a result, I conducted an action research project focusing on ways to improve my own practice and affect change based on my engagement with visual culture discourse and the docents I teach.

Having chosen action research, I implemented various teaching approaches and collected data over the course of several months. These data collection methods included interviews, museum documents, observational notes, recorded teaching practice, and daily journal entries. Narrative analysis was then used to interpret the collected data, specifically focusing how participants, including myself, make sense out of our experiences and how we value them.



Copyright 2008

by

Kate Wurtzel

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and give thanks to my committee members, Dr. Rina Kundu, Dr. Melinda Mayer, Dr. Christina Bain, and Dr. Connie Newton. The committee members' suggestions, insights, and contributions made my story stronger and my thinking sharper. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my major professor Dr. Rina Kundu. Over the last several years Dr. Kundu has pushed me to expand my thinking and to consider new understandings of the world. Her constant advice and feedback has challenged me to become a better writer and a stronger thinker.

I would like to also acknowledge my soon-to-be husband, Jeffrey Daniel Hodges for providing continuous support throughout the writing process and always encouraging me to pursue my personal journey as a research practitioner. Last but not least, I must acknowledge those who were willing to engage in conversation regarding teaching, learning, and museum education. Family members, friends, and colleagues who read each new chapter and offered intellectual debate were instrumental in achieving this goal.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
Chapters	
1. THE PROBLEM.....	1
Background to the Problem	
Statement of the Problem	
Theoretical Framework	
Methodology	
Significance of the Study	
2. VISUAL CULTURE .....	32
Defining Visual Culture	
Strands of Visual Culture: Deconstruction and Intertextuality	
Strands within Visual Culture: Positioning and Power	
Conclusion	
3. METHODOLOGY: ACTION RESEARCH .....	68
Understanding Action Research	
The Position of the Researcher and the Construction of Knowledge	
Strands of Action Research and Visual Culture	
Design of the Study: Educational Action Research	
Data Analysis	
Validity	
4. RECONCEPTUALIZING PRACTICE.....	91
Introduction	
Struggling with the Discourse	
Curriculum, Dialogue, and Social Learning	
Integrating Visual Culture into Practice	
The Importance of Reflection	
Findings and Epilogue	
5. IMPLICATIONS .....	122
The Fourth Dialogue	
Challenges and Struggles	
Learning to Teach: Social Systems and Reflection	
Contributions to the Field	
APPENDICES .....	130
REFERENCES .....	134

## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### Background to the Problem

##### *Teaching Values*

When people ask me if I am a teacher, I answer an emphatic yes. I, however, confound assumptions by explaining that I teach within the context of the museum. As a museum educator in north Texas, I am a teacher of teachers. My work, performed within a traditional, more modernist, and object-centered museum, consists of constructing programs and workshops for both children and adults. These programs and workshops are then executed by museum docents. As a result, my teaching moments do not happen directly with the public. Instead, I teach docents who then carry out program and workshop objectives or big ideas. Docents are educators in the museum; they are the liaisons between my teaching and visitors, extending learning experiences to the public. Due to the structure of the museum programs, and the position of the docents, I view my role not only as a museum programmer, but also as a teacher of teachers. I am helping to construct museum educational experiences through my own voice and through the voices of other educators.

I consider myself an art teacher who embraces social education and constantly reflects on postmodern discourses<sup>1</sup>. However, the museum within which I work is heavily rooted in modernist notions towards art and education. As a result, my values and educational approaches are in constant negotiation with other staff members and the environment in which I work. This tension and negotiation has proven to present challenges when trying to align my value system with everyday teaching practice. Therefore, for this project I am examining ways to negotiate my

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, I will identify postmodern discourses as visual culture, multiculturalism, critical theory, critical pedagogy, feminism, ecotheory, post structuralism, deconstruction and intertextuality (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a, 2000b; Jencks, 1996; Lyotard, 1984, 1992; Roberts, 1992).

teaching values and practices, with traditional museum practices coming out of modernism. More specifically, I am looking to the postmodern discourse of visual culture to inform my teaching practices, so that I may present and facilitate opportunities for museum visitors to question and explore self and society, specifically through my engagement with docent education.

My teaching values are based in social education that draws from visual culture discourses, and the use of art as a way to reflect on the self, society and the environment.<sup>2</sup> As a result of my experiences within the museum and within the classroom, I understand social education to include curriculum and instruction that addresses contemporary issues and the individual learner's experience. Olivia Gude (2004) articulates an understanding of social education and its objectives when she describes her 21<sup>st</sup> century art education curriculum. She describes this curriculum as one that gives students the "capacity to reflect on cultural issues related to self and society," and the ability to "learn to recognize cultural choices that underlie even the most mundane moments and actions of everyday life and consider whether these are the choices they themselves wish to make" (p. 9).<sup>3</sup> The positive benefit that I see in contemporary social education, as revealed by Olivia Gude (2004), is that the making and exploring of artwork can be a catalyst for larger life-centered understandings.

From my current work as Director of Education at a small museum in north Texas, my previous work as the family and special programs coordinator at a museum in north Texas, and my experiences student teaching in the public school classroom, I have come to realize that I

---

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this paper, I am using the term discourse, specifically visual culture discourse as an umbrella term, encompassing different ways of discussing and defining visual culture theory, pedagogy, and conversation.

<sup>3</sup> In Gude, O. (2004). "Postmodern Principles: In Search of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Art Education." *Art Education*, 57(1) p. 6-16, the author lists these characteristics as part of a contemporary spiral curriculum based on the Spiral Art Education curriculum website: [libroxy.library.unt.edu/2050](http://libroxy.library.unt.edu/2050).



value teaching about the self and the way we interact with our environment.<sup>4</sup> I view the museum and the art classroom as places where conversations focused on an object can extend outwards towards discussions on humanity and the ways in which people make conscious choices as part of a larger community. This direction for learning is supported by such art educators as Tom Anderson (2003) who argues that the goal of art education is to “understand ourselves and others better, allowing more intelligent and meaningful action in the arena of life” (p. 1). Yet, by aligning myself with this direction for learning, I am presenting a view that is different from earlier ideas towards museum education and its promotion of social education (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Zeller, 1989). Earlier museum education was focused on the object and enlightening the “undifferentiated mass audiences” with homogenous views of art and beauty, not as a tool for understanding more about the individual within society (Hooper Greenhill, 2000a, pg. 2).

### *Museum Education: The Early Years*

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the educational role of the museum in the United States was to promote good taste and civic responsibility (Roberts 1997; Zeller, 1989). “Good taste” was not necessarily determined by the individual visitor, but instead determined by the elite, and reinforced as a homogenous opinion. According to Zeller (1989), in 1916, Charles Hutchinson, the President of the Art Institute in Chicago, expressed the ability of art to “uplift the life of a community,” by stimulating imagination, fostering a sense of beauty, and instilling ideals among children that will “increase the happiness of future generations and assure the advance of a civilization” (p. 24). While Hutchinson’s

---

<sup>4</sup> This project took place at an art museum in north Texas. Since the project was completed, I became Director of Education at a different small museum located in Texas.

intentions sound optimistic, they make enormous assumptions about visitors and the way they learn.

The comments by Hutchinson, and similar comments that circulated during that time (Zeller, 1989), do not leave space for visitors' personal interpretations that are informed by their personal background or experiences. The museum professionals made assumptions about practice based on modernist thought or dogma. Modernist beliefs include: the belief that high art, identified as art within the museum, is inherently beautiful and universally understood, the belief that art should be experienced through formal analysis, and the belief that art should be presented as clearly delineated cultural objects (Hein, 1998; Hooper Greenhill 2000a; Rice, 1995; Zeller, 1989).<sup>5</sup> These modernist beliefs limit the learner's opportunity to construct his/her own knowledge and simultaneously limit the museum educator's opportunity to facilitate dialogue. Visitors are encouraged to act as passive receivers of information and educators become the suppliers of information that is centered on the object (Hein, 1998). With a heavy focus on the object, and with the visitor acting as a passive receiver, there is very little need for discussion or individual interpretation. Instead, these beliefs gave rise to museum practices that reinforced authoritative roles of museum staff and other members of society, and assumed all visitors to be alike (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a).

These earlier practices, which presently represent a more traditional approach, were didactic in nature. These didactic methods took the form of art-historical lecture tours, lengthy wall text, and exhibition displays that did not encourage cross-cultural comparisons, nor present the artworks as objects from living and practicing cultures.

---

<sup>5</sup> When stating "clearly delineated objects" I am referring to object display that reinforces the notion that knowledge or epistemology is the same across cultures (Duncan, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a; Osborne, 1985).

(Duncan, 1995; Hein, 1998).<sup>6</sup> These practices are still being used today as a main method for presenting information. As Hein (1998) explains,

All the approaches to education still used today, as well as many of the controversies surrounding them, were first introduced by pioneering staff members a century ago: didactic labels of varying length and complexity, lectures and other events for the public, special courses and programs for school groups, deliberately didactic exhibitions, and in house and outreach programs for general and specific audiences. (p. 4)

While I am not suggesting that all museum education practices need to change, I do believe there is a way to uncover a wider range of teaching and learning opportunities.

These teaching and learning opportunities are often times facilitated by dialogue, reflection, and an evaluation of the ways in which staff and visitors look at objects and the contexts surrounding them. However, within the traditional and more didactic teaching practices, there are underlying limitations that challenge museum educators who wish to engage in alternative types of interaction.

### *Didactic Methods*

Didactic methods of presenting information, set in place nearly a century ago, do not allow room for visitors to engage in dialogue that may provide an in-depth look at the self. The art historical lecture style tour, or what Mayer (2005b) distinguishes as the “walk and talk” tour, is inseparable from the museum’s use of wall text and exhibition display (p. 359). In many cases, the information presented on the tour is a regurgitation of the information displayed on the wall text, or labels (McCoy, 1989). For most museums, these labels do not cultivate visual comparisons or more subjective responses, but instead, they promote a historical or formal analysis. Although this is starting to change, textual information on labels is an arguable point of

---

<sup>6</sup> In this thesis, I will use the phrase “traditional museum practices” to refer to more didactic labels, lecture style tours, and exhibition displays that do not encourage visitors to think of the artwork as something from a living, contemporary culture.

contention that had a place in museum literature as late as the 1990s (Lankford, 2002). While there are some museum educators and researchers (Davidson, Heald & Hein, 1994; Hein, 1998; Roberts, 1997) who are experimenting with innovative wall text, the traditional museum label still consists of a rich visual analysis and in-depth historical context. Presenting information in this way, and training docents to provide this information in a lecture-style approach, ensures that the “walk and talk” tour revolves around traditional art history premises.<sup>7</sup>

The didactic labels and lecture-style tour also reinforce a particularly modernist way of knowing. True to modernist beliefs, knowledge is being provided instead of being constructed as a shared event between the visitor, educator, artist, and institution (Roberts, 1997). The art historical information and the formal analysis presented on the labels, and reinforced by the lecture-style tour, suggest that the information is an objective absolute truth (Preziosi, 1989, Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a, Hooper-Greenhill, 2000b). By presenting the information as an absolute truth, there is the implication that the only route to understanding and appreciating a work of art is by receiving and memorizing its historical and formal properties. In turn, the didactic labels and lecture style tours support the modernist belief that the language of art is universally understood and that we all learn through the same methods.

According to Elkind (1997), “Education in the modern era also manifested the belief in universality,” the belief in a singular, dominant, and usually Eurocentric narrative (p. 29). In the case of museums, “universality” refers to both the visitors’ interpretations and the language of art. The modernist notion of universality breeds the expectation that the un-differentiated masses who visit the museum, will all view the artwork and automatically understand the artwork in the

---

<sup>7</sup> For this thesis, I will define traditional art history using Donald Preziosi’s (1989) three premises that govern the discipline: “1) artworks say (express, reveal, articulate, project) something determinate; 2) that such determinacy be grounded ultimately in authorial or artistic intention; 3) that the properly equipped analyst could mimetically approximate such determinate intentionality by producing a reading that, it must be assumed, was similarly trained and skilled experts might agree possesses some consensual objectivity” (p. 29).

same manner and according to the perspective delivered by the museum (Rice, 1992a, p. 53-55). It supports the idea that art speaks a determinate, absolute truth that is inherent to the work, and can therefore be perceived by anyone with a “trained” eye. This notion that art has a universal language understood by all who are educated does not leave space for personal interpretation, perceptions, or differing experiences that contribute to one’s understanding of a work of art.

The expectation that everyone will have an uplifting and meaningful experience through pure formal and historical analysis is strongly aligned with traditional art history and the educational background of most museum educators. One main reason why these “walk and talk” tours are still perpetuated is because many educators have the same background as a museum curator; they are heavily invested in art history and not as equally invested in art education or pedagogy (Low, 1962; Mayer, 2005b). At the museum where this study was conducted, most of the staff in the education department have either a masters or doctorate in art history. This narrower focus on art history can create environmental challenges. For example, when presented with the choice between delivering art historical information in a lecture-style approach and integrating contemporary teaching practices that involve dialogue, the focus is typically on the art historical lecture. Although changes have occurred in the disciplines of art history and pedagogy within the last several decades, many museums and their staff still resist these new initiatives (Muhlberger, 1985).

### *Traditional Art History and Exhibition Design*

The advent of postmodernism in the late 1970s and early 80s brought on new social movements, such as feminism, Marxism, and poststructuralism, and forged new ways of thinking about art history that are now referred to as the “new art histories” (Bal & Bryson, 1991; Mayer

2005b; Preziosi, 1989). Even though the new art histories were discussed in the literature of the late 1970s, 80s, and 90s, traditional art history and its “museological validating mechanisms” continue to dominate museum practice (Preziosi, p. 8, 1989, Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a, 2000b).

The new art histories have largely escaped implementation into practices, such as in the creation of labels and exhibition display (Duncan, 1995). Art historians Preziosi (1989) and Grabar (1982) admit that criticism towards traditional methodologies, and the attempts to change the discipline, are contained mostly within academic circles. Although these new ways of looking at art history raised critiques of conventional exhibition display, and prompted innovative approaches by artists, educators, and scholars, such as Fred Wilson (2001), Maurice Berger (2001), Eilean Hooper Greenhill (2000a), Carol Duncan (1995), and Moore (1998), they did not have a widespread effect.

As a discipline, traditional art history ascribes to the idea that the stories we tell about art, and the practice of art making, is linear and culturally sectionalized. As Kuspit (1987) explains, “Art history is still legalistically territorialized as an area of clearly marked boundaries” (p. 346). These clearly marked boundaries have an affect on several aspects of teaching and learning. They isolate cultures from one another and imply that cultures producing these objects are not living, contemporary, practicing cultures visitors may connect with. If the artwork is seen as something that is only of the past and has no relevancy to the visitor’s framework or knowledge, the visitor will loose interest (Roberts, 1997). In the case of the museum in which this study was conducted, the space is sequestered so that the European artwork is upstairs and the Meso-American and African artworks are downstairs, in much smaller galleries. This organization of the space denies a broader, more postmodern social context that moves beyond the visual

experience.<sup>8</sup> The separation does not allow visitors to connect to the art in relationship to a current, ongoing community, and it covertly resists the idea that cultures and cultural exchanges have an effect on one another. With such distinct cultural and geographic delineations in the galleries, there is very little space for the visitors to exercise their critical eye and reflect on their position as viewers of objects. The information is being presented in a “monolithic” manner that makes it seem more objective, impersonal, and absolute (Wilson, 2001, p. 39). In this way, the traditional exhibition display, with their “socially privileged spaces,” govern the structure of a tour, reinforcing modernist ideas towards art and education (Duncan, 1995, p. 65).

The choices made around exhibition design speak to what is being said and what is not being said. In the end, it is the museum educator and the visitor who bear the brunt of the tensions created by exhibition display decisions. The display choices can silently deny the approachability of particular subjects and certain learning opportunities. They may not visually provoke visitors to question the connections between cultural objects or artworks in opposing galleries, but rather they dictate how visitors are to view and think about a work of art (Wilson, 2001). Moreover, this long-standing format for exhibition display is something that has become comfortable, familiar, and possibly boring for both visitors and docents.

The docents or tour guides are more familiar with the organization of objects when they are displayed according to more traditional methods (McCoy, 1989), such as galleries that are highly sectionalized by cultural boundaries, and wall text that provides little to no social context extending beyond certain geographic borders and delineated time frames. In order for the docent

---

<sup>8</sup> For this thesis I am defining “postmodern social context” in regard to exhibition display based upon the Fred Wilson’s discussion with Maurice Berger in *Collaboration, Museums, and the Politics of Display: A Conversation with Fred Wilson*, and Kerry Freedman’s (2003a) discussion on context in *Teaching Visual Culture*. The term “postmodern social context” refers to the notion that artworks have the ability to provide insight on the self and other contemporary cultures through their multiple interpretations based on complex cultural systems that “influence judgments of goodness” (Freedman, 2003a, p. 54).

to work within this structure and still resist presenting cultures as separate and romanticized entities, they have to invoke new ideas through dialogue. I am referring to a type of dialogue that includes the object, but extends beyond art-historical or formal information. It involves making space for individuals of all ages to reflect on their mindset, their culture, their perceptions of the object, and the context in which it is being viewed (Amburgy, Keifer-Boyd, & Knight, 2003). This type of viewing and interaction is addressed in visual culture discourses, which suggests that a close evaluation of the ways in which we view an object, and the context in which we view an object, can provide a better understanding of how decisions made by ourselves and others have varying effects on society.

The prominence of visual culture discourses in art education indicates that changes are occurring in the field. The present literature on visual culture implies a shifting focus that includes the visitors and their educational experience. According to Lankford (2002), “the most educationally provocative issues revolve around the presentation or transmission of didactic information as opposed to stimulating visitor inquiry” (p. 143). The importance placed on stimulating visitors’ curiosity and renewing their experience in today’s museum, suggests that teaching practices need to be evaluated and altered to meet new understandings of education in the museum. Visual culture discourses offer a sensible way to approach this new way of understanding art education. As Lisa Roberts (1997) explains, education “becomes an act of empowerment...educators have instituted reforms in their interpretive activities that treat knowledge as not only a productive endeavor but also a shared venture” (p. 56). It is my belief that investigating the museum educator’s values, and the institutional context in which he/she works, can determine ways in which an educator may create a more optimal learning experience for the contemporary visitor.



## *The Postmodern Museum*

The contemporary museum visitor is living in an era during which ways of receiving information and constructing knowledge is not the same as it was a century ago. The “postmodern era”, which began to reveal itself in around the late 1960s, brought forth new conceptions about education and ways of knowing (Elkind, 1997). As Elkind (1997) explains, “It was only in the 60s and 70s that the tenets of postmodernity—difference, particularity, and irregularity—begin to dictate educational practices” (p. 34). Various social movements, such as feminism, marxism, and the civil rights movement, began to change the way society understood education and learning (Elkind, 1997). Schools began focusing on the smaller narratives and move away from universal assumptions (Elkind, 1997). However, this was, and continues to be, a slow paradigm shift that is still meeting resistance in learning environments in today’s culture (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996).

Defining postmodernism is beyond the purview of this thesis; however, I will rely on the term postmodernism to refer to certain postmodern characteristics. These include: the disbelief that all advances in society are positive and that history can only be presented as a linear evolution in accordance with these advances, the disbelief that Eurocentric values or the singular narrative is applicable to everyone, and the inclusion of smaller narratives that reflect many points of view (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996).<sup>9</sup> This idea is particularly important for this thesis because it explains how our understanding of the world, and the way we come to learn,

---

<sup>9</sup> To read more on the defining characteristics of postmodernism, See Jencks, C. (1996). *What is Postmodernism*. Chichester West Suffex. UK: Academy Editions for further discussion on postmodernism with an exploration of its definition, and its relationship to art and architecture. To investigate how these characteristics apply to curriculum, see Efland, A, Freedman, K, Stuhr, P. (1996). *Postmodern Art Education: An Approach to Curriculum*. Reston. VA: National Art Education Association for further discussion on postmodernism and its affects on curriculum, include the development of multiculturalism and different ways of knowing,

have changed. Defining the characteristics of postmodernism helps to explain why traditional museum practices may no longer suit the 21<sup>st</sup> century visitor (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a).

Postmodernism is characterized by the questioning and critiquing of the way information is presented and understood (Roberts, 1997). The coming of postmodernism in education encouraged the break down of the singular narrative to include multiple perspectives; it encouraged a close analysis of the ways in which knowledge is created and reinforced through social systems. (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). With the breakdown of the singular narrative to include multiple perspectives, personal interpretations started to take priority; learning was beginning to be understood as an ever-changing process of “making meaning and finding connections” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 12). Through this continual examination of meaning, and the creation or recreation of knowledge, postmodern beliefs have a direct relationship with educational environments such as the museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a).

Ideally, the postmodern museum would create room for the visitor to inquire about himself/herself and society through a close examination of the object and the ways in which she/he is looking at it. The postmodern museum would offer an educational space that is provocative, challenging, and moving. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000a) offers an explanation of the “post-museum” in which she identifies the values that would enable this to happen. She states “Rather than upholding the values of objectivity, rationality, order and distance, the post-museum will negotiate responsiveness, encourage mutually nurturing partnerships, and celebrate diversity” (p. 153). However these values, based on postmodern beliefs, are stifled by traditional practices and past precedence.

Although the perceptions towards art and museums at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did establish museums as educational institutions, they did not necessarily relate art to the lives

of the people. I believe it is the responsibility of the museum educators to find new ways of practicing that can work within the modern traditions, and still effectively implement teaching values based on postmodern ideas or discourses. Using visual culture theory in the museum, I believe the visitors can gain better understanding of themselves, their environment, and society at large. For this thesis, therefore, I explored the museum as an active learning space, examining my own practice and its contributions towards making the institution a place for greater dialogue and richer meaning-making experiences.

### Statement of the Problem

The museum educator is given the possibility of presenting artworks as something relevant to the individual acting in today's society. The artwork can become more than just the sum of its formal principles and elements of design (Rice, 1995). It can inspire visitors, move them, provoke them, and help them understand their individual lives in a new way. In alignment with my teaching values, it is important that I create an educational environment where learning is a social interaction that encourages reflection and discussion on the self and society. Falk and Dierking (2000) identify interactions and discussions as "people's efforts to negotiate personal and cultural meaning" (p. 47). Even though I worked within a museum environment that values traditional practices and stands on past precedence, I sought new ways to implement learning and create space for the visitor to engage in these negotiations (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

My teaching values are informed by my understanding of visual culture discourses and their possible affects within the museum context. Visual culture studies presents a new way of looking that supports an evaluation of the self and the environment. Using visual culture discourses as a lens in which to view education in a museum environment, could potentially

provide viewers with a space to become more aware of the ways in which they perceive, reflect, challenge, and negotiate both the art object and its relationship to the social.

### *Visual Culture: A New Way to Look*

As a set of theories, visual culture studies illustrates a way to create spaces for dialogue and new ways of looking within a modernist environment. In trying to reconcile traditional museum practices with non-traditional practices, I wish to use visual culture discourses to engage audiences in the re-evaluation of the act of looking. Instead of being passive observers of certain objects, audiences should have opportunities to actively make meaning of objects (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000b). Visual culture discourses provides an innovative and relevant approach to this challenge.

While there are several threads developing in the field of visual culture, I focused on the two that are most applicable to this thesis. Directions for visual culture study include: a push to broaden the canon, an emphasis on how to look at objects and gain a greater understanding of the conditions in which they are being viewed, and “the study of images within their context as part of social practice” (Duncum, p. 17, 2002a). When discussing a new way to think about dialogue within museum practice, and creating experiences that challenge and engage participants, Duncum’s (2002a) last two definitions are most applicable.

Ralph Smith (2004) warns about the “zealotry” of using visual culture to expand the canon and the need to “salvage” high art; however, Duncum’s (2002a) third thread of visual culture resolves this issue by addressing the “how” instead of the “what”. Visual culture, presented as a way of seeing, is asking visitors to examine the subjective as well as various other perspectives. According to Eilean Hooper Greenhill (2000a), visual culture is more than just

expanding the canon to include additional visual objects. It can offer a way to analyze the “ways in which we look at them” (Duncum, p.20, 2003a) and examine the context through which we look.

An examination of the conditions by which objects are viewed goes against traditional practice and the associated idea that a purely aesthetic experience can enlighten an individual. Defining the aesthetic experiences is still something of a mystery. For some, the aesthetic experience is defined as something outside of an individual’s regular routine (Freedman, 2003a). It is the ability to have a sacred moment celebrating the object and its artistic properties; it is a sort of surrendering to the power of the art (Lankford, 2002).<sup>10</sup> However, as Lankford (2002) argues, contemporary learning research shows that the visitors who are left alone in the museum are not able to access this type of experience on their own. Goodman (1985) and Osborne (1985) discuss the aesthetic experience as a deliberate decision that requires practice and the development of “aesthetic skills” (Smith 1985). I believe those working within visual culture studies, such as Duncum (2001a), Freedman (2000), Mirzoeff (1999, 2002a, 2006), Mitchell (2002) and Tavin (2003, 2004, 2005), recognize these skills and attempt to take the experience much further. By considering concepts found within the discourses of visual culture studies, individuals gain insight from analyzing the context in which an object is viewed and how their experiences are informing the way they are receiving, understanding, and interacting with the object.

Visual culture studies offer ways of questioning not only those who make the art, but also those who receive it and the environment in which it is received (Duncum, 2002a). Museum educators can ideally put this way of looking at context into effect. In Lisa Robert’s (1997)

---

<sup>10</sup> Levi and Smith (1991) describe various versions of the aesthetic experience. For a further exploration of the controversial characteristics of the aesthetic experience, see Levi, A.W., Smith, R. (1991) *Art education: A Critical Necessary*. Urbana : University of Illinois Press.

discussion on museum educators providing a broader context, she cites a museum educator Danielle Rice, as saying “In showing that it is people who structure and control institutions, rather than the other way around, and in helping people to analyze the decisions by which aesthetic and other value judgments are made, we empower people to act with greater awareness” (p. 78). The museum educator can provide the space where institutional assumptions, personal beliefs and personal values can collide and be explored in a safe context. By examining the ways in which one looks, we are asking deeper questions about ourselves, the environment, and the social structures that create that environment in which we are looking. Through visual culture, visitors can explore how roles are negotiated in various environments and society at large. Investigating the “how” or the “ways” in which one is looking can prompt a deeper analysis of personal beliefs and/or expectations for oneself and society at large (Freedman, 2003a).

