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DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY, SOCIAL MEDIA, ART MUSEUMS, AND LEARNING

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by
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the process of adult participants taking digital photographs of art and artifacts in art museums and the subsequent sharing of these photographs to three social media platforms in an effort to investigate the permeability of learning environments including art museums. Specifically, this study considers how participants’ encounters with works of art and the process of learning are mediated and negotiated through digital photography and social media communities and what this means for contemporary art education.

This study was informed by visual ethnography, as well as by research on social media and curricula. I collected digital photography data from Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook for the study from October 2014 through November 2014 followed by e-mail invitations to potential participants to engage in semi-structured interviews. I invited all participants who completed the semi-structured interviews to participate in unstructured interviews as well.

Following two participants’ completion of follow-up interviews, I described and analyzed the data using visual ethnography methods. The findings from this study characterize a broad understanding of learning through the relationships between curricula and physical and digital communities. These characterizations include details regarding the process of digital photography, participant engagement with social media platforms, as well as face-to-face social engagements as they relate to learning.

My discussion of the findings culminates in the definition of curricula as they
influence and are influenced by adults in online and physical communities, which outlines potentials for art education at large and art museum education. This definition of curricula reflects the complexity of contemporary permeable learning environments and communities of choice and provides a framework for understanding them.

The importance of this study is that it approaches data collection and analysis from a visual and participant-centered position rather than utilizing institution(s) for location of data collection and analysis. Additionally, this study lends important insights into participants’ encounters with works of art and subsequent learning as mediated through digital photography and social media platforms. Through the methodology and subsequent insights, this study supports current and potential educational experiences mediated by digital photography and communities of choice, and opens up opportunities for further research regarding permeable learning environments in art education.

Keywords: Digital Photography, Social Media, Art Education, Art Museums, Visual Ethnography
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Chapter 1

Background

This chapter provides a background for my research. I begin this background discussion with an autobiographical overview of the numerous professional experiences that sparked my interest in researching digital photographs of art objects taken by adults in art museums and shared to social media. Following the autobiographical overview, I will state the research problem that provides the foundation for this study. Following the problem statement, I will briefly discuss contemporary issues related to photography in art museums and current conceptions of learning in museum settings. These two contemporary issues lead the reader into the next section, which introduces the theoretical framework that will guide this study. With this theoretical framework in mind, I will provide the reader with an introduction to the purpose of this study as well as discussing the importance of the study. Finally, I will outline the scope of this study and summarize the key points in this chapter.

Introduction

I am driven both personally and professionally by curiosity and my career as an art educator reflects the role curiosity has played in my professional journey. For instance, my career as