Of course, this deeper analysis can pose a threat to the more traditionally didactic museum. In discussing the context in which they are looking, the visitors may challenge the validity and power structures of the institution. I am not trying to make power struggles the focus of this thesis, but it is important to acknowledge power struggles within the context of the museum. There are practitioners, such as Juliet Moore (1997) and Danielle Rice (1995) who addresses the relationship between power and knowledge within the museum context. Although I agree with the notion that museum practitioners are negotiating power, it is not the main focus of this thesis. Instead the main focus is identifying how visual culture discourses may contribute to the construction of educational experiences that embody my values as a teacher and impact learning in the museum.

## *My Values*

As a museum educator and art teacher in this post-modern era, I believe it is my responsibility to create a type of educational environment where individuals can investigate notions of self, nature, and society. I view the museum space as an ideal environment for making and discussing art in a way that leads to affirmations and challenges about the self, nature, and society. I value the fact that I can provide opportunities for reflection, and critical evaluations on the self and the way in which we interact with the world as a changing landscape.

We live in an increasingly globalized society with nearly unlimited access to information and images (Freedman, 2003b). This nearly omni-directional flow of information and images forces individuals to constantly try to redefine themselves, their environment, and their understanding of society. As Freedman (2003b) states “In the postmodern world, what students come to know and how they come to know breaks traditional boundaries” (p.15). As a teacher, I hope to always offer a way to make sense of these larger questions through investigation, reflection, and action. It is important to me that students look critically at how their interactions have an effect on those around them; investigating how they are affected by others’ perceptions or social expectations, and how understanding different perspectives can be valuable. I believe that dialogue around an artwork, using visual culture discourses, can extend into an investigation of ways of knowing and acting within the world.

In alignment with the aforementioned characteristics of postmodernism, I see the importance of including smaller narratives and looking critically at the ways in which individuals are interconnected. This interconnection permeates relationships on many levels; it exists between the self and those we encounter in our daily lives, the self and nature or the environment, and the self and pre-established social structures. In offering a space for dialogue

within the museum, I hope to promote the benefits of seeing others peoples' perspectives, the importance of dialogue around cultural identity, the value of questioning mass culture, and the benefits of understanding one another on a deeper level (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Gude, 2005). By creating learning experiences that engage viewers to analyze the ways in which artworks are seen, and the context in which they are viewed, I can create opportunities for visitors to question their assumptions about themselves, others, and their environments. These ideas are central to the basis of my teaching values and yet the implementation of them is restricted by the museum environment. Therefore, this raises the question of how I might become the type of teacher I want to be within an environment heavily rooted in modernism.

I believe it is important for me to examine how my values, correlating with visual culture, translate into practice. Instead of keeping notions about the viewer and the "viewed" contained within academic circles and museum literature, studying the application of visual culture can help move the discourse from theory to practice. As a result, the research questions I address throughout this study, and ones I believe have implications for the field, are as follows: How can visual culture discourse be used to create active and meaningful learning experiences within a traditional museum environment? Specifically, how can I improve my teaching practice using visual culture discourse in a modernist museum environment, so that I may present and facilitate opportunities for the museum visitor to question and explore self and society, specifically through my engagement with docent education?

## Theoretical Framework

### *Conceptual Framework*

This thesis is concerned with the integration of contemporary museum practices that



create meaningful experiences based on visual culture discourses. In order to establish the difference between traditional practices and contemporary practices, along with the importance of implementing these new practices, I have examined texts that address the historical development of museums, changes in the discipline of art history, changes in art education curriculum, postmodern characteristics, and visual culture discourses.

The essays and articles “The Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Art Museum Education in America” (Zeller, 1989), “Education, Communication and Interpretation: Toward a Critical Pedagogy in Museums” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994), “Can Philosophical Change Take Hold in the American Art Museum?” (Mayer, 1998), and “Museum Education Embracing Uncertainty” (Rice 1995) address the development of museum education and highlight changes either occurring in the field, or needing to occur in the field. These texts map out the various underlying philosophical and social foundations of museum education during the early 1900s through the later part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. They also suggest pedagogic changes that have occurred, or should occur, within museum practice. A close analysis of various institutional practices and the call for pedagogic changes can also be found in the books *From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum* (Roberts, 1997), *Learning from Museums*, (Falk & Dierking, 2000), *Learning in the Museum* (Hein, 1998), *Civilizing Ritual: Inside Public Art Museums* (Duncan, 1995) and in several essays from *Transforming Practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education 1992-1999* (eds. Hirsch & Silverman, 2000). These texts address changes in the way visitors construct knowledge and how meaningful experiences are defined in the museum. They also discuss the importance of expanding beyond traditional practices.

The emphasis on moving beyond traditional museum practices is tied to changes in the discipline of art history and art education. In this thesis, I touch upon the changes in art history in

relationship to the visitor's ability to make meaning with works of art. The book *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (Preziosi, 1989), and Mayer's (2005b) article "A Postmodern Puzzle: Rewriting the Place of the Visitor in Art Museum Education" point to changes in art history and the influence of postmodern discourses on visitor's interpretation of artworks. I also look specifically at visual culture, a discourse coming out of postmodernism, and its contribution in enabling meaningful experiences with objects. Sources for understanding visual culture, with its multiple threads and points of contention, include Duncum (2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003), Mirzoeff (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2006), Mitchell (2002). Stankiewicz (2004), Smith (2004), Sturken and Cartwright (2001) Tavin (2003, 2004, 2005). Within these resources, the authors discuss the foundation of the discourse, its various threads or definitions, and reasons why the application of visual culture is both beneficial and threatening to the field of art education. Authors such as Amburgy, Boyd, and Knight (2003), along with Barrett (2003), and Freedman (2000, 2003a, 2003b), discuss visual culture in relationship to contemporary art education curriculum within the classroom. Whereas, Hooper-Greenhill (2000a, 2000b) addresses visual culture within the curriculum of the museum and compares the effects of modernism with the effects of postmodernism in the museum environment.

Although defining postmodernism is a challenge, the characteristics of postmodernism, and how they affect teaching practices, must also be addressed. For this reason, I drew from Efland, Freedman and Stuhr (1988), Gude (2004), Elkind (1997), and Jencks (1996), to establish postmodern characteristics and their importance in creating meaningful learning experiences. Whereas Jencks discusses the properties of postmodernism as a larger social movement and in relationship to art and architecture, the others explore the application of visual culture ideologies within an educational environment. Discourses coming out of postmodernism have influenced

visual culture studies heavily. Texts that address these postmodern discourses and provide insight visual culture as it relates to educational experiences include: Bakhtin's theory of dialogism as discussed by Holonquist (1990), Julia Kristeva's translation of Bakhtin's theory and introduction of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980, 1986; Graham Allen, 2000; Mary Orr, 2003), as well as deconstruction and its application in contemporary curriculum (Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996), feminist pedagogy as discussed by Giroux (1992) and Britzman (2003) and critical theory with a focus on power, culture and education (Arnowitz and Giroux, 1991, 1993; Giroux, 1992; Foucault, 1980).

### *Purpose of the Study*

The experience of looking, reflecting and creating artworks offers a space for self actualization and understanding that "we do not all see the same thing" (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002, p. 132). While engaged in activity, museum visitors are presented with an opportunity to reflect on their own perspectives, as well as those held by others, and the relationship between the two. By finding ways of examine the context in which one looks at artworks, and how one situates herself/himself when viewing an artwork, museum educators are presenting opportunities for visitors to "question, contemplate and grow" (Carr, 1989, p. 54).

Carr (1989) argues that the most authentic learning experiences within the museum require continuous reflection, planning, flexibility, and evaluation on the part of the museum educator (p. 54). I fundamentally agree with Carr (1989) and believe that the framework of this study as an investigation into my own practice supports that argument. I am examining ways to negotiate my teaching values and practices, with traditional museum practices coming out of modernism. More specifically, I am looking to the postmodern discourse of visual culture to

inform my teaching practices, so that I may present and facilitate opportunities for the museum visitor to question and explore self and society, specifically through my training of docents.

Since I consider the museum a place where questioning and reflecting on the self and the social, teaching within a museum that employs more traditional practices is problematic. The use of visual culture in the museum is the principle method for my exploration into this problem. Drawing on the work of Kerry Freedman (2003a, 2003b) and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000a), I see value in the investigation of visual culture in the museum. With the growing research on visitors' experiences and changing values in art museums, there is a great opportunity to create spaces that embrace learning about, reflecting on, and challenging notions of the self and the environment (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a).

My intention throughout this project was to improve my practice and determine how visual culture discourses can contribute to the creation of meaningful learning experiences. While there is much discussion on visual culture and art education, research that evaluates the application of visual culture in the museum context is scarce and risky (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a). Because an examination of the application of visual culture discourses could lead to an understanding of how to merge my values with the values of the institution, and offer insight into museum learning experiences, I undertook this project.

## Methodology

### *Paradigmatic Assumptions*

This research project was based on a specific perspective that acknowledges the influence of context and individual values and experiences in the construction of “truth” and knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This perspective, called the postpositivist perspective, views truth and

knowledge as “conjectural” and without absolute foundations (Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 29). The postpositivism paradigm is not opposed to the existence of truth, but rather supports the notions that there are multiple truths, and these multiple truths are subject to change depending upon the problem being investigated (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). This concept is in alignment with ideas put forth by visual culture discourses and its supporting postmodern theories.

Visual culture falls subject to critical theory and the deconstructivist point of view. Both theories support the notion that there are multiple ways of knowing and multiple beliefs constructed within social context and power relationships. Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) identify the deconstructivist critic as one who “attempts to uncover oppositions not so much to resolve them but to show that no points of view are privileged” (p. 104). As the visitor and museum educator look critically at the context in which they are viewing an artwork and various points of view toward an artwork, they are essentially uncovering privileged views, as well as those that are not privileged. This uncovering of multiple points of view could lead to shared understandings about the institution, the self, and society at large. Similarly, critical theory looks at the construction of knowledge in relationship to the interactions between power and various social institutions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Critical theory is applicable for this study in that it defends the smaller narratives, and the notion that there are multiple ways of experiencing the ways in which one comes to understand her surroundings (Arnowitz & Giroux, 1991, 1993; Foucault, 1980; Moore, 1998). By using a visual culture lens, and thus involving deconstruction and critical theory, the museum educator and participants are exploring the construction of truth, how it is situated, and how it frames us as learners. Examining how to teach, therefore, and integrating visual culture into museum pedagogy, can potentially reveal information about the construction of truth and knowledge.

## *Design of the Study*

Since I chose to examine how my personal values frame my practice within a modernist institution and integrate ideas coming out of visual culture, it seems natural to have chosen action research as my methodology. Action research is based on the conception of teacher as researcher where the practitioner asks questions such as “What am I doing? What do I need to improve? How do I improve it?” (May & Diket, 1995, p. 223; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 1). According to McNiff & Whitehead (2006) this type of research offers a chance for practitioners to “investigate their own practice as they find ways of living more fully in the direction of their educational values” (p. 8). . Action research reinforces reflection, stresses the influence of context, and calls for change. As the researcher, action research encouraged me to create practice, reflect upon my practice, and examine my effectiveness on my surroundings.

Action research is also defined as being site and practitioner specific, and therefore, influenced by the social context and the practitioner’s values (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). As a methodology, action research recognizes that the institution and those acting within the institution affect the data collected. More specifically the docents, the museum culture, and I, influenced the way knowledge was constructed during this research project. The research was a shared experience where individuals brought their perspectives to the museum environment. It was a collaborative process that enabled values, beliefs and understandings of truth to be challenged, reformed, strengthened, etc.

Action research supports the “epistemological assumption” that knowledge is uncertain and created through a collaborative process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). With this type of research, the practitioner is not looking for an absolute truth or answer, but rather acknowledging that there can be multiple answers and that knowledge is created in relation to various ways of

knowing and understanding the world. (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 28). The design of this study therefore took into account the notion that knowledge is socially constructed, and “truth” is a negotiation between parties, not through observations of value-free interactions that are separate from the researcher. Using action research, allowed me to acknowledge that insights gained from this research are not neutral; they are the result of interactions between me and others, particularly the docents and my colleagues, in the community in which I work. The collision of our experiences and values had an impact on our investigation into new ways of thinking, looking, and talking about works of art.

### *Participants and Location*

The study took place at a fine art museum located in the north Texas area. Throughout the study, I investigated several main areas. These areas included: my construction of two Childrens’ Workshops, one in October 2006 and one in December 2006, how I taught docents in preparation for these two workshops, and the docents’ reflections on their teaching experiences or any changes they made in their practice. Throughout the project, I also monitored my own reflections on teaching and learning in the museum.

The site and participants can be considered both convenient and purposeful sampling. Since I was employed at the museum during the course of this project, I could actively situate myself as full participant. As full participant, I had ample opportunities to evaluate my teaching practices within the programs that I designed and implemented (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) This included an evaluation of my own practice, as well as the observation of how my own practice impacted the docents I worked with on a regular basis.

Although I designed the content of the Childrens' Workshops, the docents carried out most of the teaching.<sup>11</sup> In designing these programs, I was responsible for determining the workshop themes, objectives, tour suggestions, and studio art activities. Once I designed the workshops, a "training session" was scheduled. During this training session, we reviewed the program theme, objectives, tour suggestions, and the art activity. From that point on, the docents facilitated the gallery discussions and conducted tours with workshop participants. After the workshop was over, we met as a group to reflect on the docents' experiences in the galleries and discuss their observations of student learning (see Appendix A).

For the Childrens' Workshops, docents typically sign up for workshops at an earlier semester sign-up event. However, for the purpose of this research project, I requested that docents who sign up for the October 2006 workshop also sign up for the December 2006 workshop. In doing so, I could have a better idea of any changes occurring in their practice, as I intervened on my own practice. In addition to the group reflection session, which acted as group interviews, I also chose three docents to interview individually (see Appendix B). I purposely chose docents whose pedagogical positions ranged from more traditional approaches to non-traditional approaches. For example, whereas one of the docents had previously discussed works of art with me as part of broader contexts, another docent expressed a greater interest in the object's art historical content. In the end, I had hoped to record these three docents in the galleries with their students during the two workshops. However, when the day arrived the docents were uncomfortable walking around with individual, hand-held, recorders. As a result, I trailed the three docents and made observations about their workshop conversations.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> *Childrens' Workshop* is the title of the program.

<sup>12</sup> Not being able to record their conversation proved to be a limitation of the study, but one that was overcome as a result of the reflection session. During the reflection sessions, the docents would often refer to their time in the galleries and recall their group conversations.



### *Method of Data Collection*

Since the goal of action research was to “improve practice by improving learning,” it was critical that I collected data from all aspects of my practice (McNiff & Whitehead 2006, p. 32). In order to gain a broader understanding of the situation, I used triangulation. Marshall and Rossman (1995) define triangulation as “the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (p. 144). Overall, I collected several sources of data pertaining to two Childrens’ Workshops scheduled for October 14<sup>th</sup> and December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Each Childrens’ Workshop had a training session and reflection session that were recorded and transcribed. The Childrens’ Workshop training sessions were scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup> and December 11<sup>th</sup>. The paperwork docents received during these training sessions, and my personal daily journal entries regarding my practice, served as additional sources of data. Lastly, I transcribed recordings of individual docent interviews that took place over several months (see Appendix B). These individual interviews were conducted as standard open-ended, semi-structured interviews, where there was a sequence of questions with some flexibility (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). I chose three docents to conduct individual interviews with after each workshop, exploring any changes they saw occurring in their practice from the October workshop to the December workshop.<sup>13</sup>

I feel it is important to reiterate that the object of this investigation was my teaching practice, and not critiquing the docents’ practice. In trying to gain a better understanding of how effectively I communicate my values under the limitations of the museum context, and the contributions visual culture could make to the environment, I needed the docents to interpret the discourse for themselves. Determining how visual culture discourse might impact their

---

<sup>13</sup> Although two docents could participate in both workshops at the last minute, the third docent could not participate in the December workshop. As a result, I ended up with only 5 individual interviews.

individual practice, and enable them to create more meaningful experiences, was up to the docents. How I introduce them to the discourse and engage them in new ways of thinking about and looking at art was up to me.

### *Method of Data Analysis*

For this thesis, I looked for evidence of times when a commitment to my teaching values were demonstrated through the regular integration of visual culture discourse. I also looked for moments when visual culture enabled richer dialogue to occur, where docents were looking at and discussing works of art in new ways. Lastly, I looked for evidence when the intervention on my own practice inspired others to modify or improve upon their practice. This evidence emerged from the collected written data and the transcribed recordings. Once the individual interviews, training sessions, and reflection sessions were transcribed, I compiled the transcriptions with my journal entries and the paperwork designed for each workshop. From there, I used narrative analysis to break down the information further.

Narrative analysis is inherently interdisciplinary and focuses on the story being told or recalled; it is the study of the way people organize and recount their experiences in the world. There are several different narrative analysis models available. However, for the purpose of this study, I chose to use Labov and Waletzky's model. This model breaks down narratives into six components: the abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Reissman, 1993). The last three, the evaluation, resolution, and coda, proved to be most significant when evaluating both the docents and my story. These three categories demonstrated the significance of certain events for the docents and explored how these events might effect

their future practice.<sup>14</sup> In the end, Labov and Waltetzky's model seemed to be the most applicable narrative analysis method for my particular project.

### *Validity*

Because this study, based on action research, is centered on my practice and my values, it is considered more subjective than objective (May & Diket, 1995). While I admit that it is subjective and contains a bias, this subjectivity allowed me to recognize and critique various discourses that effect my practice. While the nature of my chosen methodology precludes this investigation from having generalizability, trustworthiness can be established through self reflexive. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), "Self-reflexive validity analyzes how social discourses shape or mediate the experience" (p. 188). I do not deny that my personal narrative is embedded in the research experience. Yet, I believe it contributes to my understanding of the "realities" of the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 352).

In addition, I feel confident that the time invested and the methods involved in the triangulation demonstrate the complexity of the situation in my pursuit to understand my practice. Instead of ascertaining a single observation, the multiple data collection methods have revealed the richness of the situation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001). Lastly, one of the docents conducted a peer review, to ensure that I had captured her voice fully, as well as the various situations in which we discuss our teaching. This peer review addresses the subject/objective issue by ensuring that my description and interpretation of the data is not completely self-serving and unfounded.

---

<sup>14</sup> The application of this model is explored more in Chapter 3 and 4.

## Significance of the Study

Although this research is site specific, it has implications for the broader museum education community. The available museum education literature that discusses action research in the museum, such as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's (2000b) "Changing Values in the Art Museum: Rethinking Communication and Learning" and Nathalie Lemelin's (2002) "Participatory Action Research in a Contemporary Art Museum", is limited and does not specifically address the application of visual culture. Instead, the bulk of the research investigating the application of visual culture takes place in the art classroom, in which the researchers are either art teachers or preservice teachers<sup>15</sup>.

While there is a growing body of literature that discusses the changing perspective of museum education and the effects that museum educators can have on the visitors, many of these texts do not embrace the question of applicable teaching practices. Research in the field needs to begin proposing practical ways to teach to these new possibilities. Although the staff of a traditional museum may resist strategies based on visual culture discourses, I believe it is worth the risk. Museum educators have an opportunity to affect change and empower people with greater understanding of themselves and the world around them. As the evidence demonstrates in present day museum education literature, now is an opportune time for museum educators to make changes and experience risk on many different levels.

### *Risks Involved*

In discussing risks involved with this project, I am referring to risks beyond the threat of

---

<sup>15</sup> To read more about action research and preservice teachers or action research, see Carroll, K. (1997). "Action research and preservice" in *Art Education*. 50(6).p. 6-13. To read more about action research and art education, see essays submitted by Lynn Galbraith and Dorothy Anderson (1995) in Chapter 8 of *New Waves of Research in Art Education*.

losing my job. In changing my approach to teaching docents, there are many different risks, including the perceptions of others and my own self perception. By taking a visual culture approach to teaching, I asked the docents to let go of their notion of teacher as expert and engage in the unknown. I asked them to take a risk and embrace the messiness of teaching and learning. Yet, in order to do so, I had to exhibit the same willingness in myself. I had to face my own need to have power, or cling to a position of authority, and let go of control. Letting go of control is a risk; it forces you to recognize how you may not have the answer and you may not be the expert.

The other risk involved relates to the perception of others. While trying to explore visual culture myself and engage in the first action research cycle, I was risking the way in which others might perceive me. In making a pedagogical change, and specifically one that was not clearly defined, I risked looking incompetent. Fortunately, most of the twelve docents who participated in both Childrens' Workshops were patient and helpful along the way. Yet, there were times when I felt unsure and vulnerable to their perceptions of me. The risk of letting go of control is accompanied by the fear of how you look in the eyes of others. The loss could be potentially great when you hope to engage with these individuals in new ways and simultaneously have their support of your actions.

## CHAPTER 2

### VISUAL CULTURE

#### Defining Visual Culture

The visual image is an integral part of everyday life that constructs the way an individual comes to know and understand the world. Today's world is filled with visual experiences, from images sent through and captured by cell phones and surveillance cameras on the street, to those displayed in advertisements, webcams, television, videogames, etc. All of these images contribute to one's perception of the world, and affect her/his sense of identity within today's postmodern culture.

The visual experience affects one's knowledge about the way the world operates and her/his place within it. For example, an individual's understanding of the events in the Middle East is constructed from images on news broadcasts, internet websites such as MSNBC.com, and newspapers such as the *New York Times*. Repeated images of events in the Middle East reinforce a chosen perspective of the situation, and in turn impact one's understanding of the developments in the current war. The same can be said for images representing notions of beauty and sensuality that are found on television, in advertisements, and even in paintings at the museum. Continuous encounters with mainstream ideas about beauty and sensuality encourages individuals to achieve a particular ideal, reach a certain social standard, and likely impact their sense of self. The repetition of dominant ideas about beauty, sensuality, or even the situation in the Middle East are constantly reinforcing a chosen point of view as reality. Even though it is widespread knowledge that representations can be altered or manipulated, typically photographs, film footage, advertisements, and other forms of visual representation are presented and accepted as reality (Mirzoeff, 1999).

Visual culture studies seek to break down these types of visual interactions and understand the affect these experiences have on consumers or receivers of images (Mirzoeff, 1999). As a field of study, visual culture is less concerned with the analysis of individual media sources and more concerned with the exchange of visual information. Mirzoeff (1999) explains this greater interest in the visual event, rather than in the specific media forms in the following way.

Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. By visual technology, I mean any apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil paintings to television and the internet. (p. 3)

Instead of viewing visual culture as just the study of objects, it becomes a study of how objects or images are used by people to understand who they were in the past and who they are in the present. At the root, it raises theoretical questions pertaining to the act of looking and seeing. In this sense, visual culture becomes a practice or a tactic, providing a framework for addressing the proliferation of images in our society and gaining insight on how people create meaning from their interactions with these various images (Mirzoeff, 1999). Visual culture examines the visual experience and the image as a place where meaning is “created and contested” (Mirzoeff, 2006). Based on the literature, I understand visual culture to be the close investigation of vision, not in the physiological sense, but rather as an act or practice that is constructed and affected by social cultural frameworks (Rogoff, 1998, p. 26).

The discourses within visual culture are focused on moments when meaning is derived from visual images. Whether this is in the form of a painting by the French artist Boucher or a JC Penny’s advertisement in *Woman’s World*, the discourse is based on the idea that the world is known through the visual and visualizing. While there is debate on the exact definition of visual culture, Mitchell (2002) puts forth a definition that is useful in explaining this field of study and

helps to demonstrate why visual culture discourse is important for this research. He cites, “Visual culture is the study of the social construction of the visual field and the visual construction of the social field” (p. 171). This definition of visual culture presents two main components of the discourse. On one hand, the visual image is the result of specific social, cultural and political contexts that influence the content of the image. On the other hand, visual culture discourse encourages the viewer to recognize that images construct knowledge and reinforce social practices. Mirzoeff’s definition implies that what we see is not natural and that the manner in which we see is not natural; vision as an act of looking and interpreting is socialized, and images reflect a dominant and privileged aspect of culture. The socialization of vision is often identified as “visuality” by various visual culturalists, such as Mirzoeff (2006) and Mitchell (2002).<sup>16</sup>

Visual culture discourse embraces this notion that certain ideas or things are made seeable and presented in a certain way, while others are not visible at all. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000a) explains, “visual culture works towards a social theory of visuality, focusing on questions of what is made visible, who sees what, how seeing, knowing, and power are interrelated” (p. 14). In other words, the idea that vision is not neutral, and the presentation of images is not neutral, is addressed within visual culture discourse. Within the framework of visual culture, Rogoff (1998) asks a series of alternative questions that speak directly to this issue. He asks, “What are the codes by which some are allowed to look, others a hazard, a peek, and still others are forbidden to look all together?” (p. 26). Investigating these questions that address the privileged point of view as well as the privileged viewer, and determining dominant forms of interpretation will likely bring forth a conversation about one’s position in the world and issues of identity.

---

<sup>16</sup> To read more about the history of the term, and review an explanation on the contemporary use of the term visuality, see Mirzoeff, M. (2006). “On Visuality” *Journal of Visual Culture*. 5(1), 53-79.



An image or object can popularize and reinforce dominant ways of knowing and understanding the world. Many times images will present opinions or subjects as truths that reinforce certain beliefs and values (Barrett, 2003). If those ways of knowing and understanding the world are accepted as universal truth, then there is no room for multiple interpretations. For example, images of ruddy cheeked, sweet looking Caucasian children are often found throughout Western culture. Whether the image is found in the form of a painting inside a museum environment, an advertisement for Downy, or on the front of a hallmark card, they reinforce certain cultural assumptions; they purposefully link smiling and/or playful Caucasian children to ideals about youth, beauty, and childhood identity. The repetition of these images supports the notion that a relatively plump Caucasian child signifies ideal states of innocence, cuteness, and jubilation (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Yet, it is highly probable that not all individuals can relate to the smiling Caucasian child as a symbol for these ideal states of being. Therefore, for those who cannot identify with this image, their experiences and ways of understanding the world become invalidated and marginalized. For example, someone of Indian or African descent may feel alienated by the image of a Caucasian child symbolizing the perfect ‘angelic’ American offspring.

Within visual culture discourse, there is an understanding that images act as tangible representations of certain privileged ideologies. When an image, such as the one mentioned above, is seen in the context of the museum, it is easy to presume that the cultural “truth” is widely accepted. However visual culture discourse promotes a close examination of why this acceptance occurs. Images exist within a cultural framework, but they also reinforce that same cultural framework; they recast the idea that there is one meta-narrative directing everyone’s understandings of the world back to the viewer. Often times, an image reinforces the assumption

that everyone agrees upon some code of universal truths that govern behavior and the construction of knowledge. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) ask, “What would it mean to question the assumptions underpinning these concepts of the universal?” (p. 37). To question these underlying concepts would mean to reveal how assumptions are culturally constructed and perpetuated through visual representation. By breaking down these assumptions, the viewer gains greater awareness about his/her own process of interpretation and the interpretation of others.

However, questions such as the one’s presented by Rogoff (1998) and by Sturken and Cartwright (2001) are not frequently addressed. As a society, we have a fascination with the visual. Yet, opportunities to analyze the proliferation of, and the affects of, this is limited. As Mirzoeff (1999) explains, there is a “gap between our wealth of visual experience in postmodern culture and the ability to analyze that observation” (pg 3). This “gap” makes visual culture studies an important area of research and in particular an important one for museum educators who create an environment for viewing and interpreting images on a daily basis. Museums, by their very nature, ask visitors to take time and make visual observations. This pre-existing gap referenced by Mirzoeff, between the visual and the analysis of images, makes the museum educators job that much more critical. The gap between viewing and analyzing challenges the museum educator to create learning experiences that critically investigate visuality and the role of images in today’s fast-paced society.

There are many theories and strands of thought woven into the discourse of visual culture. However I am most interested in five strands that I feel connect with my interest in improving my practice. I am interested in these five specific strands because they could potentially change my pedagogy as a practicing museum educator. These five strands include

deconstruction, intertextuality, identity formation, positioning, and representations of power. I have chosen to explore these five areas because they have influenced my understanding of museum education, and they are an integral part of the literature on visual culture.

### Strands of Visual Culture: Deconstruction and Intertextuality

Both deconstruction and intertextuality are literary theories that come out of post-structuralism and have influenced the development of visual culture discourse. The discourse of post-structuralism began as a reaction to structuralism within critical theory circles (Norris, 2002). Structuralism and post-structuralism are theories of language that address how people read and derive meaning from text. Although structuralist theory and poststructuralist theory both address semiotics and the idea of the linguistic ‘sign’, the two theories differ drastically when it comes to the interpretation of this linguistic sign. Structuralism, on the one hand, seeks stability and truth within a fixed interpretation of text. While post-structuralism on the other hand views text and meanings derived from text, as unstable and ever-changing.

Within structuralism, text is made up of linguistic signs that consist of two parts, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the word, and the signified is the meaning or concept that is conveyed by the word. These two parts are otherwise known as sign-vehicle and sign meaning (Eco, 1976). Sarup (1993) uses the word ‘apple’ as an example of this linguistic code presented by structuralism. Within the framework of structuralism, “the word apple is the signifier and the concept of the apple is the signified” (p. 2). Together, both the signifier ‘apple’ and the signified concept of apple create the linguistic sign. The linguistic sign for an apple is understood because of “common usage” and its “differential position within the structure of language” (Sarup, 1993, p. 3). In other words, structuralism argues that the linguistic sign has a

fixed interpretation because there is a shared understanding of what an apple is, and what an apple is not; an apple is an apple because of our understanding of the language, and conversely an apple is not something other than an apple, such as a pear, due to our shared knowledge of all other things that are different from an apple. Structuralism supports the idea that there is a language code or a system that provides a framework for understanding the linguistic sign, in this case the 'apple'. In Umberto Eco's (1976) exploration of Saussure's definition of semiotics (1976), he states, "insofar as the relationship between signifier and signified is established on the basis of a system of rules which is 'la langue,' Saussurean semiology would seem to be a rigorous semiotics of signification" (p. 14)<sup>17</sup> According to structuralism, this system of rules that makes up language, or 'la langue', is what allows readers to understand the signified meaning of text. The emphasis therefore of structuralism is on the signified meaning or concept, and how one comes to understand the linguistic sign.

In contrast to this emphasis on meanings or the signified, poststructuralism highlights the signifier and its inability to be associated with only one fixed signified concept (Sarup, 1993). With poststructuralism, the linguistic sign is not pinned down to one reality; it is not fixed to a meaning based on a common code or underlying rules of language. Instead, poststructuralism embraces the idea that signifiers or words are never stable and clear. Poststructuralism, and deconstruction for that matter, suspends the notion that a sign is linked to a specific concept. This means that the text is dynamic and constantly referring to something other than itself, taking on new meanings with each new context (Sarup, 1993, p. 34). With poststructuralism, all signs are constantly referring to other signs. The text is always moving onward towards the next sign or the next word that is absent, so that the initial signifier is merely a ghost.

---

<sup>17</sup> The French philosopher Saussure was one of the progenitors of structuralism. To read more about the differences between structuralism and poststructuralism see, M. (1993) *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*. Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.

The poststructuralist Derrida (1976, 1978), the leading figure of deconstruction, denounces fixed meaning and calls for alternative methods of interpreting texts. According to Sarup (1993), Derrida facilitates multiple interpretations of a text by conducting a ‘close reading’, and identifying binary oppositions within the text. Examples of these binary oppositions include black/white, man/woman, self/other, high/low, etc. Sarup (1993) defines binary oppositions as “ways of seeing, rather like ideologies” that govern and reflect the way we think about the world (p. 38). Deconstruction theory asks that these ideologies are reflected upon and further broken down. However, to do this would mean a close examination of one’s way of thinking, by examining and revealing the hierarchy and power struggles within these binary oppositions.

Deconstruction focuses on these binary oppositions not in an attempt to simply recognize them, but to highlight alternative ways of knowing and understanding the text. According to Sturken and Cartwright (2001), Derrida found that embedded within these ideologies are values systems and concepts of power and ‘truth’. Deconstruction is like a textual x-ray that reveals hidden hierarchies and hidden power struggles within the text. Identifying the binary oppositions is the first step, but looking deeper and revealing the hierarchy that exists within these binary oppositions is the second. As Norris (2002) explains, “Deconstruction is not simply a strategic reversal of categories which otherwise remain distant and unaffected. It seeks to undo both a given order of priorities and the very system of conceptual opposition that makes that order possible” (p. 30-31). A close reading of the text, within the framework of deconstruction, aims to strip down the hierarchy that allows for one word to gain higher value than the other word. It examines how and why a privileged term, such as ‘man’, depends upon a subordinate term, such as ‘woman,’ for its value and identity. This ‘close reading’ is done in an effort to eventually

dismantle and reverse the hierarchy that originally existed within certain texts (Sarup, 1993). By doing so, deconstruction brings forth marginalized meanings, exposes embedded power struggles played out in language, and reconstructs this hierarchy based on a new interpretation of the text.

Deconstruction requires a close examination of the text in order to see how signs or words are interrelated and placed within hierarchical structures. It also requires this “close reading” to reveal how our understanding of signs is dependent upon other texts and other interpretations of other signs or words (Culler, 1982). This belief that texts refers to other texts, similar to the poststructuralist belief that all signs refer to other signs, is the main connection between deconstruction and intertextuality. According to Sarup, “Deconstructivists tend to say that if a text seems to refer beyond itself, that reference can finally be only to another text. Just as signs refer only to other signs, texts can refer only to other texts, generating an intersecting and indefinitely expandable web called intertextuality” (p. 52). Intertextuality refers to the way individuals understand or interpret text. With intertextuality, meaning is not only understood from the primary or immediate text, but also by prior interpretations of other texts. The theory is concerned with the intersection of text and signs, where interpretation of text in the present moment is influenced and intersected by meanings found in other texts. As Roudiez explains, “It [Intertextuality] is defined in *La Révolution du Langage Poétic*s as the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another” (p. 15)<sup>18</sup> This definition is important and can be applied to the visual image.

If intertextuality is the conceptual space between texts, where signs can transposition on top of one another, then visual images can operate within a similar system of layered and

---

<sup>18</sup> in *La Révolution du Langage Poétic*s is one of Kristeva’s major works where she ties her threads of thought together. Leon Roudiez has edited a collection of Kristeva’s work translated by Tom Gora, Alice Jardin, and Leon Roudiez. To read more about Kristeva, see Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. T. Gora, A. Jardine, & L. Roudiez (Trans.). L. Roudiez (Ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.

interwoven signs. Freedman, (2003a) talks about the application of intertextuality in the visual world as *intergraphicality*. As he explains, *intergraphicality* is “the same type of conceptual space exists for visual culture that provides a milieu for connections to develop between the range of images we see” (p. 121). According to intertextuality or *intergraphicality*, our understanding of the world is constructed through the interplay between signs, the transposition of the sign systems. While this is a purist way to consider the construction of knowledge and interpretation, it illuminates the need to consider relationships between images and the viewer.

The viewer is an active meaning maker who operates within a society of interrelated signs systems, be it visual or literary. According to these theories, knowledge and understanding are therefore constructed as a result of these interrelated signs or signifiers. Recognizing the influence of an interrelated sign system can only enhance museum educators’ understanding of how people learn and construct better educational experiences in the galleries.

### *Deconstruction, the Image, and Museum Pedagogy*

Visual culture studies seek to understand how meaning is made from visual images, through an investigation of surrounding cultural and social frameworks. This investigation includes an exploration of power struggles, and an investigation of the way other images play into the interpretation of new images. In this regard, visual culture discourse gives consideration to ideas that emerged out of deconstruction of binary oppositions and difference, as well as ideas that emerged out of intertextuality concerning the intersection of texts or images.

Just as with literary text, binary oppositions can be found and reinforced in the visual image. An example of how the visual image can present and reconfirm underlying binary oppositions comes from a postcard I purchased last summer while on a cruise ship to Alaska.

The black and white postcard image depicts several male Chilkat Dancers wearing traditional Chilkat regalia back in 1898. The Chilkat men depicted in the postcard are not individually identified. Instead, they are depicted as a group of men who are presented in an exotic way with complete regalia, including Chilkat blankets, frontlets, masks, rattles, and a bear cape. The anonymity of the individual men, coupled with the objects in the image, sets the stage for viewing the “other.” The men in the postcard are meant to be seen as something outside of the tourists’ daily life. For the tourist, this image is not within their “normal” way of acting in or understanding the world. The Chilkat men in the image represent the collective “other,” as an object that the tourist can take interest in, investigate or be amused by. As a result, the image plays upon several binary oppositions that revolve around ideas of difference and cultural norms. These binary oppositions include similarities/difference, self/other, white/brown, and tourist/native. The image presumes that the viewer is either Caucasian or at the very least not of Chilkat descent, which sets up the binary opposition of white/brown. The binary opposition of white/brown, as well as tourist/native, is reinforced by the fact that the image is on a postcard and sold in a gift shop for cruise ship tourist. Both the content of the postcard, and gift shop environment, project and play upon these binary oppositions or ideologies that are an integral part of the way people understand images and the world.

Binary oppositions reveal categories by which we understand the world. The categories, or as Sarup (1993) calls ideologies, are set up within certain power struggles that force one ideology to be dependant upon the other. For example, the category of self is dependant upon the category of other, that which is not the self. In the case of the postcard image from Alaska, the category of tourist is dependant upon the category of native, that which is not the tourist (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Recognizing how these power-struggles play into the way we make



meaning out of images is consistent with the second half of Mitchell's definition of visual culture, where he says, "visual culture is the visual construction of the social field" (p. 171). This second half of the definition suggests that the way in which we see is socialized, and images, such as the postcard from Alaska, reinforce cultural and social frameworks that affect our interpretation of the image and our understanding of the world.

In accordance with deconstruction, however, it is not enough to simply recognize binary oppositions. One must break them down and reconfigure the hierarchy that causes one category, such as tourist, to be dependant upon the other, such as native. According to Christopher Norris (2002), deconstruction has become a buzz word that is often placed in a negative light, and not often used to reconstruct new interpretations. He explains,

Often it is used with a strongly negative connotation: thus 'deconstruct' = 'take things apart' (literary text, philosophical arguments, historical narratives, truth-claims, or value-systems of whatever kind) in a spirit of game-playing nihilist abandon and without the least concern for constructing some better alternative. (p. 135)

This discrepancy between simply taking apart an image and taking it apart in order to reconstruct other or new interpretations is where deconstruction, through the lens of visual culture, can help present different ways of approaching museum practice.

Similar to my postcard, images in the museum can also reinforce binary oppositions with embedded power struggles and value systems. For example, a sculptural bust by the French artist Antonio Canova, from 1817 titled *Ideal Head of a Woman*, is created out of pure white marble and depicts the head of a woman, done in a classical Greek manner with curls piled on top of her head. A sculpture such as this overtly defines ideas about what is beautiful, based on Classical Greek proportions and ideas about beauty. However, it also inadvertently defines what is not beautiful. In doing so, the *Ideal Head of a Woman* automatically marginalizes viewers who come to the museum and who look very different from this ideal beauty. Viewers who have a different

value system and a different belief about the concept of beauty would not identify with the characteristics that are presented in this depiction of an ideal woman's face. Instead they are instantly separated from the artwork, and there is a stronger delineation between the "self" and "other."

Visual culture studies support the exploration of these kinds of binary oppositions and embedded values system as a way to investigate how meaning is derived from the visual experience. In discussing visual culture and deconstruction, Kerry Freedman (2003a) states,

Derrida has taught us that not only multiple, but conflicting meanings are inherently suggested by representation. Often, it is these conflicts that underlie assumptions in visual culture. All sorts of cultural dichotomies—establishment versus antiestablishment, male versus female, nature versus culture—are suggested by visual culture. (p. 89)

As a practicing museum educator, who encounters a wide range of people on a daily basis, I feel obligated to find ways to address these conflicts and enable visitors of varying backgrounds to have a meaningful experience.

Changing my museum practice in a way that addresses these cultural dichotomies, means that I must create space to explore these conflicting meanings. In order to explore these conflicts, it is important that I facilitate dialogue that first exposes the binary oppositions suggested in the image, and secondly reinforce the possibility of multiple interpretations. Conducting dialogue in a way that allows for these two things to happen is a much more viewer-centered approach than the traditional object-centered approach typically used within the museum setting. The shift to a more viewer-centered approach means that the viewer's experience and what they bring to an object or image is as important, if not more important, than revering the object. A more viewer-centered approach concedes to the notion that knowledge and cultural "truth" are not found in the object or artwork. Instead, knowledge and beliefs about "truths" are constructed at the converging points where the viewer's individual experience, cultural knowledge and engagement

with images intersect to inform an interpretation of an image (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a). The idea that there are moments of intersection between images and experiences is an important part of the visual culture discourse, and it is the basic premise behind applying intertextuality to the visual world.

### *Intertextuality, the Image, and Museum Pedagogy*

Intertextuality functions in the same way with visual images as it does with literary text. Just as intertextuality is defined as the referencing of one literary text within another literary text, intertextuality is the “incorporation of meanings” from one visual image to another (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001, p. 358). Intertextuality, when applied to visual images, means that the visual image is constantly referencing other images, films, songs, etc. Like the poststructuralist belief that signs continue to reference one another, the visual image is in a constant state of signification with other images or other cultural products. This constant play of signification affects the way a viewer responds to and makes meaning of an image.

Intertextuality acknowledges the proliferation of images in today’s society, and addresses the notion that images influence the way we construct our vision of the world. Within intertextuality, visual references are embedded within images, yet these visual references are culturally defined and presumably known to the majority. For example, the contemporary artist Ray Charles’s work contains several visual references to past representations of the African American community. In his work, the viewer can find the presence of Little Black Sambo, Aunt Jemima, watermelons, large lips and individuals with curly or ‘nappy’ hair (Barrett, 2003). All of which, are symbols that have taken on additional meanings, such as Aunt Jemima and her association with maple syrup. Yet because of their flexibility to operate within multiple sign

systems, these image or icons retain some of their original stereotype status. These overtly 'connoted' intertextual references assume that the viewer will be familiar with the image content and force the viewer to look his/her own encounters with images of racial stereotypes. The bold intertextual references in Ray Charles's work confronts us with our own discomfort and presses us for deeper explanations about injustices, race, and social acceptance in the guise of humor.

Visual culture studies look at how intertextual references such as these affect the way meaning is constructed and images are interpreted. As Rogoff (1998) explains,

Visual culture opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sound, and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever-accruing layers of meanings and subjective responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, art works, buildings or urban environments. (p. 24)

This play between images, sounds, and spatial delineations that cross boundaries and affects our subjective responses, ultimately shapes our "vision" of the world (Tavin, 2003, p. 71). As a field of study, visual culture explores these layers as a place where meaning is created about both the self and society. Visual culture studies, supports the investigation of how images, including popular culture and museum images, contribute to an individual's perception of reality.

Questions raised within the discourse ask viewers to expose the manner in which a variety of visual images and other cultural products influence the way one constructs knowledge about the world and about their personal identity. However, this idea that visual text develops our understanding of the self and the environment assumes that the viewer is part of the mainstream culture and has access to multiple forms of visual images.

The visual image that contains references to other meanings requires that viewers bring outside textual information to their interpretation (Mirzoeff, 1998). The referencing of other visual images creates an assumption that the viewer is already familiar with and recognizes the references that are being made. The viewers are automatically understood as part of the

mainstream culture and familiar with certain works of art or other forms of cultural representation. For example, Cindy Sherman's work overtly attempts to draw the viewer's attention to other cultural products, such as films, advertisements, photos, and pornography (Freedman, 2003a). She forces the viewer to examine how other popular images or forms of representation have helped to construct her/his understanding of the world. However, this is done with the assumption that the viewer will recognize Sherman's direct play on other cultural products, and be able to explore these intertextual references.

Changing my museum practice so that there are opportunities for discussing these visual references, and examining how signification affects interpretation, meant that I had to facilitate dialogue that openly discussed these ideas. It also meant that I had to bring other forms of visual images into the museum curriculum. In an argument for the inclusion of popular culture images into art education curriculum, Kevin Tavin (2003) states,

These texts (popular visual culture) play a significant role in the symbolic and material milieu of contemporary society by shaping and often limiting perceptions of reality and constructing a normative visual of the world. (p. 71)

My hope was to include these images into gallery discussions in order to open up richer dialogue and help viewers to understand how the visual world around them influences their interpretations. For some, however, incorporating these images into either the public school or museum curriculum could be risky and contentious. Visual culture dialogue asks that the hierarchical structure that differentiates between fine art and other art forms is broken down, or at least blurred. This can be threatening to the museum institution that maintains its position of power through the promotion of culture and high art. Visual culture promotes the notion that art is attached to ideas and does not inherently speak for itself; it places power in ideas over power

in art. Placing the power in constructed ideas is problematic for individuals who want to believe that art contains a universal and inherent truth.

Visual culture as an interdisciplinary field of study, is threatening to traditional forms of museum practices. With museum practices that look to promote historical context and formal analysis, there is a loss of the analysis of both larger intertextual references and hierarchical structures. Unlike traditional art history, which is at the root of most museum practices, visual culture discourse must look to other fields of investigation. In order to investigate the visual experience and the larger social and cultural frameworks in which that experience exists, visual culture discourse must cross over other disciplines. The study of vision, or the act of looking, is unlike other discourses in that it does not prescribe to one specific political stance or academic movement. Rather visual culture acts as an all encompassing field of study “attentive to the full range of visual experience from humble vernacular images, to everyday visual practices, to objects of both aesthetic delight and horror” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 542). As Mitchell (1995) explains, visual culture is emerging from and working within well-established disciplines that include, critical theory, cultural studies, media studies, anthropology, literary theory, phenomenology, art history, etc. Because visual culture has a tendency to move back and forth across these disciplines, it has the potential to bump up against the border of several disciplines at once. Mitchell (1995) calls this cross discipline movement as “indiscipline,” or rather “a moment of turbulence at the inner and outer borders of established disciplines” (p. 542). An example of this “inside-out” movement can be seen in the relationship between visual culture and art history.

Although visual culture deeply investigates art history and the visual experience, it simultaneously pushes the outer boundaries of the discipline. The discourse examines the inner

core of art history and its dependency on ideas of spectatorship, semiotics, visual pleasure, etc. It also works towards an expansion of art history's traditional canon (Mitchell, 1995). In other words, visual culture studies push to expand what is traditionally identified as the 'fine art' canon to include everyday objects or images. Within the framework of visual culture, these everyday objects or images inform our understanding of the visual experience and our understanding of the world around us. They help us to construct knowledge about ourselves and our place in the world. In this regard, I am interested in changing my practice to include everyday images into gallery discussions. By including popular imagery into gallery discussions and exploring the intertextuality of images, I hope to open up broader dialogue about the self and society.

However, broadening of the canon to include popular culture images such as advertisements, comic books, etc. into the art curriculum, has met some resistance with art and museum educators. The idea of opening up the canon to include popular imagery is threatening due to the break down of the hierarchy between fine art and everyday images. There is the concern that this break down will cause all images to be considered equal, and aesthetic standards to be overlooked (Efland, 2005). It would also mean that artworks are valued for the ideas they are attached to, instead their formalistic or aesthetic qualities. Attaching artworks to social and cultural ideas, over formalistic qualities, could cause some trepidation for an individual coming out of a traditional art history background. For example, even though I was asked to define workshop objectives and activity objectives, many times these objectives are eventually edited to sound more formalist in nature. The edits were made by the department's director who has her PhD and training in traditional art history. After the editing process, there is a stronger focus on principles and elements of design, and less of a focus on broader themes or concepts. While this is not surprising, it does reinforce the notion that a traditional institution

uses language revolving around modernist notions of communication that involve a more formalist, object-centered approach. I believe this is done out of a fear that analyzing an artwork in relationship to social and cultural ideas will move too far away from its formalistic and historical value that brought it to the institution in the first place.

While I can understand the reason for the trepidation, I believe this worry is based upon only one interpretation of visual culture discourse. Duncum (2002a) identifies three strands of visual culture that shed light on the different interpretations of visual culture discourse that circulate among the literature. The first is simply broadening the canon to include most, if not all, imagery into the art curriculum. The second is an examination of visuality or “attributing meaning to what we see,” and the third involves social context (Duncum, 2002a). This third strand has “a concentration on images as social practice rather than just textual analysis” (p. 18). In trying to understand how visual culture can be used as a pedagogical approach to inform and change museum practice, I am most interested in the second and third strand. My understanding of visual culture from the literature is that visual culture is not simply about the inclusion of everyday objects, but rather it is about connecting artworks to ideas and changing the way we see. Amburgy, Keifer-Boyd, and Knight (2003) define this difference by stating, “Visual culture does not just mean a broader range of stuff. It also means a particular way of understanding stuff” (p. 48). It is about the process or practice of looking that helps us to understand the visual world around us and shape our personal narratives within larger social and political frameworks.

This process or practice however is shaped by various factors that affect interpretations of artworks, and influence the application of those interpretations. These factors include the positioning of an object within certain narratives, the way one understands herself/himself to be in the world, and the affect of power struggles on the viewing process. The literature on visual



culture discusses these three important aspects of the meaning making process. Ideas about positioning and power in relationship to the visual image are woven consistently throughout the literature of visual culture. As a field of inquiry, visual culture investigates the relationship between context, subjectivity, power, and multiple interpretations. It continually addresses the idea that objects and images are not truth holders; they do not hold unified or unchanging meanings that can be presented objectively to viewers. Instead, meaning is constructed as a result of many factors, including the context in which an image is seen and the manner in which it is presented.

### Strands Within Visual Culture: Positioning and Power

#### *Positioning of the Object: Contextualization*

The positioning of an object or an image within certain narratives is often referred to as contextualization. Looking closely at contextualization is an important aspect of visual culture. How an artwork is displayed and the relationships between objects or images in the galleries can reveal new interpretations and reinforce certain larger cultural or social positions. The presentation of an image and the information communicated by the image contributes to how a viewer values or makes sense of a work of art. In addition, the contextualization of an object also contributes the viewers' interpretation of that artwork into a larger cultural narrative. The positioning of an object or image among other objects or images in the museum can guide viewers towards certain institutional, curatorial, and/or even social objectives. Relationships between objects in the museum, and the way an object is represented through wall text, audio guides, etc., speaks to a specific narrative that the museum institution is trying to communicate or reinforce.

When an object or image is placed within a certain context, it takes on specific social and cultural meanings. In most cases, all of these objectives have larger social networks and power struggles embedded within them that influence the way an individual experiences and interprets a work of art. For example, as an art form, portraiture has had a long-standing tradition and has been the focus of numerous gallery spaces and special exhibitions. Portraits hung together in a gallery space can be very powerful. They can make a statement about the relationship between people and also demonstrate the values of certain social groups (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a).

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill cites the National Portrait Gallery in London as an example of a museum that has, in the past, purposely presented images in a manner that supports and reinforces certain political and social positions. She states, “Through the persistent production of certain images and the suppression of others, and through controlling the way images are viewed or artifacts are preserved, visual representations can be used to produce a view of a nation’s history” (p. 25). According to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000a), this was achieved by the National Portrait Gallery through their use of the visual image and their representation of selected portraits. The original portrait paintings that hung in the museum consisted of Britain’s royal and bourgeois society. The community of portraits in the museum represented individuals of wealth and leadership in both the arts and politics. Although the original two hundred twenty-five portrait paintings included images of aristocratic men and women, there were a total of only twenty-two portraits of women. The bulk of the portraits were of Caucasian men who were in powerful political and artistic positions and who stood for the nation’s best and brightest. The representation of these portraits was meant to improve good conduct, encourage ‘noble actions’, and to construct a sense of nationalism for Britain (Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a).

The position of these portraits in the museum deliberately made a statement about the values of the country and reinforced certain cultural standards. However, they also excluded those individuals who did not meet the same cultural standards. Because of the way the images were grouped, they spoke to the elite and middle class aspirations while ostracizing others. While the portraits presented society's starring figures who had wealth and leadership capabilities, they also isolated those who were not part of mainstream cultural or upper middle class. The portraits sent underlying messages about who was in power, who should be respected, and how one should look or behave. In this regard, the positioning of these portraits within the museum was connected to larger ideas of prestige, class, gender and race. Because of the context in which these images were used and how they were positioned within a larger cultural narrative, the portraits contributed to the creation of a nation's history. Yet, this larger narrative that is reinforced by the portraits of the wealthy and the fortunate, excludes smaller voices and other cultural experiences that could potentially affect the interpretation of the artworks.

One of the few female portraits included in the first collection at the National Portrait Gallery is titled the *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth*. The *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* featured the royal Duchess and an unnamed black child. This particular painting provides a good example of how an image can take on new interpretations when positioned within a different narrative. The *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* was featured in the National Portrait Gallery's 1997 "Sancho" exhibition, which highlighted the relationship between 18<sup>th</sup> century London and African slave trade. The museum chose to focus on the biography of a particular slave named Ignatius Sancho in order to explore the subject of slavery. With this unique and somewhat risky subject matter, the National Portrait Gallery was able to cast objects and images in a new light. Artworks from the museum were positioned in new ways for this

special exhibition and took on new relationships with one another. For example, a coffee cup that depicted a black slave serving coffee and tea was originally placed among other decorative arts and valued for its formalistic qualities. However with the “Sancho” exhibition it was positioned among many other artworks focusing on slavery. Within the “Sancho” exhibition, the coffee cup took on a new role as a historical reference that demonstrates the social acceptance of slavery in Britain (Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a, p. 146). The *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* and the “unnamed child” also took on new meaning within this special exhibition. Prior to this exhibition, the black child in the image was overlooked; the placement of the image in the museum emphasized the Duchess in the larger national narrative, and the wall text focused solely on the Duchess and how the Duchess was presented. However, within the context of this new exhibition focused on the treatment of African slaves in Britain, the *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* stood for all the complexities that surrounded slavery in England (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Even though the small child in the painting was not Ignatius Sancho, the figure metaphorically illustrated the way of life for African slaves in Britain. In this regard, the painting gained different social relationships to the other images and objects around it. By showing how images and objects in the collection can reveal concepts and historical ideas about slavery, the museum was also demonstrating the importance of positioning for revealing alternative interpretations.

Removing the *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* from its position among other images of royalty, and contextualizing it within an exhibition that focuses on an alternative narrative, demonstrates how viewing context can affect the visual experience. The change in the painting’s position allowed for a smaller, more marginalized narrative to be exposed and presented to the general public. The way in which the objects were re-grouped for this exhibition

created a different cultural statement and a different “visual event” between the viewer and the image (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 13). The traditional way of viewing this 17<sup>th</sup> century portrait of the Duchess as a representation of Britain’s foundation no longer became the only way to interpret the image. Instead, other interpretations linked to ideas about the country’s connection to slavery, and the ethical and moral implications of this connection, are exposed. These alternative interpretations were supported by wall texts and other forms of communication that addressed the hardships slaves had to endure and other cultural practices (Eilean Hooper-Greenhill 2000a, p. 147). In the end, changing the position of the *Portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth* revealed how different positions and interpretations of an image can redefine how a viewer understands a country’s cultural identity and her/his place within it.

This exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London is a rare instance where a museum took a risk to elucidate alternative meanings of an image, and other ways of knowing or understanding the world. Many times smaller narratives, such as Sancho’s experience as a black slave in Britain, are not presented or heard by the general public. Instead, information and interpretations of artworks are traditionally presented as objective truths with singular interpretations. Perpetuating single interpretations of artworks is connected to larger questions about cultural politics and dominant ways of knowing or understanding the world. As Hooper Greenhill (2000a) explains, “Where meaning is multiple, but where a single meaning is insisted upon, questions must be asked as to who is advantaged by the meaning made available, and whose history or culture is denied by being suppressed? Questions of knowledge are also questions of power” (p. 77). Where a singular interpretation is presented, there is bound to be a voice that is suppressed or marginalized. Examining how these smaller, more marginalized, narratives are left out of the viewing process, and looking at ways to include them into the

dialogue, is a focus of visual culture discourse. The literature on visual culture addresses these issues of power that are linked to ideas of contextualization, and their affect on the visual experience.

Visual culture asks why certain narratives are made visible while others are left out, and how the relationship between power and knowledge is played out in the visual arena. This relationship between power and knowledge was studied extensively by the poststructuralist, Michel Foucault. Foucault (1980) articulates the connection between power and knowledge when he states, “The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces the effects of power” (p. 52). Identifying this connection between the two elements as ongoing and interconnected is based on Foucault’s in depth analysis of criminality, torture, and England’s early policing society. Throughout his studies, Foucault theorized about the relationship between the prison system and the structure of the Western society (Foucault, 1980).<sup>19</sup> According to Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996), Foucault’s close investigation of prisons and hospitals revealed how “the expansion of disciplined knowledge might also be viewed as a way of extending social control over certain social groups” (p. 98). At the base of Foucault’s argument is the idea that power provides access to knowledge, and knowledge provides power over others. As Sarup (1993) states, “Foucault argues that knowledge is power over others, the power to define others” (p. 67). Within the museum, this relationship between power and knowledge translates to the power to circulate dominant art historical information that privileges certain narratives and disregards smaller voices. In the museum, those who are in power, and who typically have a background in art history, can perpetuate certain narratives that present a particular way of understanding both images and the world at large.

---

<sup>19</sup> To read more about Foucault’s investigation of the prison system, criminality, and the relationship between power and knowledge, see Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Museum practices based on traditional art history continue to circulate privileged interpretations that fit into mainstream, more westernized notions about artistic advancement and social progression. These privileged narratives are part of a larger, meta-narrative that is rooted in modernist notions about progress and social advancement. According to Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996) “history based on the belief in the inevitability of progress as a consequence of the advancement of science is one such meta-narrative and perhaps the most pervasive” (p. 92). This larger or meta-narrative makes the assumption that progress and advancement are beneficial to all people and that all people understand certain truths in the same way. Truth, under modernism, exists outside of the learner. It is something to be attained instead of something to construct. With traditional art history pedagogy coming out of modernist ideas, there is an emphasis on objective truth and social progress. There is a focus on the object and its essence as well as the benefits of artistic progression for all viewers, which inevitably does not leave space for multiple interpretations or alternative ways of understanding the world.

Under postmodernism, this meta-narrative is no longer accepted as the only way to understand the world. According to Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996), the postmodern theorist Lyotard describes the postmodern as “incredulity toward meta-narratives” (p. 92). Under postmodernism, there is a distrust of the idea that all progression is beneficial and that everything has a given social order or a way of being understood through categorization (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). As Olivia Gude argues, “A basic tenet of all postmodern theory is a suspicion of totalizing discourses and grand narratives—the belief that there is one right way to organize and understand things” (p.13). Looking closely at the way museums, based in traditional art historical pedagogy, position or contextualize artworks will help viewers question this meta-narrative. Through an examination of contextualization, viewers hopefully will have a chance to see how

there could be other ways of organizing, viewing, and/or seeing artworks. Just as with the painting of Sancho and the Duchess's portrait, the re-contextualization of an image could break down assumptions about larger cultural narratives and make a viewer reevaluate how they value a work of art. In the end, I hope that discussions on the viewing context and the position of an object will lead to new thoughts about the impact an artwork can have on one's understanding of the world.

### *Contextualization and Museum Pedagogy*

Images can become social and political texts to which certain narratives are given credence to and other smaller or alternative narratives are disregarded. According to Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr (1996), the postmodern theorist Lyotard describes these smaller or little narratives as "stories of various cultures, subcultures, genders, and social classes" (p. 94). Visual culture, as a postmodern discourse, highlights the fact that these smaller narratives are often disregarded and left out of the mainstream conversation. As a field of inquiry, visual culture asks why this occurs and how we can create space for them. Although some museums have tried to bring forth these smaller stories, they are still often overlooked. Instead of positioning an image in a way that highlights less recognized voices and presents multiple interpretations, traditional museum practices tend to reinforce singular ways of knowing or interpreting an image. They heavily stress the voice of authority that does not typically provide space for unpacking assumptions or investigating the relationship between images and larger social or cultural frameworks.

In Kerry Freedman's book, *Teaching Visual Culture* (2003a), she discusses some of the key concepts to creating a curriculum based on postmodern characteristics. Included within this



curriculum is the importance of context, both the context of production and the context of viewing. The production context, according to Freedman (2003a), is the art historical component that takes artist and “milieu” in account. This includes aesthetic theory, personal history, and social circumstances that may have affected the production of the image or object (p. 50). The viewing context, on the other hand, accounts for the viewing environment as well as the individual viewer and her/his previous interactions with other images. Viewing context as defined by Freedman refers to both the position of the image and how the image relates to other images. This aspect of interpretation is as important as the production context. While production context can provide historical information to museum visitors, viewing contexts can provide insight on why a viewer might or might not value an image, and how the contextualization of that image affects interpretation.

As a museum educator in a traditional setting, I feel obligated to approach ideas about interpretation and contextualization. In particular, I feel a responsibility to discuss the relationship between viewing context and how one values an image, along with issues of contextualization and privileged interpretations. My hope is that facilitating dialogue with docents regarding the contextualization of objects, and how the museum environment affects interpretations, will eventually lead to discussions on power relationships, intertextuality, identity formation, and alternative points of view. My intention is to question openly the organization of exhibitions and the position of an image in order to bring about visual culture ideas, and to encourage docents to consider other ways of knowing or understanding the world.

### *Position of the Viewer: Subjectivity*

Visual culture discourse argues that interpretations are affected by the position of an

artwork, as well as the position of a viewer. Since objects are polysemic, having more than one meaning, interpretations can change depending upon contextualization and who is doing the viewing. The meaning of an image is not self-evident. Instead, it is formed by a constellation of factors, including the viewer's position and her/his understanding of the world at large. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill explains (2000a), cultural theory insists that "meanings are contingent upon the circumstances within which meanings are made" (p. 49). These circumstances include the viewer's perception of the way life should be, due to a world view based on social and cultural values and ideologies.

In alignment with visual culture discourse and postmodern thought, an individual's perception of life is constructed through cultural and social ideologies. These ideologies serve to "define ideas about how life should be" (Sturken & Cartwright, p. 51). According to Sturken and Cartwright (2001), the French Marxist theorist Althusser identifies ideology as our means of understanding reality; it is the "representational means through which we come to experience and make sense of reality" (p. 52). Ideologies provide a set of ideas and beliefs that are shaped by social and cultural forces, including factors such as the economy, government, institutions, politics, and religious groups. The way one perceives her/his reality is in accordance with her/his understanding of these social and cultural factors. As Sturken and Cartwright (2001) express, "By living in society, we live in ideology" (p. 52).

The idea that an individual understands herself/himself through cultural and social factors falls within psychoanalytical theories and postmodern ideas about subjectivity. The French psychoanalyst, Lacan, was one of the earlier theorists who looked at how people are constructed through culture and language. As Sturken and Cartwright (2001) explain, "He (Lacan) was most concerned with how human beings come to imagine themselves as unique individuals even as

they are given identity within the social structures of Western capitalism” (p. 74). For Lacan, subject and individual were separate. The individual referred to a person’s physicality, and the subject stood for a person’s culturally constructed role in society. According to Chandler (2002), “In theories of subjectivity, a distinction is made between ‘the subject’ and ‘the individual. While the individual is an actual person, the subject is a set of roles constructed by dominant cultural and ideological values” (p. 180). With subjectivity, an individual’s sense of self is not necessarily an internal construction that is independent of social activity. Instead, the idea of self, or rather subject, is constructed through lived cultural experiences (Freedman, Efland, & Stuhr, 1996). As part of the larger postmodern discourse, visual culture supports this notion that a viewer’s position is continually constructed through social and cultural experiences. The idea that our sense of reality is always being acted upon or constructed by social and cultural factors is an important concept within visual culture discourse. As a field of inquiry that asks questions about the act of looking, visual culture discourse examines how values and ideologies are constantly speaking to us through language and images. The discourse inquires as to how we are continuously being told what life should be like and what our role is through images and text found in society. Visual culturists such as, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000a), Kobena Mercer (1998), Lisa Bloom (1998) and Nicholas Mirzoeff (1998), investigate how viewers recognize themselves in images and how images construct one’s sense of self in regard to gender, ethnicity, and other social or cultural roles.

As viewers, who live in a highly visual world, images are constantly asking us to interpret the visual in a particular way. From billboards and advertisements to film and fine art, the image continually suggests how one should act or be in society. Simultaneously, it also asks that viewers identify themselves within the visual, serving as a place to be constructed and

continually redefined (Bloom, 1998). A good example of this relationship between a viewer's sense of reality and images can be found in my seven year old niece. From media reports and magazine advertisements, my niece knows that she wants to project an image of Beyonce, the hip hop singer, for herself. She cuts out magazine images of Beyonce and other girls who she thinks are pretty, and she collages them into a representation of her ideal woman. At the age of seven, my niece already has an understanding of what womanhood looks like and more specifically what she would like to look like in the near future. In my niece's mind, Beyonce is widely accepted and admired by society, which is no doubt something that my niece would like to ascertain.

In alignment with postmodern thought, my niece's desire to look like Beyonce and her constant identification with the images, are affecting her sense of self. She is both identifying with the visual image and being constructed through the visual image. My niece is recognizing herself in the magazine cutouts and being acted upon by those cutouts. In this case, the visual image is contributing to the formation of my niece's identity, yet it is not the only image of womanhood that is presented to her on a regular basis. In contrast to images of Beyonce, my niece is exposed to other ideas about womanhood through the other females in her family. For my niece, the images of Beyonce are counteracted regularly by other women in her environment. Although Beyonce is a woman of color, and a woman who has some curves, there are other examples of what a woman is like in my niece's daily life. My niece's mother, grandmother, and both of her aunts offer varying ideas about what it is like to be a woman. From our different body shapes, to our dissimilar life styles, personalities and professions, the females in our family provide other positions on womanhood. These other positions do not necessarily follow the mainstream ideal image. Although they bump up against Beyonce's hip-hop image that is

regularly found in the media, they are available to her. The sense of femaleness that my sisters, my mother, and I represent stands in opposition to Beyonce's appeal. As a result, my niece is presented with differing positions that will contribute ultimately to her identity and her interpretation of womanhood. We, the females in our family, along with the media images that surround her, become part of the pastiche that makes up her identity.

Just as postmodernism rejects totality in regards to language and narrative, the self is also de-centered and fragmented. With the development of postmodernism, the humanist idea about an authentic and unique self was questioned and replaced by ideas about pluralistic identity. According to Sarup (1993) the American critic Fredric Jameson suggested that the modernist notion of the unique individual is mythical and misleading. Instead, Jameson identified the self as a pastiche of recycled styles. The self is created out of fragmented imitations of various positions based on available social and cultural experiences. Postmodernism argues that these positions are based on recycled social and cultural experiences, and that creating new positions is impossible. Applying this concept to my niece would mean that her understanding of womanhood is never going to be completely new and original. Instead, it will be built upon the examples set forth by other females in her family, and the examples she is exposed to through various social or cultural institutions, such as television, internet, film, and paintings. In the end, the portrayal of femaleness in the media and our presence in her life constantly subject her to ideas about womanhood and inform the multiple positions she will take.

The idea that an individual can hold several positions at once is integral to visual culture. As a discourse coming out of postmodernism, visual culture recognizes that interpretations of images are affected by one's position in the world, and that this position is not singular. For example, I understand my position in the world to be pluralistic and even contradictory. Having

grown up in both the East coast and the border of Texas, I simultaneously understand what it means to be both a 'Texan' and a 'Yankee.' Although I choose to stress one side of my background over the other, depending upon the situation, both my inner Texan and my inner Northeasterner inform the way that I see the world. Other positions that I occupy include caucasian, Jewish, female, museum educator, teacher, sister, aunt,...etc. Although I may choose to stress certain aspects of my identity more than others at given times, they all contribute to my sense of self, and my world-view. In Chandler's (2002) discussion on Lacan and theories of subjectivity, he describes this type of pluralistic identity. He states,

Lacan undermined the humanist notion of a unified and consistent subject. The individual can occupy multiple subject positions, some of them contradictory, and 'identity' can be seen as the interaction of subject-position. (p. 180)

The multiple positions occupied by an individual will affect her/his identity formation. It will affect how she/he sees themselves positioned in the world, and ultimately how she/he interprets images in her/his environment. How someone constructs meaning and interprets a work of art, will reflect where that individual is positioned in the world.

The notion that one's position in the world affects the viewing process, underlines visual culture discourse and its emphasis on multiple interpretations. As a discourse coming out of postmodernism, visual culture highlights the idea that we do not interpret images in the same way. Moving away from the belief in singular interpretations and objective truths, and moving towards concepts of pluralism and subjectivity, has created space for dialogue about multiple interpretations. Pluralism, according to Jencks (1992), is one of the strongest foundations of postmodernism. As Jencks explains, "Post-modernism means the end of a single world view and, by extension, 'a war on totality', a resistance to single explanations, a respect for difference and a celebration of the regional, local, and particular" (p. 11). Visual culture discourse investigates

how this celebration for difference can occur when viewing images; it wrestles with the reconciliation of cultural and historical significance of images, and with the multiple positions and cultural experiences of viewers. Even though the discourse recognizes the importance of art historical information, it asks probing questions about the way images and information are received. These probing questions address issues of plurality and highlight the breakdown of the meta-narrative. Example questions based on visual culture discourse might include: How is the cultural significance of this image presented to the viewer? Does the interpretation of this image represent an authoritative singular voice? Or does the wall text consider other world-views? These types of questions encourage the investigation of multiple interpretations along side other cultural and social factors.

The emphasis on multiple interpretations in visual culture discourse is not just about recognizing that we all have different cultural backgrounds. Also, it is about recognizing that images play into those backgrounds, and images can empower or dis-empower the viewer. According to Nancy Pauly (2003), Kevin Tavin recommends that art educators ask similar questions that address issues of background and empowerment. His questions include the following:

What do students learn from images?...Do these images provide or signify a certain lifestyle or feeling?...Do these images embody sexist, racist, and class-specific interests? What are the historical conditions under which these images are organized and regulated? How is power displayed or connoted through these images? (p. 265)

By asking these types of questions and discussing other world views that are not being told, as well as the ones that are being told, viewers most likely will be uncomfortable. Yet, if imagery has the power to construct a story and contribute to the formation of someone's identity, through either the stories that they say or don't say, then engaging in dialogue about other ways of knowing is important for all viewers.

## Conclusion

Visual culture is much more complex than simply the inclusion of everyday objects and other perspectives into the curriculum. It is about diving into the heart of the problems in today's society through an exploration of images, the looking process, and larger social and cultural factors. Through the visual image, museum goes and museum educators can explore alternative ways of viewing the world around them and their place within it. As Rogoff (1998) states,

The emergence of visual culture as a trans-disciplinary and cross methodological field of inquiry means nothing less and nothing more than an opportunity to reconsider some of the present culture's thorniest problems from yet another angle. (p. 16)

Because of its interdisciplinary format, visual culture presents a new lens for the museum educator; it offers a way of looking at the museum experience as an exploration of larger contemporary issues, instead of an exploration of formal principles and stylistic movements.

Critiquing images to understand the role they play in the construction of identity and the construction of mainstream narratives are important reasons for engaging in dialogue based on visual culture discourse. Recognizing that we all bring varied experiences to the viewing process and stand in different positions is one aspect of visual culture. However, just below the surface of this concept is a tangled web that involves issues of power, text, social and cultural frameworks, identity, and values or ideologies. Through this research, I hope to determine if visual culture can create more meaningful experiences for viewers' as they explore this tangled web and discover new perspectives about themselves, others, and the environment that we all share.

While, I understand that museums, and therefore museum education, are coming out of a more modernist art history model, there are still possibilities for reflection and change. Eilean Hooper Greenhill (2000b) sees the beginning of changes already taking place in museums. According to her, these changes include new professionals, differentiated audiences, emerging



new voices, and the development of new narratives. To this list, I would add new ideas about what it means to be a museum educator and how museum practices can empower and/or create change.

I believe in the role of the museum educator as a change agent, and that is why I am doing this research. Museum educators are in a position to open new doors and create new pathways of understandings through active participation and dialogue. My hope is that by asking questions and engaging in conversations based on visual culture discourse, I will address the layers of experiences that occur when looking at an image and see how dialogue can bring greater awareness towards one's self and society. In this regard, using visual culture in the museum may provide a way to reflect on both the visual experience and larger life issues. In the end, I would like to move discussions on visual culture from academic circles into the museum environment, to see if the discourse is meaningful to viewers and if it has a place within museum practice.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY: ACTION RESEARCH

#### Understanding Action Research

Action research is a different type of research methodology in that it supports practitioners as active researchers who investigate their own practice. It is a form of inquiry that allows practitioners to evaluate and reflect on their daily performance in order to affect and create change. With this methodology, practitioners such as myself can seek ways to improve their practice by asking questions such as ‘What am I doing? What do I need to do to improve and how do I improve it?’ (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Questions such as these require practitioners to become researchers, and stand within the research study instead of looking or observing others from the outside.

The shift from observing others to evaluating oneself is one of the main reasons why I chose this methodology, and what distinguishes action research from other types of research. While other types of research are structured so that the researcher is conducting studies on other people, action research engages researchers in questions about their own practice. Practitioners who are conducting action research evaluate their day to day activities closely to determine how well their actions align with their values. They examine their impact on the learning of others in a specific setting. As Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest, “Specifically, action research aims at improvement in the three areas: the improvement of practice; understanding of the practice by its practitioners; and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place” (p. 162). Because action research aims to look at practice within a specific setting and affect change, I believe this methodology aligns with my question of “how can I improve my teaching practice based on my values and visual culture discourse in a modernist museum environment?” With this

question, I seek to understand how to be a better practitioner within a particular environment, and how my practice might impact museum learning experiences using visual culture theory. Evaluating practice, acting upon those evaluations, and reflecting on any actions with the hope of affecting change, are all key aspects of action research.

### The Position of the Researcher and the Construction of Knowledge

Action research is unique in that it is site specific and on-going or cyclical. It is traditionally employed when a practitioner is seeking a solution to a local problem. As a methodology, it does not support generalized solutions that fit all or most situations. Instead, it is a systemic approach that focuses on specific situations and settings where a practitioner wishes to research a problem that is impacting her/his everyday life (Stinger, 2007). Observing and identifying a particular concern begins the process of inquiry, or what McNiff & Whitehead (2006) call the 'action-reflection cycle'. The action-reflection cycle is the foundation for researchers performing action research. It consists of several different stages. The stages include the following: making observations or identifying a concern (observing), thinking of a possible solution (reflecting), trying out a possible solution (acting), monitoring the action, gathering data on the action (evaluating progress), making judgments, testing the validity, and modifying practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). By engaging in this cycle, the researcher is investigating and reflecting on her/his practice continuously; this is at the core of action research.

Today, action research is identified as the study of oneself and one's own practice in the hopes of making change and impacting a larger community. This understanding of action research is different from earlier conceptions of action research that were more external to the researcher and associated with the social sciences. Earlier action research in the 1930s and 1940s

was identified with education and social sciences, through the work of action research pioneers John Collier and Kurt Lewin (Hartog, 2004). However, by the late 1960s and early 1970s action research began to be associated with political activity as well as education (Stinger, 2007). In the 1980s, the work of Carr and Kemmis linked educational action research to critical theory and academic studies (Hartog, 2004). However, according to McNiff (2002), early educational action research was still somewhat removed from the practitioner. It is only within the last ten to fifteen years that the idea of “teacher as researcher” has been openly supported and promoted (May, 1997). Even though earlier action research was also about change and bettering an environment, the researchers were still studying a phenomenon that was separate from themselves and their immediate practice. As a result, the research question was less directed towards oneself and more directed towards the study of others. For example, instead of asking “How can I improve my practice using visual culture,” earlier action research would have asked “Does the use of visual culture theory motivate others to engage with artworks?” While the first question admits that I am acting as the researcher, the latter question places the researcher outside of the question; it does not transparently implicate the practitioner as the researcher or acknowledge the researchers investment.

By asking a research question based an educational inquiry and engaging in action research, I am placing myself at the center of the study. I am also aligning myself with certain paradigmatic assumptions. These assumptions include the belief that research is not value free and that knowledge is constructed through the collaboration of individuals (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Action research does not claim to be objective. Rather, the methodology prescribes to the post-positivist view that acknowledges the influence of context and individuals’ values or experiences in the construction of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This

perspective views truth and knowledge as “conjectural” and without absolute foundations (Phillips & Burbules, p. 29, 2000). The post-positivism paradigm supports the notions that there are multiple truths, and that these truths are subject to change (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Whereas other types of research prescribe to the idea that research can be neutral and value free, action research aims to reveal what the researcher knows or values and how this knowledge is reflected through his/her practice. With action research, knowledge is internally constructed and can be challenged and transformed in different social contexts or within different social relations.

In choosing to use this methodology, I am holding myself accountable for my values and my actions. I must look at the values and actions that frame my practice as I facilitate learning opportunities within a modernist museum setting. The facilitation of these learning experiences, however, is not done alone. As a museum educator, I am acting within a community of individuals. Just as these individuals affect my day to day activities and my reflections on various situations, my interactions with them will also have some effect. My interest in this project is in seeing how my practice affects people who I interact with for programming and other purposes. Instead of looking at my practice in isolation, action research asks that I recognize how my knowledge is constructed, challenged, and re-created through interaction with individuals.

In discussing my interaction with others, I must mention that this project was not a true collaboration, with a community of researchers. While action research can include a community of researchers, my project did not fall into that category. Due to my position of power, and the particular institution in which I worked, I could not engage a community of researchers in a large scale project. Instead, I chose to focus on my own practice and my own story, using both emancipatory and living educational theory as my chosen action research formats. While these

formats immediately position me to have a strong voice and tell a partial story in the research, they also recognize the importance of change and aligning values with practice.

### Strands of Action Research and Visual Culture

I was attracted to this research methodology because of two strands of action research, both emancipatory action research and the living educational theory approach first established by Jack Whitehead (1989, 2000). While living educational theory relates directly to my research question, emancipatory action research relates to visual culture theory and what I value about my role as a museum educator.

Living educational theory originated with Jack Whitehead's (1989) investigation of his values and his determination to improve his practice in 1988. Basing his research on the question "how can I improve my practice," he evaluated his day to day activity and found that his values were often negotiated in his living actions. He witnessed a video tape of himself giving a science lesson to a group of students. While observing the tape, Whitehead noticed how he was not allowing for individual learner investigations, even though he believed in the construction of knowledge and the power of student driven explorations. Whitehead did not believe knowledge was fixed, yet his teaching practice was not reflecting his epistemological and ontological position. As a result, Jack Whitehead began to ask how practitioners can become active researchers while trying to improve their practice (Hartog, 2004; Whitehead, 1989). How can they close this gap between values and practice, which he later identified as living contradictions?

As a practicing museum educator, I can identify with this gap and the constant negotiation of my values. Working within an institution that does not philosophically align with

my belief system, makes acting in accordance with my values challenging. In order to rectify this 'living contradiction', Whitehead (1989) suggests that practitioners start looking at their personal values as points of inspiration for educational growth. Looking at personal values, however, places the practitioner at the center of the research. It requires that teachers study their practice as a way to develop personal theories of practice that can eventually impact other practitioners (Whitehead, 2003). Even though the researcher is studying her or his values, it is done in an effort to understand how one's actions can affect a broader community. Living educational theory suggests that practitioners are being held accountable for their practice as it relates to a larger public (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006b). In this regard, living educational theory is tied to emancipatory action research, which calls for stronger social action and social change.

The purpose for conducting this study is not only to close the gap between my values and my actions, but also to understand the impact that my practice has on the people with whom I interact in an educational setting. Even though I am placing myself at the center of the research, I am looking for change; I am looking for a way to change consciousness and move beyond the frame of the visual image. Specifically, I am looking to expand dialogue to include multiple narratives and create opportunities for alternative voices. I chose visual culture theory because it centers the viewer as an active producer of meaning in relationship to a social world. Conducting the study through a visual culture lens in theory would allow new voices to be heard and for dialogue to extend into the social. Using this lens, however, requires that I create and affect change on a daily basis, which is a key component of emancipatory action research.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), the purpose of emancipatory action research is to create opportunities and the will to engage in social actions. Although this research methodology often has a political agenda, it is also about creating opportunities for change and

empowerment (Cohen, Marion, & Morrison, 2000; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). According to Grundy (1996), emancipatory action research aims to foster new understandings about constraints that are restricting participants' autonomy and other freedoms. It is about emancipating the consciousness in such a way that individuals change their view of themselves and the world around them. This aim of emancipatory action research directly relates to visual culture and the desire to provide space for personal voice. Because of emancipatory action research and living educational theory, I am able to use action research as my methodology for addressing the question "How can I improve my practice using visual culture theory in a modernist museum environment"

With emancipatory action research, you are hoping to create sustainable change. For this research project, sustainable change is in the form of the docents teaching. Shortly after I finished the project, however, I changed jobs. As a result, I was not there on a daily basis and could not encourage the docents regularly to explore and reflect on their teaching. In my best attempt to continue supporting them, I did maintain a relationship with several docents and talked with them regularly about teaching strategies. Although In the end, sustaining that change is up to them; they do not have the power to change the institution, but they do have the power to change their individual teaching styles and what they can accomplish in the galleries.

#### Design of the Study: Educational Action Research

Educational action research is messy. It is not clear cut moving from point A to point B. Unlike social scientific enquiry with external researchers who develop objective or external theories (e-theories), educational action research leads to an understanding of the self in a co-created world with I-theories of practice. I-theories of practice are theories of practice that reflect



internal ways of knowing; they reflect the changes that occur in the researchers' thought processes as they grow and challenge their own beliefs or understandings about the world (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002).

While acknowledging and examining I-theories makes educational action research so distinct from other methodologies, it also makes action research unclear and difficult to translate into a two-dimensional model. As a result, there are several different action research models available, beginning with some of the first models developed by John Collier and Kurt Lewin, and continuing well into the 70s and 80s with Lawrence Stenhouse, and Stephen Kemmis (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). For this research, however, I chose to follow the model put forth by Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead. Instead of being a flat diagram, with a clearly delineated pathway, their model for the action-reflection cycle is presented as a spiral. It is a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and repeating the cycle (Cohen, Marion, and Morrison, 2000). The spiral suggests that the process of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and modifying is ongoing. Because it is in constant motion, there is always room for new growth—there is always room for new questions and new reflections on ways to better practice.

Throughout this project, I went through two action research cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The first cycle took place while preparing for and implementing the Oct. 14, 2006 workshop and the second cycle took place while preparing for and implementing the Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006 workshop. For both workshops, I was able to work through a full cycle, including the reflection stages.

### *Participants/Location of Research*

This study took place at the museum in which I worked. This museum is located in North

Texas. I chose this site because of the nature of the research question. Since it is a question about my own practice, it encouraged me to start the investigation with me and the individuals with whom I interacted on a regular basis. As a result, the core participants of this study included a convenient and purposeful sampling. Using a purposeful sampling allowed me to choose specific participants who provided significant data during the course of my research. These participants therefore consisted of specific docents who facilitated two workshops and me.

Purposeful sampling is one method of participant selection used by qualitative researchers. Participants are chosen based on what the investigator wants to discover, or gain insight on. Glensne (1999) cites Patton (1990) in explaining the logic behind purposeful sampling. Patton states “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (cited in Glensne, p. 29). Since I was aiming to learn how to improve my practice, it was important that I directly involved the docents with whom I worked with to create different workshops. However, because of the design of our educational programs, docents typically sign up for workshops months in advance.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the sampling of docents for the October 14, 2006 workshop was mostly based on convenience and availability. Convenience sampling is one strategy for choosing participants under purposeful sampling. It is directly tied to the availability of resources, such as time, money and availability of respondents. This type of sampling is useful when evaluating an educator’s practice (Merriam, 1998).

---

<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in Ch. 1, I asked that the docents who signed up for the October workshop, also sign-up for the second workshop in December. The first workshop was therefore a convenient and purposeful sampling, but the second one was intentional. Having the same docents enabled us to travel through any pedagogical changes together and for me to see their individual growth whenever possible.

There were a total of twelve docents who participated in each of the two workshops. All twelve docents participated in workshop training sessions, the actual workshop, and the reflection sessions. Therefore, data coming from the recorded and transcribed training and reflection sessions reflects the voices of these twelve docents. The docents were within the approximate ages of forty to seventy five. There were ten Caucasian females and two Caucasian males in the group. About eighty percent of the docents had volunteered their time at the museum for over three years and had a strong interest in the arts. About fifty percent of the group was also active docents at the modern art museum across the street.

From these twelve docents, I chose three docents for individual interviews. I conducted two rounds of individual interviews with each docent, one after the October 14, 2006 workshop and one after the December 16, 2006 workshop. Unfortunately one of the docents could not participate in the December workshop and therefore could not be interviewed for a second time. As a result I concluded with a total of five individual interviews that were transcribed and recorded.

I chose these three docents based on their length of time at the museum, and prior conversations I had with each one regarding teaching in the museum. The first docent, with the pseudonym of Sally, was in her late forties and a mother of three. She was very active with human rights organizations in the area and the World Affairs Council of Fort Worth. She had been to Africa several times to work on self-sustaining farms and improve agricultural development. Sally was a strong thinker who openly challenged people to consider non-traditional approaches. She had been a docent for approximately a year, and was considered a new docent or docent in training. Sally was more liberal in her approach to teaching and learning. She enjoyed dialogue and admittedly feared having to memorize dates. However, I

would describe Sally as a contradiction; she was a complex thinker who liked to be grounded in art historical information and given very clear guidance.

The second docent, who went by the pseudonym Bette, was on the other end of the spectrum. Based on my prior conversations with her, and being familiar with her practice in general, I knew Bette to be very traditional in her approach to teaching and art history. She took comfort in a didactic style of teaching and had a great deal of art historical knowledge in many areas. She was in her seventies, retired, traveled extensively for pleasure, and had been a docent for over five years. Bette was also a docent at the modern art institution across the street. Overall, Bette had a very strong personality and gave the impression of being unwilling to change.

The third docent, who was assigned the pseudonym Tina, was situated between the other two when it came to teaching and learning about art in the galleries. Tina was in her forties. She was a single, affluent mom, who worked as a flight attendant and who brought her daughter with her to most events. She had a social personality and was very willing to accommodate others. Tina loved having a list of questions to ask the participants and wanted to know exactly what she was to do. Prior to this project, I had seen Tina ask other docents for clarity and take direction from them. Tina was very compliant and agreeable. She did not like to ruffle feathers, and tried very hard to memorize art historical information. I do not believe Tina had a background in art or art history. Before this project, Tina was a docent at the museum for approximately two years. Unfortunately, Tina was also the docent who had to take a flight at the last minute and could not participate in the December workshop. As a result, I could not interview her for a second time.

Before the project began, all twelve docents signed an informed consent form reviewed by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board, acknowledging that they understood the research project and would willingly participate. They were also assigned

pseudonyms by me, some of which are mentioned throughout this report. In the end, the stories, comments, and statements in the data analysis are pulled not only from the individual interviews, but also from the recorded training and reflection sessions with all twelve docents.

### *Data Collection: Participant Observer*

Marshall and Rossman (1999) identify participation, observation, interviewing, and analyzing documents as the four main types of data collection for qualitative research. Over the course of this research, I used triangulation and incorporated several of these data collection methods into the study. Specifically, the methods I used included the review of written documents, such as workshop training materials and email exchanges; audio recorded, open-ended individual interviews; audio-recorded training sessions; my journal entries based observations of the docents and my practice; and lastly, audio-recorded group interviews during docent reflection sessions. Combining these methods allowed me to reflect on my actions and gain insight from docents about their interpersonal experiences with others in our shared environment.

During this study, I acted as one of the primary research tools. Cohen, Marion, and Morrison (2000) cite one of the first steps to action research is participation as a model for practice. As a participant, the researcher is an integral part of the project setting and can observe patterns or behaviors first hand. However within this method of data gathering, there is a continuum. On one end of the spectrum is the *observer as participant*, or participant-observer, where the researcher has limited interaction with the community. On the other end of the spectrum is the *researcher as full participant*, where the researcher is a “functioning member of the community undergoing investigation and an investigator” (Gresne, 1999, p. 44). My role

within this study was researcher as full participant instead of someone who stands back and simply observes group behavior. I recorded my reflections on a regularly basis. These reflections were recorded in a journal that I continued to use throughout the duration of the study. Reflecting on a regular basis through journal entries provided me with an opportunity to evaluate my teaching practices within programs that I designed and implemented (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I considered my own practice and made observations on how my practice affected the people with whom I interacted, including docents, colleagues, and workshop participants. In addition, I also was able to record my observations of the workshops within this journal. The journal acted as my way of keeping field notes and written documentation of any observations and reflections I had while teaching and observing the docents during the workshops (Gresne, 1999).

#### *Data Collection: Audio Recordings and Group Interviews*

In addition to the journal entries, I also audio-taped two workshop sessions that occurred three months apart. The first occurred in October, 2006 and the second in December, 2006. Ideally each workshop recording would have consisted of three components, the initial training session with the docents, the workshop itself, and a group reflection session after the workshop concluded. However, when it came time to record the actual workshop, many of the docents were uncomfortable with the idea. As a result, I made observations regarding three docents' tours in my journal.<sup>21</sup>

I recorded and transcribed the initial workshop training sessions in order to gain insight on my teaching strategies and evaluate how I communicate some of the larger overarching

---

<sup>21</sup> The three docents I observed were the same ones I interviewed later on in the study.

questions and ideas. It was important for me to get a sense of how I create learning experiences for the docents, since they are the ones who would ultimately communicate the workshop objectives to the students or museum visitors.<sup>22</sup> The second component, the reflection session, occurred directly after each of the two workshops. These reflection sessions were actually designed as open-ended, semi-structured group interviews, where I began by asking specific questions to the group (see Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews are more open-ended than structured interviews (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Although interviewers using the semi-structured method will form initial questions prior to the interview, there is still some room for varying opinions and flexibility in the direction of the interview. According to Merriam (1998), a semi-structured interview “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 74). This type of interview aligns with my values as both a researcher and as an educator. While asking certain guiding questions is important, I also see the value in providing the docents with a chance to reflect on their workshop experience and to help direct the conversation.

By providing the group with space for their opinions, I was acting in alignment with the aims of visual culture theory and my desire to discuss larger issues in the museum context. If I did not provide the space for others to reflect on their practice, then I would have been contradicting the very principles that I was putting forth. This would have widened the gap between my values and my actions, or what Whitehead calls my ‘living contradiction.’ In

---

<sup>22</sup> While my goal was to record the Children’s Workshop training sessions in both October and December, there were some unexpected events that occurred. While these events did not prevent me from collecting the audio-recordings entirely, I believe they did alter the data that was collected. For the first workshop training session, only half of the docents scheduled to participate attended. As a result, I had to lead a second training session the following day. While my approach for both training sessions was similar, there were some alterations that occurred due to the differing shifts in conversation with the docents. Also, for the second children’s workshop training session in December, I was only able to record half of the training session. After about 30 minutes the tape recorder ran out of batteries, and I did not have a replacement on site. Although I took notes in my journal immediately after the training session, I was not able to audio tape some of the docents’ comments.

addition, by using a semi-structured interview format and asking docents to reflect on their workshop experiences, I was trying to model a type of practice that constantly is reflective and looking for methods of improvement.

### *Individual Docent Interviews*

In addition to the group reflection session interviews, I also conducted five individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These five interviews were conducted with three different docent respondents. With each of these interviews, I came prepared with a list of questions that acted as guides for the conversation (See Appendix B). The respondents of these face-to-face interviews were docents who participated in both the October and the December workshops. However, one of the three docents could only participate in the October workshop and therefore did not undergo a second interview. With her, I had just one opportunity to assess her experiences and gather her reflections on the workshop experience. Overall, these three docent respondents contributed to my data collection based on their participation in the Childrens' Workshop training sessions, the Childrens' Workshop itself, and the post-workshop reflection sessions.

Conducting the additional face-to-face interviews was important to my data analysis as I looked for ways to improve practice using visual culture theory. These face-to-face interviews, along with the other materials, provided a story; they offered insight into the respondents' personal beliefs and helped to demonstrate how to make sense of their experience. In turn, their narratives reflected in their individual interviews allowed me to understand better the impact that I may or may not have on the docents' practice as they engage with museum visitors. The



individual interviews along with the other collected materials, told the docents' and my story as we worked through the integration of visual culture into practice.

### *Document Collection*

To complete the triangulation method, I collected documents that pertained to the study, such as workshop lesson plans, correspondence with docents and colleagues, and institutional publications. The documents helped to provide additional information about the situation, such as attitudes, outlooks, and differing opinions (Glesne, 1999). For example, over the course of the few months that I conducted the study, I collected correspondence between myself and the Director of Education. Within that correspondence, both the director and I expressed our differing visions for the workshops and our philosophical beliefs about museum education.

Document collection adds another layer of description that tells a story about my work setting and the institutional paradigm. Collecting documents such as workshop lessons, observation notes, and correspondence strengthened the study and reinforced any data analysis findings. They contributed to the story told through this action research project. Collecting these additional documents, according to Marshall and Rossman (1995), "is an unobtrusive method, one rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting" (p. 83). Since action research is site specific and uses the setting to frame the problem, additional document collection seems logical and necessary; these documents served as extra materials that speak to the specific setting in which I work, and reflect both my values and the values of the participants.

## Data Analysis

### *Narrative Analysis*

I used narrative analysis to analyze the interviews, observations, journal entries, and collected documents. As a methodological approach, narrative analysis aims to explain how humans create order and construct verbal and written text out of certain experiences. It is the analysis of experience through stories and storytelling (Merriam, 1998).

A narrative is not simply a chronology of events, but rather it is a reconstruction or a retelling of events into a whole that reflects the narrator's point of view (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Instead of offering a mere description of events that took place, a narrative contains personal interpretations and emotions that are inevitably tangled up with the way one walks through the world. The telling of narratives and the construction of experiences helps us to create a social context for ourselves—it presents an idea of how we want to be understood by others and how we try to understand the world. For example, the manner in which the docents recounted their workshop experiences is influenced by their understanding of themselves, how they see themselves in the institutional context and how they wish to be perceived by others. The story constructed through other collected materials, such as the recorded training sessions, my journal entries, and workshop paperwork, all tell my narrative as I integrated visual culture discourse into practice. In the end, the docents' recounts of their workshop experiences, and the recount of my story over the course of this study, are unique to our individual perspectives and our interpretations of the situation.

Like action research, narrative analysis is somewhat messy and fluid. Because it addresses the construction and the telling of stories, this type of analysis is not clearly delineated within one scholarly field or another. Instead it crosses over into different fields of study and

travels across disciplinary borders. As a result, theoreticians from varying disciplines, such as sociolinguistics, anthropology, and literary studies, have interpreted and implemented narrative analysis in slightly different manners. These interpretations range from examining the social context of a narrative, and its impact on the way the story is told, to looking at the structure or form of the narrative and categorizing a respondent's every utterance (Merriam, 1998).

Specific narrative analysis approaches include Labov and Waletzky 1960's model for categorizing elements of a story, Lieblich's focus on content and form, and Mishler's look at the function of language (Elliott, 2005). I chose to use Labov and Waletzky's approach for this research project. With this model, interviews, journal entries, and documents are reduced to statements of sentence clauses and core narratives are produced. From there, the statements in the core narratives are broken down into 6 categories. Those six categories include the following: an abstract (summary of the content of the narrative), orientation (time, place, situation, participants), complication action (sequence of events), evaluation (significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator), resolution (what finally happened), and coda (returns the perspective to the present) (Reissman, 1993).

Labov and Waletzky's six categories helped me to analyze the data and uncover any changes occurring in both my practice and the docents' practice. With Labov's model the analysis is not just about identifying the sequence. It is also about categorizing the information in a way that reveals how the events come to bear meaning for the person experiencing or telling the story. Although I admit to having a limited view, and only being able to tell a partial story, the model put forth by Labov and Waletzky enabled me to investigate the docents' narratives as they intertwined with my own. I acknowledge that I shaped the story and recognize that whichever model I chose would have brought light to certain things and not to others. Labov's

and Waltetzky's model reduced the data into those six categories listed above, and in doing so I believe it offered a good place to begin analyzing.

### *Narrative Analysis Sample*

According to Labov and Waletzky, in telling a story, a narrator will typically begin with abstract and orientation statements. For the docent interviews, this meant providing me with an initial summary of the tour, as well as any detailed information such as the size of their group, the age of their participants, etc. For example, when conducting an individual interview, the docent Susan stated, "There were ten students in my group that Saturday afternoon." In this statement, she provided a detailed picture of the situation, which falls under the orientation category (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2006; Labov, 1972). Following abstract and orientation comments are typically complicating action comments, where docents describe different events that occurred. For example, the same docent mentioned above continued to say, "I had to call their names and tell them to focus on the docent" and "We were talking about the eyeliner and cosmetics. I asked them the question, "Do you know why they wore the eyeliner?" and they didn't" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2006). These last few complicating action statements help me to understand what transpired during the course of their tour.

Evaluation and resolution statements typically follow complicating actions. For this particular docent, resolution came next and evaluation seemed to be dispersed throughout her narrative. Comments such as "So there were levels of interest that would come from the questions we discussed" is a resolution statement; it tells me what finally happened; it is a summary of sorts. Whereas evaluation statements are more like, "I believe when people can participate in revealing an aspect of who they are, they become more involved in the process,

like that one little girl who was talking about female values, her comments were profound” (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2006).<sup>23</sup> Evaluation statements are often found after complicating actions, but may also be interspersed throughout the narrative. Evaluation statements can serve as a short synthesis, a moment when the narrator is reflecting on the action and interpreting it before moving forward (Labov, 1972).

The last category is coda statements. Coda statements bring the listener back to the present. Codas are not necessarily descriptions of events or direct answers of what happened. In this sense, they do not provide a result like resolution statements. Instead, they signal that the narrative is finished or at least coming to a close. For the docent mentioned above, her coda statements expressed how she would continue to discuss issues related to the social world and adornment in upcoming next tours. As she states, “I can see how the theme of adornment and beauty could flow over into other tours. This may not be the only one” (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2006). Her coda statements demonstrate a desire to continue engaging in greater dialogue and hopefully explore artworks as they relate to social issues even further.

Although the first few categories have value, I focused mainly on the last four categories when looking at the data. Isolating the data into these categories helped to reveal moments of awareness experienced by either the docents or me, and the impact these isolated moments may have on future practice. In particular, statements falling into the evaluation and resolution categories enabled me to see clearly when docents felt capable of moving dialogue away from the picture frame and engaging in a conceptual way of teaching that embraced the social world and all its complexities.

---

<sup>23</sup> This particular docent happened to interject evaluation statements throughout her interview, which is a recognized form of Labov’s (1972) original model. While evaluation statements are often found just before the resolution, they may penetrate the entire narrative as waves. When this occurs, the evaluation is thought to interrupt or suspend the action of the narrative. According to Labov (1972), even if actions and emotions are experienced at the same time, the action is suspended by the evaluation when stated as different sentences.

## *Narrative Analysis and Interviews*

Narrative analysis supports the notion that interviewees should have more space to explore their story in a semi-structured, open-ended interview (Reissman, 1993). Creating space for the interviewee to craft their story is an important aspect of narrative analysis. It enables the respondent to choose the language and the structure she/he wishes to put forth without having a format imposed upon them. Therefore, during the group and individual docent interviews, I tried to provide the docents with enough time to construct their understanding of the events, and genuinely listen to their account of the workshop experiences. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) narrative inquiry looks to transform the interviewer-interviewee relationship into narrator and listener. As the interviewer it was my responsibility to listen to the docents' reflections as we wove in and out of my pre-planned semi-structured interview questions.

As I retell my story, I am also constructing an understanding of how the study unfolded and why the study is worth exploring. I am actively deciphering my own voice as I recount the story through these various pieces of data. Because I am actively deciphering my own voice, I have the power to perceive it. I am taking both an authoritative and supportive role as I try to balance my voice with the voices of the docents. Instead of guessing whether or not I had an impact on their teaching, they are expressing this to me through the interview. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest,

As narrators, then, researchers develop meaning out of, and some sense of order in, the material they studied; they develop their own voice(s) as they construct others' voices and realities. (p. 657)

The limitation of this type of research, however, is that I am close to the responder. I am both in a position of power and a person within the community, which makes the interviewing process challenging. The mixing of the docents and my voices, meant that the docents might be

performing to some degree. This is an undeniable part of the research but one that I did not feel threatened by in our situation. In the end, I believe the docents and my stories supported one another. They demonstrated how change can take place from within an institution, when people are willing to explore new ideas and take on a little risk.

### Validity

The limitations of this study are the subjectivity and the non-generalizability aspect of action research and narrative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While in the past researchers viewed subjectivity as a threat to validity it enables researchers such as myself to carry out a self-reflective study and critique discourses that influence practice (May & Diket, 1995). Since this project is focused on my values and action, more than observing someone else's behavior, I recognize that it is biased. However that bias helps to describe the realities of the context in which I work and the complexities of affecting change in a particular setting. Because of this subjectivity, I must employ much self awareness and use multiple methods of data collection, or triangulation. By remaining consciously aware of the study's subjective nature and utilizing triangulation, subjectivity can become a strength instead of a weakness of qualitative research.

Because of the site specific nature of action research and narrative analysis, generalizability is impossible to apply. Not being able to transfer the data findings to other situations is often viewed as a limitation. With qualitative data, this external validity is challenged and looked upon as a weakness (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In response to that belief, this type of study is thought to have 'self-reflexive validity.' Self reflexive validity is where there is "critical reflection on how social discourses and processes shape or mediate how we experience our selves and our environment" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This type of validity

shows the “realness” of what I am studying on an everyday basis. It takes social and cultural context into account when trying to explain how someone’s understands their world and their every day experiences. While the findings from this study may not be generalizable, they do offer an in-depth account of naturally occurring events in a natural setting. These in-depth accounts typically use rich descriptions that describe lived experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this specific case, the rich descriptions have been collected through the use of several different data collection methods that account for its validity.

Using triangulation, or the collection of data from multiple sources, demonstrates the complexity of the situation and my determination to understand my practice as an ongoing and evolving process. Instead of only obtaining one point of data collection, the multiple methods will expose the “realities” of the situation. (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001). Using more than one source to reinforce any data findings and increasing the study’s generalizability will ultimately strengthen the validity of my research (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In addition to triangulation, I also employed members check. Members check requires that the interviewee review the finding in order to confirm, refute, or enhance the data analysis. This additional validity method helps to determine whether or not I accurately represented the interviewer’s voice and the story he/she was trying to express. It is a tool often used in narrative analysis research (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). For the purpose of this project, Sally was asked to review the document and provide her feedback. Conducting members check with Sally led to a rich conversations regarding dialogue in the galleries. After reading the report, Sally and I discussed the type of teaching she has engaged in over last year and the role this project played in her personal growth. For Sally, the story being told in this document accurately reflects her experience and her engagement in the project (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2008).



## CHAPTER 4

### RECONCEPTUALIZING PRACTICE

#### Introduction

The data gathered from workshop training sessions, individual interviews, and docent reflection sessions, revealed ways to improve my teaching practice and understanding of new concepts for teaching and learning. Using narrative analysis, I discovered valuable stories and statements, revealing significant moments in the research that were meaningful to both the docents and me. Although the docents were not co-researchers in this project, their reactions to changes in my pedagogy proved important. Because I was participating within a community, tension inevitably existed. I was not only looking at myself, but I also was viewing my practice as it related to the docents and their roles as teachers in the galleries. In the end, I needed to honor the docents' individual voices and examine the data as a whole. In order to understand my teaching and how to improve it, I had to examine what docents valued, welcomed, dismissed, or negotiated during the course of the project.

My story, as it was interwoven with theirs, is about re-considering my practice as a teacher of teachers. As I traveled through the action research project I gained a clearer understanding of visual culture and began evaluating my ideas about teaching, curriculum, and learning, ultimately defining four areas of focus within this research project. These four focus areas include the following: understanding visual culture and its impact on my teaching, discovering new ways of looking at works of art through curriculum, dialogue, and social learning experiences, examining the integration of conversation into practice, and recognizing the value of reflection in teaching.

Discovering how to look at works of art in new ways, and enabling others to do the same, began with my own struggle to understand visual culture discourse. Whitehead and McNiff (2006a) state, action research is when “practitioners intervene in and improve their own learning, in their attempts to influence the learning of others and how they in turn can improve their own learning and their own situation” (p. 19). Intervening on my practice meant grappling with ideas presented in visual culture discourse and struggling to articulate these ideas to the docents. Pushing through my own understanding of the discourse helped me to reflect on what it means to be a teacher of teachers and how I might encourage docents to look at works of art in new ways. From the beginning, I believed that using a visual culture lens in a traditional museum environment might have an impact, but I did not foresee how my personal struggle to understand the theory would contribute to the reconceptualization of my practice.

### Struggling with the Discourse

#### *Scratching the Surface of Visual Culture*

I was introduced to visual culture discourse during a graduate course at the University of North Texas. Immediately, the discourse lent itself to my desire to affect change and connect the past with the present. The integration of mass media, advertisements, and low brow art into museum or art education curriculum was wildly appealing. In the fall of 2005, at the University of Kansas, a colleague and I gave a lecture on the importance of deconstructing visual signs in everyday life. In the spring of 2005, I integrated pop culture into a student teaching lesson plan under the guise of visual culture. Experiences such as these were the germination of my current research. They were part of my path in understanding visual culture discourse. However, these experiences also demonstrate my limited understanding of visual culture. Although I saw value

in blurring the line between high and low brow art in the curriculum, I was unaware of the political and social side of visual culture discourse.

At the beginning of this research project, I was not fully conscious of how an image could be socially constructed and act as a social constructor. Although I understood the first half of the equation, viewing images as social constructions, I struggled with the idea that visual images build and reinforce one's identity or understanding of the world. I did not fully understand how images could reinforce underlying assumptions related to issues of power, gender, identity, etc. My struggle with this concept revealed itself during the first Childrens' Workshop training session focused on architecture and Hatshepsut's ancient Egyptian temple. At the time of this first Childrens' Workshop, I was operating within the first two threads of thought regarding visual culture presented by Kevin Tavin (2003).<sup>24</sup> I was working within what Tavin identifies as the substantial and pedagogical, not the phenomenological. In the beginning, I was integrating contemporary images into the curriculum, and broadening the scope of images used by the docents in the galleries, but struggling to discuss issues of visuality and intertextuality.

During the first workshop training session, the docents and I discussed issues of power and identity as they relate to architecture and representation. In my attempt to have docents look at works of art differently, I asked them to compare contemporary buildings, such as the White House or Supreme Court, to Hatshepsut's temple. I encouraged the docents to question how they came to know the function of a building, examining visual elements that may dictate meanings related to power, class, and social context. For example, when discussing Hatshepsut's Temple

---

<sup>24</sup> Tavin (2003) identifies three threads of thought emerging from the literature on visual culture. These threads include, the phenomenological, the substantial, and the pedagogical. The substantial is "an inclusive register of images, artifacts, objects, instrumentaria, and apparatus" while the pedagogical is a "transdisciplinary project that attempts to interpret and analyze the wealth of visual experiences in and through contemporary culture" (p. 202). Lastly, the phenomenological is identified as "a description of present-day conditions in which experience, subjectivities, and consciousness are profoundly affected by images and the practices of seeing, showing, and imagining" (p. 201).

as it relates to power and representation, we compared it to the art museum where the study was taking place. As a group, we explored materials used to construct the museum, the design of the museum, and the museum's location in the city of Fort Worth. Although we had a rich discussion using these images, I was not able to articulate clearly ideas regarding visuality or the visual experience to the docents. Even as we discussed issues of power and representation as they relate to architectural structures, I struggled to express how perceptions of the world are social constructions influenced by images and experiences. My grasp of the social construction of identity and the impact of intertextuality, or as Freedman (2003a) calls it, *intergraphicality*, between images was not complete.

According to Freedman (2003) *intergraphicality*, or the space between images, contributes heavily to the construction of new knowledge. Freedman (2003) identifies the term *intergraphicality* as the individual's ability to store and recall many images and their associated meanings. Freedman states,

The attached meanings are part of what is known about the images until we restructure or construct new knowledge through more experience. This process, then, enables us to comingle images, make associations between them, recycle and change them, as we restructure knowledge and create new images and art. (p. 121)

This intergraphical space between visual images, where they intersect and exchange meanings, is a significant part of visual culture and one that I struggled to explain to the docents. While I understood how images could act as interdisciplinary signs, referencing multiple layers of meanings, I did not immediately recognize the social and political implications of these visual signs. I had not absorbed the subtext; that one's perception of self and the world at large is socially constructed, and that power is subtly reinforced through visual images. However, as this research project progressed, these aspects of visual culture became more apparent.

### *Revisiting Visual Culture and My Practice*

By the second workshop in December, I felt more comfortable facilitating a conversation with the docents regarding images as social constructors of cultural concepts or norms regarding issues of beauty, gender, power, etc. I began to understand more clearly how ‘culture’ is rooted in a signifying practice, and how objects become players in the construction of world view’s or subjectivities (Duncum, 2003). This new understanding allowed me to reconceptualize my role as the teacher and feel more comfortable letting go of specific outcomes.

During the first workshop training session, I felt frustrated by the discrepancy between how I had envisioned the docents and my conversation, and the actual outcome of our conversation. I wanted to control the direction of our discussion and be sure to address certain aspects of visual culture. Yet, in needing to control the conversation, I was not allowing visual culture theory to act at its best. I was searching for specific outcomes and not providing space for multiple interpretations of the experience, which is a key component to visual culture discourse. However, by the second workshop in December, I began to understand how visual culture and my job as a museum educator are rooted in the negotiation of differences and subjectivities.

The emphasis on multiple interpretations in visual culture, and on deconstructing master narratives in postmodernism, allows for the negotiation of differences in teaching and learning environments. As the museum educator and practitioner researcher, my actions took place in the context of museological space; I was working in relationship to the values of docents and other museum staff members. Within this context, differences were encountered. Varying cultural and social backgrounds, institutional power hierarchies, and individual values were impacting the course of our conversation and the construction of new knowledge. The extent to which each docent integrated, and took ownership over, new concepts presented at the training session

would, in the end, be affected by these varying differences. Realizing this idea, that the embracement of visual culture was based upon individual docent value systems and how partial embracement did not indicate failure, was part of my personal practice as their teacher.

### *Docents Discover Visual Culture in the Galleries*

On several occasions, the docents expressed a discovery of visual culture concepts in the galleries. Many of them were able to integrate discussions into their tours related to issues of power and positioning, intergraphicality, and objects or images as documentation of social practices. For example, when looking at the ancient Egyptian temple sculptures during the first workshop one of the docents asked her participants questions focused primarily on power and positioning. She asked students to compare two sculptures of Hatshepsut, one depicting Hatshepsut in a softer, more petite manner, and the other depicting Hatshepsut in a stereotypical male pharaoh fashion, with both beard and head covering. The docent asked students to discuss their reactions to these strikingly different sculptures, looking closely at gender associations and issues of contexts or positioning.

In response to the docent's inquiry, the students began to debate the viewing experience and issues of positioning. They discussed how an object's position in an architectural setting can influence the interpretation of that object. One student claimed that the sculpture with a masculine appearance was meant to intimidate, and was probably placed in more sacred areas. While the more feminine looking sculpture, was softer and more inviting for the general visitors. This student believed the first sculpture exhibited ideas about power and the right to rule, whereas the second sculpture was welcoming and more accepting for the general populace. In opposition to this perspective, a male student spoke up and offered an alternative point of view.

He believed the softer, more feminine looking sculpture exhibited power and would have been placed in more sacred areas. In his opinion, by not disguising herself as a man, Hatshepsut was embracing her female strength. This student compared the softer sculpture of Hatshepsut to seventeenth century literary authors who had to take a male pseudo-name in order to get recognized. According to the docent, the young male participant believed that the self-assured depiction of Hatshepsut, as a softer female, demonstrated the ancient Egyptians' acceptance of her position and her "internal strength" (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2006).

The docent went on to compare and contrast the interior of Hatshepsut's temple with the interior of the White House, using images provided in our training session. She asked students to consider how architectural space "projects an inviting, or not inviting, feel" through the use of interior objects and architectural design. In response to the docent's inquiry, a female participant replied with comments on the design and structure of her own home. According to the docent, this young girl identified the garage as her dad's "domain", complete with male tools and other male associations. The same student also commented on the close proximity between her bedroom and her parents' bedroom, noting issues of power and supervision. In the end, the student was relating Hatshepsut's sculptures to her personal space and how the design of her house might be influenced by gender and power associations.

As a group, the conversation continued to move into a discussion on women's rights, comparing what Hatshepsut had to "go through" with voting rights for women in America. The participants also explored Hatshepsut's approach to ruling in ancient Egyptian society, and her presiding interest in cultural reform over conquering lands. According to the docent, one young girl in particular felt as if a female ruler may act more for "the good of the people" than a highly

political male figure, such as Napoleon (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2006).<sup>25</sup>

The students and the docent were traveling quickly through many ideas. However, they continued to come back to this notion of power and positioning. As a group they explored the viewing experience; investigating how sculptures took on different meanings depending on who was looking, and the context in which the sculptures were being viewed. In the end, this docent used several different approaches to engaging students in dialogue. She brought in the use of other images, to connect cultural practices with contemporary times. She addressed issues of context and how interpretation can be affected by the positioning of an image, and lastly, she used sculptures of Hatshepsut as a way to address historical, cultural and social issues from both the past and the present.

### Curriculum , Dialogue, and Social Learning

#### *Emerging Curriculum*

This experience described above relates to the notion of emergent curriculum, where something fascinates, challenges, or stimulates the learner in an unplanned way. An emergent curriculum is based on the learner's own actions and understandings, not the teacher's planned outcomes. It is rooted in Dewey's ideas regarding educational transformation, viewing curriculum as it "emerges from the interactions happening within an event or set of experiences" (Doll, 2002, p. 37). William Doll, associate professor at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University, discusses how emergent curriculum is a "ghost" idea connected with Dewey's thoughts on education. According to Doll (1993), the seeds of emergent curriculum can be found in Dewey's writings on educational theory. Dewey's educational

---

<sup>25</sup> In talking with the docent, I soon discovered that this particular girl had just finished reading about Napoleon in class. She was connecting her gallery learning experience with new information from her classroom curriculum.



theories address the importance of process, interaction, and reflection. His emphasis on experience and process as a way to achieve transformative educational moments, are developed further in postmodern discourse on curriculum and learning.<sup>26</sup>

Emergent curriculum aligns with the theory of authentic learning and postmodern thought regarding curriculum. Under postmodernism, curriculum can be thought of process; it becomes the process of constructing knowledge through dialogue and reflection (Doll, 1993, p. 156). As Doll states,

In this frame, where curriculum becomes process, learning and understanding come through dialogue and reflection. Learning and understanding are made (not transmitted) as we dialogue with others and reflect on what we and they have said – as we negotiate passages between ourselves and others, between ourselves and other texts. (p. 156)

Although this is somewhat of a purist perspective, postmodern curriculum as process relates to authentic learning and its focus on both the learner and real world contexts. Authentic learning is about engaging in learning experiences and dialogue that is meaningful and placed within everyday, cultural practices (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Authentic learning is situated in real-world experiences and accounts for multiple voices as they reflect different positions about oneself and society at large. As the teacher of teachers, my goal was to engage docents in an authentic learning process, where they explored workshop curriculum through dialogue and reflection related to everyday practices.

The docents' interest and ownership over new ways of looking at works of art had to emerge from a vested interest in constructed dialogue. They needed to engage in workshop training dialogue more freely, and find aspects of our conversation that resonated with how they understand the world. Yet, at the beginning of this research project, dialogue was uncomfortable

---

<sup>26</sup> To read more on the relationship between Dewey and postmodern curriculum, see Doll, W. (1993) *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

and unfamiliar. In the past, workshop agendas, tour stops, and art historical information was scripted and delivered by the residing museum educator. The prescribed workshop instructions did not allow for dialogic exchange or an emerging curriculum. As a result, I chose to alter two aspects of the workshop trainings session, providing more space for conversation and allowing for the negotiation of subjectivities.

### *Making Space for Dialogue*

From the start, I hoped to investigate the visual image, its underlying assumptions, and the visual experience. I wished to offer opportunities for docents to engage in dialogue as defined by Barge (2002).<sup>27</sup> However, working in a position of power and knowing the structure of past workshop training sessions made this goal challenging. While I had visions of shared meanings and generative thinking, the docents looked to me for scripted instructions and prescribed objectives. In the end, I decided to make two modifications to the structure of the training session. First, I asked docents to engage in conversation before reading the written material, and secondly, I moved the location of our training session.

Withholding the docents' paperwork goes against past precedence. Typically, docents would receive workshop paperwork as soon as they arrived. This paperwork included objectives, pertinent art historical information, and a studio art lesson plan. However, instead of following this past precedence and handing the paperwork over immediately, I chose to begin the session with a conversation. In doing so, I hoped the docents would gain more ownership over visual culture and engage in new ways of looking. What I did not have the foresight to see, however,

---

<sup>27</sup> Barge (2002) identifies dialogue as “a collective and collaborative communication process whereby people explore together their individual and collective assumptions and predispositions” (p. 168).

was that allowing space for dialogue would upset some docents and force them to work through their discomfort with conversation.

During our first workshop training session, the docents and I made comparisons between Hatshepsut's temple and contemporary architectural structures.<sup>28</sup> We considered ways of engaging students in broader discussions focusing on larger concepts of power and social dynamics. We also examined how architectural elements, both exterior and interior, are linked to issues of authority and representation; we looked at architectural size, materials, landscaping, and location, as they express ideas of power and importance. We investigated the interiors of buildings, looking at how they reflect both the function of a building and the identity of its designers or users. For example, the docents compared the interior of the White House with the interior of Hatshepsut's temple. Both structures send a distinct message to their audiences through their design quality and their function. The White House and Hatshepsut's Temple reflect a position of power; they remind the general viewer of the president's or Hatshepsut's placement in society.

Conversations such as the one described above, where the group explored notions of power and society, encouraged docents to consider works of art in new ways. While withholding the paperwork proved to be uncomfortable for about half the group, it forced them to build new understandings of the material and build off of each other's contributions.<sup>29</sup> Many of the docents admitted to discovering new ways of looking at works of art after our group conversation. As one docent stated,

---

<sup>28</sup> Please refer to the first workshop, which focused on Hatshepsut, the ancient Egyptian female king, and her temple. The images I encouraged the docents to use during their tour included visuals of the White House, the Supreme Court, the Coliseum, the Vatican, and current churches and temples visited by the students.

<sup>29</sup> Although I withheld the paperwork, I asked docents to take notes on our conversations. Explaining how the notes would remind them of each other's contributions once they return home and review the paperwork. Asking the docents to take notes also reinforces the importance of our group discussion or dialogue.

Since you said don't look at those materials yet, we are going to talk first, it was a little unnerving. Thinking about those concepts of why Hatshepsut built her temple this way, and how does that differ, caused me to think a little deeper than I sometimes do with tours where it's a little more black and white. I enjoyed having to delve deeper underneath the surface. (personal communication, October 14, 2006)

For this docent, her workshop preparation method was challenged. The moment she arrived, the docent was asked to move from familiar didactics to unfamiliar dialogue. As “unnerving” as it was for her at first, the docent's discomfort forced her to work through her preconceived notions about certain works of art, and contributed to her understanding of the visual as part of a larger discourse. In addition to removing the paperwork from the training session, I also moved our training session location. We shifted from a boardroom table to the galleries, moving our conversation from an environment lacking in visual objects to one filled with many entry points for dialogue.

### *Learning as a Social Experience*

Moving the trainings session into the galleries demonstrated how learning can be a sociocultural phenomenon. A sociocultural approach to learning tries to understand how people learn in a social environment. It is based on subjective epistemology, where learning occurs within a social context as individuals act within the world and create new understandings. In a sociocultural approach to learning, knowledge is not inherent in the learner. Instead, it is constructed through social environments and cultural experiences (Luke & Adams, 2007). This is the purest form of sociocultural learning theory. By working together in the galleries, the docents revealed how learning is situated within a cultural context.

Situated learning theory, often associated with apprenticeship like experiences, is aligned with both sociocultural theory and emerging curriculum. It is the idea that learning takes place in

real world contexts and within a community of practitioners. Situated learning theory is not a pedagogical approach per se, but it does support the notion that learning is a social phenomenon.<sup>30</sup> Lave and Wenger's (1991) define situated learning as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world...A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage" (p. 98). In this case, Lave and Wenger (1991) are referring to communities of practice as groups of people who share a passion for a certain activity. These groups of people are continuously working on improving their practice through regular social interaction.

The notion that learning takes place through social interactions has already found relevancy within the museum field through the work of Falk and Dierking (2000), Hein (1998, 2000), and others. Hein (1998) explains how socio-cultural theories depend upon both the interplay between individuals and the mediation of "tools, talk, signs, and symbol systems – that are afforded by culture, environment and history" (p. 149). For the docents, the tools or symbol systems were works of art. They used works of art to create larger dialogue with one another focused on issues of power, government, and representation. While in the galleries, the docents examined the social function of Hatshepsut's temple sculptures. They made contemporary cultural references and critiqued the museum setting. As a group, the docents discussed the visual experience in the museum. They compared viewing ancient Egyptian artworks in the museum today, with viewing the same objects in ancient Egypt. The docents discussed how meanings, and viewers' responses, would change depending upon who is looking and the viewing context. When addressing this particular point in the galleries, one docent stated "I've

---

<sup>30</sup> According to Herrington (2005) a model based on situated learning would need to include the following components: an authentic context, complex authentic activities, multiple perspectives, expert performances, coaching and scaffolding, opportunities for collaboration, reflection and articulation, and authentic assessment. To read more about situated learning models, Herrington, J., Herrington, T. (2005). *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.

never thought about discussing that on my tour, but watch me now!” (personal communication, Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006). Although the docents had a tendency to rely on chronology, they were beginning to address the politics of display in their conversation.

### *Learning as Complex Interplay*

This type of complex interplay, where docents are both impacting the environment and using the environment to shape their conversation, is difficult to study Hein (1998) suggests, however, that the learning experience be viewed as a whole; what the docents bring to the experience and how the experience shapes the docents should be looked upon as equally important. For example, in discussing a work of art depicting the Opet festival, the docents moved from a visual literacy approach into a visual culture approach.<sup>31</sup> Initially the docents “read” the relief, looking for iconographic clues and literal translations of the work; they searched for visual clues and asked questions about the soldiers’ skin color, the compositional structure, and the objects in the soldiers’ hands. The docents discussed their prior knowledge regarding Nubian soldiers and the Ancient Egyptian slave society. They also engaged in a style of pedagogy that felt comfortable and familiar. However, as we collectively pushed our thinking and considered the role of this particular relief sculpture in ancient Egyptian society, the docents contemplated the work on a broader scale. They shifted the conversation, from a historical or iconographic reading of the artwork to a dialogue on personal power. They considered questions based upon our conversation to ask workshop participants, and discussed ways to make the piece connect with students’ contemporary lives. As one docent exclaimed,

---

<sup>31</sup> The Opet Festival was initially reinstated by Hatshepsut. She apparently supported this festival as a way to reinforce her rightful place as the female King and continue her legacy as a generous ruler.

You can relate why they [the Egyptians] would want it [the relief sculpture] to be shown with Hatshepsut for an eternity. Like if you donate money, you put your name on a building, you are always remembered with that building. I mean, why do they call it the Davidson Art Museum? I mean, why isn't it just the Fort Worth Art Museum? (personal communication, Oct. 10. 2006)<sup>32</sup>

In this comment, the docent is looking at the role of the relief sculpture in ancient Egyptian society and how it supports Hatshepsut as a rightful governing King. She is comparing the function of this relief, and its political implications, with the link between art and power in today's society. Although the docent does not use the word power specifically, her comment demonstrates changes in her thinking. As our dialogue moved away from a visual literacy approach, she was able to place the work of art in a broader social context reflecting the position of the viewer not just the historical position of the object. In the end, the interplay around this work of art affected the learning environment. Even though the conversation began in a place of previous knowledge and familiarity, our exchange changed the dynamic and contributed to the construction of new knowledge in the museum.

Falk and Dierking (2000) discuss sociocultural context as defining "both who we perceive ourselves to be and how we perceive the world we inhabit" (p. 39). Our ways of understanding the world, according to sociocultural theory, is defined by our social interactions and specific environments. Therefore, using a sociocultural approach in the context of this study meant acknowledges docents' subjective experiences and the social interactions taking place in the galleries. During our training session conversations, the docents were negotiating subjectivities; they were examining their own voices within the context of others, and discovering how others docents organize and interpret information and experiences differently. As one docent stated,

---

<sup>32</sup> Davidson Art Museum is a pseudonym for the institution in which I worked. This was done in an effort to keep the institution anonymous.

When we walked through the galleries and posed the same questions in front of the artwork, that really helped me to see how our conversations and training about the artworks led to conversations with my group about the same artworks. It brought about four or five different perspectives. What each person sees brings up a lot more things, a wider variety of questions. You can see who's going to go in which direction with an idea. (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2006)

Discussing the workshop around works of art in the galleries helped this docent see how new perspectives can be offered when looking at works of art. Even as we reviewed art historical information, our dialogue enabled her to envision a more interactive, visitor-centered, approach to touring in the galleries. Examining instances such as this one, where there is the dissemination of information and the social construction of knowledge, is valuable to my practice. Moments such as this, demonstrate how authentic learning, experienced through social interaction and situated learning environments, can open new ways of thinking about art and teaching in the museum.

#### *Peripheral Docent Dialogue: Outside Conversations*

Beyond the recorded training sessions, observations, reflection sessions, and one-on-one interviews, I received informal feedback in the form of emails, phone calls, and casual conversations. Since action research and narrative analysis are both messy forms of qualitative research, receiving this information was not surprising. However, the significance of this feedback did surprise me.

After reviewing the data collected, I noticed an unanticipated pattern. The data collected throughout the project, revealed the effectiveness of docents' smaller, self-directed, peripheral conversations. As it turns out, the docents were getting together informally to discuss the material further. These conversations were quickly becoming an important part of the docents' social learning experience. The docents were looking to one another for support, often seeking



out other docents with similar museum experiences and educational philosophies. For example, Sally, a docent who was struggling with some of the larger objectives, met with another docent, Molly, in the galleries to discuss the materials further. I later found out that their casual meeting informed Sally's practice. According to her comments, the informal social learning experience enabled her to feel comfortable discussing gender issues on her workshop tour. Both Sally and Molly had relatively the same amount of experience teaching at the museum and shared similar values. This was not the only instance of docents fleshing out visual culture concepts with one another. Throughout the project, I received numerous emails and phone calls describing other accounts of what I call peripheral docent dialogue.

In *Learning in the Museum* (1998), Hein talks about cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is the idea that "by sharing information and working together, students will learn more and will learn better" (p. 173). This type of social learning is done without the teacher mediating; it is experienced without the leading figure that is often associated with power and an agenda. In my case, I was initially unaware of these cooperative learning sessions taking place. Until one or two docents brought it to my attention, I did not consider their side conversations as important pieces of data. However, these self-directed group conversations became spaces for docents to work through larger concepts and grapple with the material without my influence.

According to Baldwin (1990) adult learners who willingly choose to engage in discussions, interactions, and collaborations with other adults, will often have a more fruitful learning experience. In the case of this research project, the docents were making choices. They were choosing to discuss the workshop material even further and give one another additional intellectual and emotional support. The peripheral docent dialogue was ultimately one more example of learning as a social experience, and it was one that I almost overlooked.

Most likely, these side conversations were happening before I made changes in my practice. However by engaging docents in dialogue, I was reminding them of the importance in shared reception, where interpretations are contested and new meanings may emerge. The docents' peripheral interactions were a symptom of the value of conversations I was promoting. While I do not believe my teaching directly caused these conversations to occur, I reminded the docents of the importance of dialogue and interaction.

Although the docents could have turned to me for clarification, they looked to each other as a support group. For some docents discussing visual culture concepts in the galleries was controversial and confusing. In the mindset of the long-standing docents, who were well schooled in the lecture-style approach, I was acting against traditional methods of teaching in the institution. Although I never felt complete refusal from the docents to engage in conversations or attempt new methods teaching, there was some resistance to change. One docent in particular was very vocal about not seeing value in discussing workshops themes in the galleries, or extending the length of the training sessions to accommodate greater discussion.

As their teacher, hearing about these side conversations helped me to reconceptualize my role even further. Although I did not consider myself the expert, I was positioned between the docents and the hierarchical institutional landscape I was negotiating. Even as I explored new teaching methods and visual culture concepts, I was acting within structural limitations. My role therefore was limited. I could only support the initial facilitation of certain conversations. It was up to the docents to continue their authentic learning experiences and determine how they might integrate this new knowledge into their practice.

## Integrating Visual Culture into Practice

### *Dialogue vs. Didactics*

Using dialogue over didactics, as a model for communication, has been explored in museum education throughout the last ten years. Within the field, researchers have examined how people learn in a museum, how people teach in a museum, and how shifting values in society affect learning and teaching in museum culture (Falk & Dierking 2000; Hein, 1998, 2000). In particular, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000b) writes about two different models of communication in the museum. She explores the museum as a transmitter of information, based on more modern behaviorist learning theories, and the museum as communicator of culture and cultural practices, based on sociocultural and constructivist learning theory.<sup>33</sup> Whereas the transmission model takes a didactic approach and expects the visitor to absorb information, the cultural model of communication emphasizes the construction of meaning and multiple interpretations.

Taking a cultural approach to communication in the museum leans towards hermeneutic theory on dialogue, where meaning making is continuous and reciprocal. Gadamer (1992), coming out of hermeneutics studies, views knowledge as emerging from dialogue, from the exchange of both certainties and uncertainties. In dialogue, participants must be willing to offer information and negotiate assumptions, both their own prejudices and points of view, as well others' prejudices and points of views. Dialogue, following a cultural approach to communication in the museum, becomes about the negotiation of voices and the integration of for social and cultural dynamics; it is the humbling of one's ego and the exchange of both

---

<sup>33</sup> Although I have not discussed a behaviorist approach to teaching and learning, it resides under the assumption of stimulus-response. With this type of model, knowledge is outside of the learner and the learner is to be filled with information.

certainties and uncertainties. Through the negotiation of voices comes new meaning making experiences and new interpretations.

In *Dialogic Looking: Beyond the Mediated Experience* (2003), Sara Wilson McKay and Susana R. Monteverde cite Bakhtin in their discussion on *heteroglossia*. They quote Bakhtin in defining *heteroglossia* as “where multiple social voices come together and clash, giving rise to new ideas across varying experiences” (Bakhtin, 1981; Wilson-McKay & Monteverde, 2003 p. 42). As the docents determined how to integrate our training session conversations into their touring practice, they were experiencing this type of dialogue. They discovered how the museum could become a space for different voices to emerge and new ideas to form. Although I only observed the docents interactions in the galleries, and did not record their conversations with workshop participants, their reflections revealed insight into these new types of dialogue. As one docent expressed during our reflection session,

The thinking process has come from what you have created here--as far as opening doors for dialogue and conversation around the artwork and that everyone has something important to contribute. So I think it has really pulled me into a place when I give these tours that is up-reaching...I feel like it's given me more tools to work with. (personal communication, Dec. 16, 2006)

Recognizing how others contributions can guide dialogue into new directions and insightful moments was part of this docents journey. By moving away from a didactic approach, rooted in modernism and notions of absolute truth, the docent could embrace the multiplicity of interpretations more readily available.

Receiving feedback such as this demonstrated how docents were re- conceptualizing their practice. As I realized more and more about my role as a teacher, the docents were having discoveries of their own. They were finding new ways to look at works of art and expand their view on dialogue. As one docent exclaimed during our reflection session, “Since I’ve been doing

these workshop activities with you Kate, my dialogue in the galleries has really increased” (personal communication, Oct. 30, 2006). The docents were beginning to look at works of art from new angles, which is an important component of visual culture. They were making interrelated connections between images and cultural contexts, enabling them to construct new types of conversations in the galleries. For example, one docent in particular began considering multiple perspectives in relationship to ancient Egyptian culture and contemporary society. She stated the following,

I think the more you do it, the more confidence develops. Engaging in conversation from different perspectives, over the work, and doing these workshops provided that. Thinking about it in the context of them [Ancient Egyptians] and what was valuable and important in their value system is kind of like...okay if we're looking in that mirror what does today look like? What decisions are we making that will be remembered? I think it opens up great thought processes and ways to approach what you're seeing just in the context of then and now. Which is what artwork is about. (personal communication, December 16, 2006)

Opening up great thought processes through dialogue has its roots in postmodern ideas about language and the new art histories, both of which heavily influence visual culture discourse. Just as poststructuralism is based in the epistemological assumption that meaning is constructed between texts and language, the new art histories began to question ways of knowing and interpreting works of art. Not only do the new art histories critically examine the museum’s authority, but the discourse also investigates any network of influences on the production of knowledge (Bird, 1988). Similarly, the concept of dialogic looking, discussed by art educator Sara Wilson-McKay and Susanna Monteverde (2003), examines how meaning is made through not only external dialogue, but also through internal dialogue and the dialogic exchange between a work of art and the viewer.

With dialogic looking, rooted in Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism, all three forms of dialogue operate simultaneously. The internal, external, and between dialogue, theoretically

contribute to the remarks made by a participants in a social learning environment. While I will not review Bakhtin's work extensively for the purposes of this project, it is related to the docents' feedback.<sup>34</sup> According to some of the docents, workshop participants' contributions were richer in thought and concept than with previous didactic tours. For example, during the second workshop a group of participants began comparing ancient Egyptian sculpture depicting Hatshepsut with political sculpture of today. At one point a young girl spoke up to state the following,

monuments created today are markers of time and events. Instead of it being about a person and glorifying who they are for everyone to go wow. In other cultures pride isn't a bad thing, but when it comes to ours, we tend to think of pride as really negative, it's a cultural thing. (personal communication, October 18, 2006)

While I cannot say I agree with this student, her comment opens up a space for further dialogue. Even though the docent did not use this comment as a way to move the dialogue into a conversation about nationalism, it exposes a subtext of power and alternative perspectives encouraged by the tour conversations. The student went on to say how "in our culture today that's kind of negative to think of yourself from that perspective" (personal communication, October 14, 2006). According to the docent, this student was exposing her internal dialogue, gaining insight on herself and her world as political.<sup>35</sup> She was bridging social practices in contemporary society with ancient Egyptian society in a complex way. Through this comparison of socially accepted practices, the young visitor was forging new relationships with Hatshepsut's sculpture and new experiences at the museum. Her external and internal dialogues were

---

<sup>34</sup> In Holquist's review of dialogism, he talks about the Bakhtin's writings regarding inner dialogue and the need to study both psychology and language. To read more about this subject, see Holquist, M. (1990). *Bakhtin and his world*. London, UK: Routledge.

<sup>35</sup> This conclusion is taken from the interview question. When asked "to what extent do you think your students did or did not gain insight on themselves?" the docent responded with this story about the young girl's comparison of political sculptures.

reinforcing her meaning making experience with that particular object and in that particular moment.

Cultivating an environment and space in the curriculum, where comments such as these are accepted, listened to, and reflected on, is the responsibility of the educator. Creating rich dialogue in the galleries is dependant upon the educator's willingness to make the gallery discussions less object-centered and more audience-focused. In Mayer's (2007a) essay, "Scintillating Conversations in Art Museums" she addresses Nodding's educational philosophy rooted in the ethics of care. Mayer states, "According to Noddings, when schooling is deeply infused with conversation, it moves beyond accumulating facts and information to engaging the issues of life that matter on the deepest levels" (p. 189). Visiting the museum is as much about reflecting on the human condition as it is about the objects. Upon entering a museum and engaging in dialogue in the galleries, participants and docents are exploring their own narratives and the narratives of others. Or as one docent stated, "I think it takes them on a journey and even going in the gallery and looking at the art. I think the entire experience is an experience of them learning about themselves" (personal communication, Dec. 16, 2008).<sup>36</sup>

### *Encouraging Dialogue within Institutional Dynamics*

I firmly believe that in order for new types of dialogue to occur, and for docents to grow as practitioners, they must first be heard and valued. In a modernist museum, however, hearing and valuing the docents' contributions and growth is not always supported. Instead, honoring the object and filling the docent with historical information seem to take precedence.

---

<sup>36</sup> In preparation for the second workshop, focused on adornment, I asked all participants to bring in a piece of adornment that was important to them. Some participants brought in necklaces, rings, or bracelets, while others brought in arrow heads or rocks hung on a string. In talking about the "entire experience" during our reflection session, the docent was also referring to the students' personal objects and incorporating them into the tour content.

Taking time to listen to the docents throughout this research enabled me to see how a didactic, object-centered approach can be a challenge for the docents' practice. For some, being filled with information and not being encouraged to engage in dialogue was equal to not being heard at all. As one docent stated, "Before you started doing these workshop activities, no one listened to us or wanted our opinion" (personal communication, Dec. 16, 2006). In taking an object-centered pedagogical approach, the teacher becomes the expert, and knowledge provides power. The relationship between knowledge and power is strengthened, and hierarchical structures are reinforced, resulting in unsupported open dialogue in the galleries. The divide between those who know and those who do not know widens. In the end, this divide can disempower the learner and encourage those in power to make assumptions about others' knowledge and experiences.

As the museum educator working within an openly proclaimed object-centered institution, and encouraging docents to discuss works of art in alternative ways, I was taking a risk.<sup>37</sup> I was asking the docents to undermine and question the propagated method of communication and the powers that sustain and circulate this pedagogy (Foucault, 1980). The docents were well aware of these pedagogical power struggles embedded in the politics of the museum. Many quietly expressed support for my efforts to breakdown the hierarchy and negotiate my educational philosophy within museum politics. Just as the one docent said, "I hope our phone conversation is not being bugged and I hope the department supports you, because what you are doing...you need to keep it up" others were cognizant of the conflict in pedagogical styles and the museum staffs' support of an object-centered point of view (personal communication, Nov. 30, 2006).

---

<sup>37</sup> I use the term 'openly proclaimed' as a result of listening to another museum educator's interview. In that interview she stated the following, "This is an object-centered museum. We want objects to stand for themselves. We don't want to limit the object and we don't want objects to illustrate an idea."



After analyzing the data, however, I believe it was a risk worth taking. The docents were constructing greater dialogue in the galleries and re-conceptualizing their practice. Several docents realized the value in allowing conversations to ebb and flow beyond the image or object. Others recognized the importance of listening to one another and the benefit of taking a conceptual approach over a didactic approach. Some docents even gained an awareness of their own patterns, every once in a while catching themselves as they moved from the unfamiliar openness of dialogue to the familiar style of lecturing. As one docent expressed during our interview, “I realized how I had stepped over into giving information. I stepped into what was comfortable” (personal communication, Dec. 16, 2006). Seeing some of the docents gain a sense of awareness about their practice provided insight for me as their teacher. I finally understood how teaching teachers to cultivate complex dialogue in the galleries and embrace new practices was an individual process, taking different forms for each educator.

## The Importance of Reflection

### *Group Reflection*

Reflection, as the last area of focus, is an important part of being a teacher in the museum. When a docent stated the following,

I didn't know how much I was growing until I listened to others during the reflection session and realized they were just as uncomfortable. This is all a process of improvement on what I can do next time (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2006).

it elucidated the need for reflection in anyone's practice, including my own. In *Teaching in America: The Slow Revolution*, Grant and Murray (1999) discuss the importance of reflection. The authors attribute both reflection and renewal as key components to applying pedagogical knowledge and as “essential acts of teaching” (p. 56). Reflection, and the applying new insight

gained from reflective moments, seems critical in changing pedagogical practice. In regard to my personal practice, I relied heavily on reflective moments where I could re-evaluate my own teacher and listen to the docents evaluate their practice. The reflection sessions with the docents and my personal journal reflections became valuable sources of data. While docents utilized the reflection sessions as a place to exercise individual voices and hear one another, I utilized the sessions as an opportunity to listen.

Ideally, reflection sessions are not only chances to exercise opinions, but also opportunities to practice humbling one's ego and refining one's listening skills.<sup>38</sup> Andy Hargreaves (1997) discusses the emotions of educational change and looks closely at the way teachers plan curriculum. He discovered that group brainstorming sessions enabled teachers to act as "springboards" for each other. The sessions helped to buffer the emotional intensity of educational planning and change. I would construct a similar argument for the process of pedagogical change in the museum.<sup>39</sup> As the museum educator and action researcher, I was presenting new approaches to teaching in the galleries. As a result, the docents needed a space to openly explore these ideas, discussing struggles or successes they encountered and any creative solutions they might offer to each other.

The reflection sessions, reinforced the notion of learning as a social experience. The docents relied on one another and built upon each other's knowledge during these meetings. When one was nervous about constructing open dialogue and not being an expert in the galleries,

---

<sup>38</sup> Mayer (2007a) discusses the importance of listening and humility when constructing conversations in the museum. Some of the docents indirectly expressed similar thoughts. During an interview, one particular docent stated "Every time I am personally with the kids in the gallery and looking at the art, I come away with new things. You know by the way—what they see and how they respond" (personal communication, Dec. 18, 2006). This docent was not only trying to impart knowledge, but also be open and receptive to the students perspectives, listening to the direction they took the tour and their thoughts on the ancient Egyptian female king

<sup>39</sup> In stating pedagogical change, I am not referring to a change in practice demanded by me, but the shift in the docents own practice as they internalized, contemplated, and reflected on new ways to look at and discuss works of art in the museum.

others relayed their experiences as reassurance. One docent offered the following suggestion for future practice.

Just starting conversationally, I told them I wanted it to be very informal and more of an architectural discussion. Then as the discussion went in certain ways, I found moments to interject the storyline of the actual exhibits that would fit in. (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2006)

The docents were listening to each other's contributions and offering alternative perspectives or ways of dealing with unfamiliar situations. When one docent struggled to balance a discussion on both architectural elements and larger concepts about power and government, he received several suggestions from the group. They offered emotional support and pedagogical support.

Donald Schön, a well known professor and philosopher who studied reflective practices and learning systems, would describe our post-workshop reflection sessions as reflection-on-action. Reflection-on-action is when practitioners explore their actions, choices and outcomes as way to establish ideas about practice. According to Schön (1983) continuing to reflect-on-action builds a repertoire of constants, an internal collection of ideas, examples, and actions that practitioners can draw upon when needed. In his words,

When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he *sees* it as something already present in his repertoire. To see *this* site as *that* one is not to subsume the first under a familiar category or rule. It is, rather, to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar or different with respect to what. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or... an exemplar for the unfamiliar one. (Schön 1983, p. 138)

When the docents discussed their growth, and compared their audience-centered tours to tours given in the past, they were pulling from their repertoire. As one docent expressed, "We focused so much more on the concepts and the ideas, how it would make them feel, how the statues and architecture would affect the people. It's kind of more the way my tour went; it was so much more less fact and more kind of ideals" (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2006). In this case,

the didactic object-centered tour was the familiar one, and the tour rich with concept was the unfamiliar one. Schön's concept of having a collection of experiences to build upon is also evident in another docent's feedback. When reflecting on her tour, she stated,

As I think about the first tour I did...When you've just got people that are standing there staring at you, not responding at all, it is such a different tour than when you've got the dialogue. I would express things and it would not go anywhere. (personal communication, Oct. 14, 2006)

Again, she is reflecting on her prior knowledge and comparing it to her recent tour giving experience.

The idea of reflection-on-action is separate from Schön's other concept called reflection-in-action. Reflection-in-action is similar to thinking on one's feet. The concept of reflection-in-action involves being able to reflect in the moment. While this might seem like an oxymoron, it is an interesting philosophy that aligns with visual culture. Reflection-in-action means being acutely aware of new understandings as they unfold, connecting to theories, ideas, and feelings while in progress. With reflection-in-action, the practitioner has to remain open to new experiences in the moment. As Schön (1983) states,

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (p. 68)

Reflection-in-action is not always verbalized and therefore hard to evaluate. However, a few docents made statements that indicated where this type of openness and flexibility may have occurred. One docent in particular expressed how students led and influenced her thoughts in the galleries. During our one-on-one interview she stated the following, "I feel that as I gave the tour, I was pulling on my knowledge, but also looking at who's in front of me and how to pull out of them...I listen to their questions, and I'll use them as a springboard" (personal

communication, Oct. 21, 2006). Although this docent admitted to typically enjoying interactive situations, in her words, she felt as if the training was “sharpening, increasing facility and giving me more tools to work with” (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2006). She expressed how throughout the workshop tour, she tried to remain open and reflect on where the group was headed conversationally. According to her, the conversation was like going down a river. The direction they took depended upon the students’ responses or where connections were made.

Both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action provide insight into practice. They help to illuminate when, where, and how educational transformations take place. For my practice, I hope to continue engaging in these forms of reflection. I also hope to continue supporting others as they participate in future tours and consider changes in their own practice. I recognize that sustaining pedagogical changes, created as a result of this project, is not guaranteed, but I am idealistically hopeful.

### Findings and Epilogue

My findings represent that docents embrace visual culture through the following ways: by examining social practices from the past to the present, by investigating how art can be political, by relating works of art to other images in our everyday world, and by examining how artworks are textual and meant to be read in relationship to social and cultural issues. The findings also reveal how dialogue, pertaining to ways in which we understand the world and the impact of the visual on that world, can enhance docents’ experiences in the galleries. Other findings demonstrate how docents embrace social learning through the following ways: the negotiation of their own voices and values, the sharing and building of knowledge from others’ experiences, and by enacting conversations and exploring concepts during training sessions or on their own.

Lastly, the data elucidate the importance of group and individual reflection as a way of improving practice and engaging in conversation as practitioners who are continuous learners.

I left the museum in north Texas several months after completing this project. When I finally spoke to one of the docents, she expressed some discontent with both institutional policy and the lack of opportunity for engaging in meaningful dialogue. In her words, “All dialogue left when you left Kate.” (personal communication, November 30, 2007). It seemed as if the docent were telling me that she no longer feels empowered by the program or encouraged to engage in dialogue. While I attribute this shift largely to the museum struggle to stay rooted in traditional art history, I wonder if it is also connected to issues of ownership and empowerment. While the docents exhibited evidence of ownership and partial embracement of visual culture discourse, was this ownership enough to sustain pedagogical change? How much empowerment would it take to generate long-standing ownership of dialogue capabilities, and how could a museum educator enable this quality to become a part of docents’ regular practice? These questions cannot be answered from the data collected, but provide great launching points for further research.

Although the training sessions, interviews, and reflection sessions tell a partial story, they are important expressions of the docents’ experiences. Without their narratives, and the retelling of their workshop experiences, I could not gauge changes in my practice. In order to understand how interventions in my practice could enhance the learning and teaching of others, I needed to examine their stories. The data collected demonstrates where changes in my practice influenced the docents. Individually and collectively, we re-conceptualized what it means to be a teacher in the museum. Looking at works of art differently, discussing works of art in new

ways, and accumulating new experiences in the galleries, all added to the benefit of this research project.

The second workshop and the second action research cycle was ultimately where I experienced the most growth. I began to see myself as part of a community instead of just a teacher of teachers. I learned to accept where the docents were with visual culture discourse and examined what they embraced for themselves. By end of the project, my hope was not to dictate how other educators act, but rather to improve upon my own practice in the hopes of encouraging others to do the same. I realized that visual culture in the galleries is more than simply creating relevancy for people. It is also about affecting change, listening to others, creating space to negotiate voices, and looking critically at the impact of the visual on our understanding of the world.

I admittedly am still in the process of learning how to integrate visual culture discourse into my practice on a regular basis, and I will continue to seek out new ways. In the end, this project taught me about the teacher I would like to be; one who is always in the process of becoming, willing to take risks, and open to reflecting on ways to improve my practice. In my present and future practice, I will continue to search for ways to examine the complexities of our visual world and the way we walk through it. As an action researcher, my practice is cyclical. It is always changing and always moving towards new understandings and new negotiations.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLICATIONS

#### The Fourth Dialogue

Visual culture discourse is dialogue on the world; it supports the examination of visual images as they relate to social and cultural contexts that influence varying world views and identity formation. Dialogue constructed under the guise of visual culture does not stop at creating relevancy and finding personal connections. Instead, a visual culture lens asks that dialogue deepen and broaden the museum experience to include the social, the personal, the historical, and the cultural. In *Dialogic Looking: Beyond the Mediated Experience*, Sara Wilson McKay and Susana R. Monteverde (2003) discuss three types of dialogue; the internal performance, the external performance, and the dialogue between visitors and objects. While these forms of dialogue are useful and important, they leave out the social, which is an integral part of visual culture discourse. This fourth dialogue, the social dialogue, played a significant role in my struggle to understand visual culture and my journey towards becoming a better teacher.

As demonstrated in the docents' feedback and my conversations with them, the fourth dialogue, a dialogue of aboutness, opened space for negotiating ideas and voices; it enriched the docents' conversations in the galleries and enabled many of them to move outside of a traditional lecture style approach (personal communication with Dr. Rina Kundu, September 2008).<sup>40</sup>

However, this is not to say that using a visual culture lens was easy or problem-free. Trying to incorporate visual culture discourse into daily practice had its moments of confusion. Entering

---

<sup>40</sup> In stating a dialogue of aboutness, I am referring to entering into a dialogue about the world. Defining aboutness in this way developed in relationship to a conversation with Dr. Rina Kundu. Aboutness, as entering into a dialogue about the world, is separate from Terry Barrett's (2000b) use of the term in his book, *Criticizing Art*. In this text, Barrett discusses the term aboutness as it relates to the meaning making process and interpreting works of art.



into a dialogue on the world enabled me to explore who I am as a teacher, but it also asked me to face certain challenges in my own practice, causing uncertainty and personal struggles.

### Challenges and Struggles

There were three main challenges I encountered throughout the course of this project. These challenges included the realization that I could not always stand in a position of authority, the need to honor the docents practice, and the recognition that moving theory to practice is harder than it seems. All three of these challenges impacted my approach to teaching and my understanding of what it means to be a good practitioner.

Examining objects using a visual culture lens meant moving into conversational spaces where outcomes are not clearly defined, dialogue is not scripted, and the educator's voice becomes one of many. Traveling to this undefined space requires educators to humble their ego and practice their listening skills (Mayer, 2007a). Yet as I discovered through this research project, humbling the ego and truly listening to one another is more challenging than it initially seems.

For me, remembering to stay humble and genuinely listen to others was critical to the integration of visual culture into my practice; it was also one of the biggest challenges with this project. Humbling the ego meant letting go of control and allowing workshop training sessions to take unanticipated conversational turns. It meant removing myself as the expert and genuinely listening to docents' feedback. Although I believed I was capable of humbling my ego and truly listening, accomplishing these two behaviors proved to be more challenging than I anticipated. In particular, during the first training session, and the first action research cycle, I struggled with my own ego. I found myself wanting to direct the conversation. In order for our training session

to actualize in a particular way, I felt the need to retain a position of authority and direct our dialogue in a certain direction. This need to retain authority or be an expert is in contradiction to visual culture discourse. Whereas I was asking the docents to embrace the messiness and unknown aspect of dialogue, I struggled to do the same in my own practice. In the end, and during the second action research cycle, I felt as if my ability to let go had increased. I became more comfortable with the unknown and more at ease with the docents' feedback.

The second and third challenges are linked with the first challenge. As I learned to let go of control or authority, I saw a need to honor the docents' practice. Honoring their practice meant accepting where the docents were in their teaching, even if their approach did not take the same shape as mine. For example, the docent mentioned earlier named Bette did not embrace visual culture in her practice as I had envisioned. She made comparisons between ancient Egyptian society and contemporary society, but she did not address issues of power or gender. At first, this discrepancy between her practice and my vision for visual culture in the galleries was discouraging. I felt as if I had failed in some manner; because my vision for visual culture in the galleries and her practice did not align, I was ineffectively integrating visual culture into the museum. However, after talking with Bette, reflecting on the situation, and working through the second action research cycle, I realized how this discrepancy did not point to failure. Instead, it denoted changes occurring in her practice, and the need for me to honor these changes.

Bette began to consider new ways of constructing conversations in the galleries; she was making connections between social practices from the past and current social practices. This type of connection was new to Bette. Later in the project, Bette admitted to not considering these types of connections prior to this project. A change in practice such as this was valuable to Bette's growth as a teacher in the galleries. It was also valuable to me as a teacher of teachers.

Although Bette and I had different ways of actualizing visual culture in practice, and different definitions for meaningful dialogue, she was embracing an aspect of visual culture that spoke to her values.<sup>41</sup> Bette was embracing an aspect of visual culture that related to how she views her practice in the museum. Coming to this realization enabled me to understand the importance of honoring the docents practice and where they were in their teaching and learning.

Moving theory to practice proved to be a constant struggle. I continuously questioned my ability to teach visual culture discourse, reflecting on how to close the gap between theoretical text and daily teaching. What I discovered throughout the research process was that there is no easy answer. Visual culture offers another lens, but it is an imperfect lens. There were moments when participants wanted more art historical information instead of dialogue, and times when docents needed specific goals or objectives over conversation. Moments such as these surprised me; they revealed how my anticipated outcomes were incorrect and how moving theory to practice is not an easy feat. In the end, challenging myself to continue growing as a teacher is my responsibility. As a researcher, who is still investigating visual culture and its relationship to practice, I will admit to times when the discourse seems confusing and inefficient. However, my experiences with this project and the lessons learned, challenge me to be a better teacher on a regular basis. Even in writing this part of the report and struggling to tell my story as the action researcher, I am reminded of the need to let go of control and embrace the unknown involved with teaching and learning.

### Learning to Teach: Social Systems and Reflection

Museum educators and educators alike are always in the process of learning to teach.

---

<sup>41</sup> During on of our individual interviews, Bette defined meaningful dialogue as the kids raising their hands and answering questions. Although I would not define meaningful dialogue in this way, I did not challenge her on this definition.

Teaching is not about being the expert, or having an inherent understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Instead, it is a “social process of negotiation” (Britzman, 2003, p. 31).

Understanding what it means to be a teacher is situated in one’s own values, experiences, social context, etc. As Britzman (2003) states, “Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always in the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing and who one can become” (p. 31). In taking this point of view, museum educators and docents will always be in the process of becoming; they are, or should be, continuously engaged in social context that promotes learning and reflection.

Engaging in a social context of reflection and learning requires the negotiation of values and the recognition that people act and learn within larger social systems. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) discussion on communities of practice addresses learning as it relates to individuals acting and operating within certain systems of relations. According to them, learning occurs as a result of interrelated systems developed within social communities. Lave and Wenger (1991) state the following:

Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities. (p. 53)<sup>42</sup>

Applying this concept to my research project meant allowing docents to interpret materials and make pedagogical changes based on how they view the world and their ideas about teaching in the museum. For example, when talking about issues of adornment during the second workshop training session, one of the docents began connecting Hatshepsut’s use of scarabs and other Egyptian symbols to society’s contemporary use of emblems and graphics as a way to establish wealth and status. While I had not thought of that angle, nor would I have chosen to exploit that

---

<sup>42</sup> To read more about systems of relations as it relates to situated learning and peripheral communities, see Lave, J., Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

angle, this docent connected the workshop theme with a more familiar system of relations he could recognize.

Building a social context for learning is critical to this research project. Another implication from this research project, linked to Lave and Wenger (1991) discussion on social systems, is the importance of presenting authentic learning experiences where social interaction occurs and people organize information based on how they understand the world. The docents' feedback, individual interviews, and reports of peripheral conversations, all revealed the importance of offering social spaces to negotiate new ideas and wrestle with old ways of knowing. Although I did not anticipate this implication, it has become a major component of my findings. For me, using visual culture as a way to improve my practice is now linked with the concept of learning as a social phenomenon.<sup>43</sup>

Current research on docent education discusses the importance of evaluation and includes self-evaluation as a way to measure success and goal achievement (Sweney, 2007). While I believe docent programs need an evaluation tool, I am proposing that reflection be an addition to the evaluation process. Reflection, in the case of this research project, was a place for docents to examine how values shape practice and how alternative points of view are valid. Our reflection sessions were not designed to measure specific goals or performance objectives. Instead, the sessions were utilized as places to share and glean information from one another. As one docent stated, "I never knew that everyone else was struggling with the concept of big ideas, until I came to the reflection session" (personal communication, Oct. 21, 2006).

---

<sup>43</sup> In addressing the notion that people can learn on their own, John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid (2000) argue that we operate within systems in society and cannot get outside of these systems. By the very nature of being human, we are being enmeshed in aspects of the social (Vygotsky, 1997). Learning occurs within these systems and is entangled in various social contexts. Therefore, the two cannot be separated out and learning remains rooted in a social context. To read more, see Brown, J. S., Duguid, P. (2000) *The Social Life of Information*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

I believe there is room for more research on the importance of reflection as it relates to both museum educators and docent training. For this project, the reflection sessions served as windows for understanding how beliefs informed practice; they offered docents a place to exchange ideas and examine alternative ways for approaching teaching in the galleries. For me, as the teacher of teachers, I found myself relying more and more on my individual journal reflections and our group sessions. Reflection became a tool I depended upon as I investigated how to improve my practice using visual culture.

Examining how individual and group reflection can serve as a method for framing and re-evaluating practice on a regular basis, could be an exciting area for further research.

#### Contributions to the Field

As a whole, museum education practitioners and researchers have demonstrated a growing interest in the investigation of visitor experiences. Currently, there is an increasing desire to understand how individuals learn in the museum context. Researchers in the field, such as Hein (1998), Housen (2001), Longhenry (2007), and Luke and Adams (2007), and are investigating the way visitors learn in the galleries. Other researchers, such as Mayer (2007a, 2007b, 2005a, 2005b), Rice (2002), Silverman (2000), and Villenue and Love (2007b), are discussing how practice informs or contributes to meaning-making experiences. Overall, the field is becoming more and more interested in finding ways to accommodate multiple voices and how to merge theory with practice (Rose, 2007). In particular, research investigating the relationship between visual culture discourse and museum pedagogy, is gaining momentum (Reese, 2007; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000a). In the most recent museum education publication, *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Beth Reese (2007)

investigates visual culture as it relates to the construction of an exhibition and museum programming. She explored museum pedagogy as process, using Freedman's ideas about curriculum and visual culture and relating them to the museum context.<sup>44</sup> Reese, among a handful of other museum practitioners, is examining visual culture as a way to influence and affect change in the museum environment.

By sharing my findings, I am fulfilling my responsibility as an action researcher. As McNiff and Whitehead (2006a) explain, "Many people can learn from these stories of disciplined enquiry, not least in terms of how they might do the same and what may be some of the consequences for their own learning and the learning of those in their contexts" (p. 160). My hope is that this research project will contribute to the field in multiple ways. First, by building upon the growing body of knowledge of how teaching and learning take place in the museum, linking visual culture discourse with practice, and second, by offering other museum educators a model for becoming research practitioners.

This project provided insight onto my practice, enabling me to reconceptualize my role as a teacher of teachers and to reconsider how I view learning in the museum. Through this project, I reevaluated learning as a social phenomenon and considered the complexities of museum education. In the end, I am still learning how to integrate visual culture into my practice on a regular basis. Yet, this journey has taught me more about my teaching practices and what it means to be a good teacher, than I could have ever imagined.

---

<sup>44</sup> To read more on museum pedagogy as process relating to visual culture discourse, see Reese, B. (2007a). Art Museums and Visual Culture: Pedagogical theories and practice as process. In P. Villeneuve (ed.). *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (241 – 249). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

APPENDIX A

DOCENT REFLECTION SESSION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



The reflection session is meant to provide all the docents with an opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions, and reflections on the workshop and their practice. This will occur prior to the individual interviews held with the specific docents chosen for the study. In particular, the Children's Workshop's reflection session will involve all ten docents, instead of the three chosen for the study.

Looking back, do you remember the objectives you were contemplating before you began the workshop? If there were any, would you mind sharing them?

In your preparation for past workshops, have you considered similar objectives?

To what extent would you say the objectives for your current workshop were affected by our discussions during the training session?

Could you name some strategies discussed during training? How comfortable or uncomfortable were you leading a discussion that incorporated the strategies discussed in the training sessions?

What did you see as most beneficial about the training?

What did you see as least beneficial about the training?

Did your experience in the workshop today differ from your experience in workshops in the past? If so, how?

Would you feel comfortable incorporating strategies learned during training into your practice on a regular basis? If so, which strategies would you incorporate?

APPENDIX B  
INDIVIDUAL DOCENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This interview will be held after each workshop, with the docents chosen for this study. All the workshops consist of both a tour and a hands-on art making experience. The interview is designed so that the docents may give their reflections on their own practice during a workshop, the strategies employed, and their understanding of participants' experiences.

1. From your perspective, what were your goals for this tour and why were these goals important to you.
2. Describe to me what I may have heard if I entered the gallery at any given time.
3.
  - A. What questions did you pose?
  - B. Which questions did you find easiest to discuss in the galleries? Why?
  - C. Which questions did you find the most difficult to discuss in the galleries? Why?
4. How is your knowledge of art similar to or different from your participants?
5.
  - A. Out of the discussions that occurred in the workshop, what were some of the most significant contributions made by the participants?
  - B. Why were they the most significant in your opinion?
  - C. Did the contributions made by participants affect your perspective of the artwork?
6.
  - A. To what extent do you feel like you and the participants engaged in meaningful dialogue?
  - B. What do you personally identify as meaningful dialogue?
7. Did the training session affect your experience in the gallery or with the hand-on art activity? If so, how?
8. What strategies did you use from training to facilitate your discussion in the galleries and/or workshop?
9. Did these strategies provide insight on, or change your perspective of your own practice?
10.
  - A. To what extent do you feel your participants gained insight about themselves or their world?
  - B. What clues pointed to these conclusions?

## REFERENCE LIST

- Allen, G. (2000) *Intertextuality*. New York, NY : Routledge.
- Amburgy, P., Kiefer- Boyd, K., & Knight, W. (2003) Three approaches to teaching visual culture in K-12 school contexts. *Art Education*, 56(2), 44-52.
- Anderson, T. (2003). Art education for life. *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 22(1), 58-66.
- Arnowitz, S. & Giroux, H. (1991). *Postmodern education*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arnowitz, S. & Giroux, H. (1993). *Education still under seige*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.) Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bal, M. & Bryson, N. (1991). Semiotics and art history. *Art Bulletin*, 73(2), 175-208.
- Baldwin, L., Cochrane, S., Counts, C., Dolamore, J., McKenna, M., and Vacarr, B. (1990). Passionate and purposeful: Adult learning communities. *Journal of Museum Education*, 15(1) 7-9. Reprinted in *Patterns in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education* (1992) Washington, DC: Museum Education Roundtable, 162-7.
- Barge, J. K. (2002) Enlarging the meaning of group deliberations: From discussion to dialogue. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *New directions in group communication* (pp. 159-177). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Barrett, T. (2003). Interpreting visual culture. *Art Education*, 56(2), 6-11.
- Barrett, T. (2000a). About art interpretation for art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 42(1) 5-19.
- Barrett, T. (2000b). *Criticizing art*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Berger, M. (2001) *Fred Wilson: Objects and Installations (1979 – 2000)*. Baltimore, MD: Center of Art and Visual Culture University of Maryland Baltimore.
- Berry, N. & Mayer, S. (Eds). (1989) *Museum education: History, theory, and practice*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Bird, J. (1988). On newness, art and history: Reviewing block, 1979-85. In A. L. Rees & F. Borzello (Eds.). *The new art history*. NJ: Humanities Press International Inc.
- Bloom, L. (1998). Gender, race, and nation in Japanese contemporary art and criticism. In N. Mirzoeff (Ed.). *The visual culture reader*. (pp. 24-37). New York: Routledge

- Britzman, D. (2003). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brown, J., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989) Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, 18, 32-42.
- Brown, J. S., Duguid, P. (2000) *The social life of information*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Carr, D. (1989). 'Live up' to learners. *Museum News*, May/June, 54-55.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge, and action research*. Philadelphia, PA: Farmers Press.
- Carroll, K.L. (1997). Action research and preservice teachers. *Art Education*, 50(6), 7-13.
- Chandler, D. (2002). *Semiotics: The basics*. New York: Routledge
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.
- Culler, J. (1982). *On deconstruction: Theory and criticism after structuralism*. New York: Cornell University.
- Davidson, B., Heald, C. L., & Hein, G.E. (1994). Increased exhibit accessibility through multisensory interaction. In Hooper-Greenhill, E. (Ed.). *The educational role of the museum* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 223-240). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology* (trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and difference* (trans. Alan Bass). London: Routledge.
- Doll, W. (2002). Ghosts and the curriculum. In W. Doll & N. Gough (Eds.) *Curriculum visions* (pp. 23 -70). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Doll, W. (1993) *A post-modern perspective on curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Duncan, C. (1995). *Civilizing rituals: Inside public art museums*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Duncum, P. (2003). The theories and practices of visual culture in art education. *AEPR*, 105 (2).
- Duncum, P. (2000). Defining visual culture for art education. *Journal of Multicultural and Cross-cultural Research in Art Education*, 18, 31-36.

- Duncum, P. (2001). Visual culture: Developments, definitions, and directions for art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 42(2), 101-112.
- Duncum, P. (2002a). Visual culture art education: Why, what and how. *Journal of Art & Design Education* 21(1), 14-23.
- Duncum, P. (2002b). Clarifying visual culture art education. *Art Education*, 53(3), 6-11.
- Duncum, P. (2003). The theories and practices of visual culture in art education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 105(2) 19-25.
- Duncum, P. (2004) Visual culture isn't just visual: Multiliteracy, multimodality, and meaning. *Studies in Art Education*, 45(3), 252-263.
- Ebbutt, D. (1985). Educational action research: Some general concerns and specific quibbles. In R. Burgess (Ed.). *Issues in educational research*. London Falmer.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Efland, A., Freedman, J., & Stuhr, P. (1996). *Postmodern art education: An approach to curriculum*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Efland, E. (2005) Problems confronting visual culture. *Art Education*. 58(6), 35-61.
- Eisner, E. W. & Dobbs, S. M. (1986). *The uncertain profession: Observations on the state of museum education in twenty american art museums*, Los Angeles, CA: Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
- Eisner, E., & Peshkin, A. (1990). *Qualitative inquiry in education*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- Elkind, D. (1997) Schooling and family in the Postmodern world. In A. Hargreaves (Ed.). *Rethinking educational change with heart and mind* (pp. 27-42). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Faulk, J., Dierking, L. (2000) *Learning from museums*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge*, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Freedman, K. (2000) Context as part of visual culture. *Journal of Multicultural and Cross-cultural Research in Art Education*, 18, 41-44.
- Freedman, K. (2003a). *Teaching visual culture*. New York, NY: Teachers College Columbia University.

- Freedman, K. (2003b). The importance of student artistic production to teaching visual culture. *Art Education*, 56(2), 38-43.
- Gadamer, H. (1992) *Truth and Mtheod* (J. Weinsheimer, D. G. Marshall Trans., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Crossroads.
- Gablik, S. (1991). *The reenchantment of art*. New York, NY: Thames and Hudson.
- Gablik, S (1984, reprinted in 2000) *Has modernism failed*. New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, Inc.
- Gallbraith, L., Anderson, D. (1995). Learning to be an art teacher educator: Action research in the preservice art classroom. In *New waves of research in art education* (88- 100).
- Gaudelius, Y. & Speirs, P. (2002). *Contemporary issues in art education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Giroux, H. (1992). *Border crossing: Cultural worker and the politics of education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. Vermont: Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Goodman, N. (1985). The end of the museum? *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 19(2), 53-62.
- Grabar, O. (1982). On the universality of the history of art. *Art Journal*, 42(4), 281-283.
- Graham, A. (2000). *Intertextuality: The new critical idiom*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Grant, G., Murray, C. (1999) *Teaching in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grundy, S. (1996). Towards empowering leadership: The importance of imagining. In O. Zuber-Skerritt (Ed.) *New directions in action research* (106-120). London: Falmer.
- Gude, O. (2004). Postmodern principles: In search of a 21<sup>st</sup> century art education. *Art Education*, 57(1), 6-13.
- Hargreaves (Ed.). (1997). *Rethinking educational change with heart and mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Hartog, M (2004). *A self-study of a higher education tutor: How can I improve my practice?* PhD thesis, University of Bath. Retrieved Jan 2008 from <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsadjw/hartog.shtml>.
- Hein, G. (1998). *Learning in the museum*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hein, G. (2000) Evaluation of museum programs and exhibits. In E. Hooper-Greenhill (Ed.), *The educational role of the museum* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp.305-312). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Herrington, J., Herrington, T. (2005). *Authentic learning environments in higher education*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.
- Hirsch, J. & Silverman, H. (Eds.). (2000). *Transforming practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education*. Washington DC: Museum Education Roundtable.
- Holquist, M. (1990). *Bakhtin and his world*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1994). *The educational role of the museum* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000a). *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000b). Changing values in the art museum: Rethinking communication and learning. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 6(1), 9-31.
- Housen, A. (2001). *Eye of the beholder: Research, theory, and practice*. Retrieved August 12, 2007, from [http://www.vue.org/download\\_author.html](http://www.vue.org/download_author.html)
- Jencks, C. (1992). *The postmodern reader*. London, UK: Academy Editions, Ltd.
- Jencks, C. (1996). *What is post-modernism?* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Academy Editions
- Karp, I. & Lavine, S. (1990). *Exhibiting cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Keifer-Boyd, K., Amburgy, P., & Knight, W. (2003). Three approaches to teaching visual culture in K-12 school context. *Art Education*, 56(2), 44-51.
- Knutson, K. (2002). Creating a space for learning: Curators, educators, and the implied audience. In G. Leinhardt, K. Crowley, & K. Knutson, K. (Eds.), *Learning conversations in museums* (pp. 5-44).
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. T. Gora, A. Jardine, & L. Roudiez (Trans.). L. Roudiez (Ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1986). *An interview with Julia Kristeva*. T. Moi (Ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kuhne, G., Weirauch, D., Fetterman, D., Mearns, R., Kalinosky, K., Cegles, K., & Ritchey, L. (1997) Case studies of action research in various adult settings. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. 73(1), 41-62.
- Kuspit, D. (1987) Traditional art history's complaint against the linguistic analysis of visual art. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 45(4), 345-349.



- Labov, W. (1972). The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. In W. Labov (Ed.), *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular* (pp. 354-396). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, W. (1982). Speech actions and reaction in personal narrative. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp. 219-247). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Labov, W. & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 12-44). Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Lankford, L. (2002). Aesthetic experience in constructivist museum. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 36(2), 141-153.
- Lave, J., Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Lemelin, N. (2002). *Participatory action research in a contemporary art museum: Findings from a researcher/practitioner partnership*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 2005).
- Levi, A.W., Smith, R. (1991) *Art education: A critical necessary*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis, and interpretation*. California: Sage Publications.
- Lyotard, J. F. (2000). *Just education*. (P. Dhillon & P. Standish, Trans.) London, UK: Routledge.
- Longhenry, S. (2007). Reconsidering Learning: The Art Museum Experience. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (pp. 180-187). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Low, T. (1962) The museum as social instrument: 20 years after. *Museum News*. 5, 28-31.
- Luke, J. & Adams, M. (2007) What research says about learning in art museums. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (pp. 31-40). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Lyotard, J. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: the University of Minnesota Press.
- Lyotard, J.F. (1992) *The postmodern explained: Correspondence 1982-1985*. (J. Pefanis & M. Thomas, Trans. & Eds.). Sidney, Australia: Power Publications.

- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (1999) *Designing qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). California; Sage Publications.
- May, W. (1997) "Teachers-as-researchers" or action research: What is it, and what good is it for art education? In S. La Pierre, E. Zimmerman (eds.) *Research methods and methodologies for art education*. Virginia: National Art Education Association, 223-241.
- May, W., & Diket, R. (1995) Action Research. In Zimmerman, E., & La Pierre, D. (Eds.). (1997) *Research methods and methodologies for art education* (pp. 221-245). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Mayer, M. (2007a). Scintillating Conversations. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (pp. 188-193). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Mayer, M. (2007b) New Art Museum Educations. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (pp. 41-48). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Mayer, M. (2005a) Bridging the Theory-Practice Divide. *Art Education*.58(2), 13-18.
- Mayer, M. (2005b). A postmodern puzzle: rewriting the place of the visitor in art museum education. *Studies in Art Education*, 46(4), 356-358.
- Mayer, M. (1998) Can philosophical change take hold in the American art museum. *Art Education*, 51(2). 15 -20.
- McCoy, S. (1989). Docents in art museum education. In Berry, N. and Mayer, S. (Eds.), *Museum Education: History, theory and practice* (pp. 135-153).
- McKay, S. W. & Monteverde S. (2003). Dialogic looking: Beyond the mediated experience. *Art Education*,56(1) 40-46.
- McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J (2002). *Action research principles and practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2006a). *All you need to know about action research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2006b) *Action research living theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- McNiff, J., Lomax, P. and Whitehead, J. (1996) *You and your action research project*. London, Routledge.

- Mercer, K. (1998) Ethnicity and internationality: New British art and diaspora-based Blackness. In N. Mirzoeff (ed.). *The visual culture reader*. (pp. 24-37). New York: Routledge
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An introduction to visual culture*. New York: Routledge
- Mirzoeff, M. (2002a). *The visual culture reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge
- Mirzoeff, M. (2002b). Ghostwriting: Working out visual culture. In M.A. Holly & K. Moxley (Eds.), *Art history, aesthetics, visual studies* (pp. 189-202). Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.
- Mirzoeff, M. (2006). On Visuality. *Journal of Visual Culture*. 5(1), 53-79.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1995) Interdisciplinary and visual culture. *Art Bulletin*. LXXVH (4) 540-544.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (2002). Showing seeing: A critique of visual culture. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1(2), 165-181.
- Moore, J. (1998). *A contextual analysis of the tradition of art museum education: The case for a new paradigm*. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University.
- Muhlberger, R. (1985) After art history, what? *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 19(2), 93-103.
- Newsom, B.Y. & Silver, A. Z. (Eds.). (1978). *The art museum as educator*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Norris, C. (2002). *Deconstruction*. New York: Routledge
- Orr, M. (2003). *Intertextuality: Debates and contexts*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Osborne, H. (1985). Museums and their functions. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 19(2), 41-52.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pauly, N. (2003). Interpreting visual culture as cultural narratives in teacher education. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(3), 264-283.
- Phillips, D., & Burbules. (2000). *Postpositivism and educational research*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Preziosi, D. (1989). *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a coy science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Reese, B. (2007). Art museum and visual culture: Pedagogical theories and practices as process. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. (pp. 241-247). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Reissman, C. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. California: Sage Publications
- Rice, D. (1987). On the ethics of museum education. *Museum News*, 65(5), 17-19
- Rice, D. (1992a). Our work is good for people. In *Patterns in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education* (pp. 53-55). Washington D. C.: Museum Education Roundtable. (Reprinted from *Roundtable Reports*, 1984, 9(1), 3-4.
- Rice, D. (1992b). Vision and culture: The role of museums in visual literacy. In *Pattern in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education* (pp. 144-152). Washington, DC: *Museum Education Roundtable* (Reprinted from *Journal of Museum Education*, 1988, 13(3), 13-17.
- Rice, D. (1995). Museum education embracing uncertainty. *Art Bulletin LXVII*(1), 15-20.
- Rice, D. (2002). Constructing informed practice. In J. Hirsch & L. Silverman (Eds.). *Transforming practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Educaiton 1992 – 1999* (pp. 222 – 225). Washington, DC: Museum Education Roundtable.
- Roberts, L. (1992). Museums and knowledge: The responsibility to open minds. In *Patterns in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education* (pp. 153-158). Washington, D.C.: Museum Education Roundtable. (Reprinted from *Roundtable Reports*, 1989, 14(1), 9-12.
- Roberts, L. (1997). *From knowledge to narrative: Educators and the changing museum*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institutional Press.
- Roberts, L. (2000). Educators on exhibit teams: A new role, a new era. In *Transforminng practice* (pp. 89-97). Washington D.C.: Museum Education Roundtable.
- Rogoff, I. (1998). Studying visual culture. In N. Mirzoeff (ed.). *The visual culture reader* (pp. 24-37). New York: Routledge
- Rose, J. (2007). Corroborating knowledge: Curriculum theory can inform museum education practice. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.), *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (pp. 49-56). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Sarup, M. (1993). *An introductory guide to post-structuralism and postmodernism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). England: Harvest Wheatsheaf, Pearson Education Limited.
- Saussure F. (1974). *Course in general linguistics* (trans.Wade Baskin). London: Fontana/Collins
- Schensul, S., Schensul, J., & LeCompte, M. (1999) *Essential ethnographic methods*. California: Alta Mira Press.

- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. United States of America: Basic Books, Inc.
- Silverman, L. (2000). Making meaning together: Lessons from the field of American history. In *Transforming practice* (pp. 230-239). Washington D.C.: Museum Education Roundtable.
- Smith, R. (2004). Introduction: Visual culture studies Part I. *Arts Education and Visual Culture Studies Symposium*, 106(1), 3-4.
- Smith, R. (1985). On the third realm. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 19(2), 7-12.
- Stapp, C.B. (1992). Defining museum literacy. In *Patterns in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education* (pp. 112-117). Washington D. C.: Museum Education Roundtable. (Reprinted from *Roundtable Reports*, 1984, 9(1), 3-4.
- Stankiewicz, M.A. (2004). A dangerous business: visual culture theory and education policy. *Arts Education and Visual Culture Studies*, 105(6), 5-13.
- Stinger, E. (2007). *Action Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Stockrocki, M. (1997) Qualitative forms of research. In La Pierre & Zimmerman (Eds.). *Research methods and methodologies for art education*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Sturken, M. & Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sweney, B. Z. (2007). Docents as meaning makers: The frontline of the museum learning experience. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (pp. 80-88). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Tavin, K. (2002). Engaging advertisements: Looking for meaning in and through art education. *Visual Arts Research*, 28(2), 38-47.
- Tavin, K. (2003). Wrestling with angels, searching for ghosts: Towards a critical pedagogy of visual culture. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(3). 197-213.
- Tavin, K. & Hausman, J. (2004). Art education and visual culture in the age of globalization. *Art Education*, 57(5), 48-52.
- Tavin, K. (2005) Hauntological shifts: Fear and loathing of popular (visual) culture. *Studies in Art Education*. 46(2), 101-117.
- Villeneuve, P. (Ed.). (2007a). *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association

- Villeneuve, P. & Love, A. (2007b). Rethinking the gallery learning experience through inquiry. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.), *From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (pp. 194-204). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association
- Vygotsky, L. (1997). *Thought and language*. (A. Kozulin, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (Original work published 1934).
- Webster, L. & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- Whitehead, J. (1989) Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?" *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1) 137-53. Retrieved on Oct. 15, 2007 from <http://people.bath.ac.uk/edsajw/writings/livetheory.html>.
- Whitehead, J (1993). *The growth of educational knowledge: Creating your own living educational theory*. Bournemouth, Hyde.
- Whitehead, J. (2000). How do I improve my practice? Creating and legitimating an epistemology of practice. *Reflective Practice*, 1(1), 91-104.
- Whitehead, J. (2003). Creating our living educational theories in teaching and learning to care: Using multimedia to communicate the meanings and influence our embodied educational values. *Teaching Today for Tomorrow*, 19 (17-20).
- Williams, P. (1984). Teaching or touring. In S. Nichols, M. Alexander, & K. Yellis (Eds.), *Museum education anthology 1973 1983 perspectives on informal learning a decade of roundtable reports* (pp. 45-49). Washington, D.C.: Museum Education Roundtable.
- Williams, P. (1992). Object contemplation: Theory into practice. In *Patterns in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education* (pp. 118-122). Washington DC: Museum Education Roundtable. (Reprinted from *Roundtable Reports*, 1984, 9(1), 10-12.
- Wilson, F., Berger, M., & Gonzalez, J. (2001). *Objects and installations 1979-2000*. New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2001.
- Zeller, T. (1989). The historical and philosophical foundations of art museum education in America. In N. Berry & S. Mayer (eds.). *Museum education: History, theory and practice* (pp. 10-90). Reston, VA: The National Art Education Association.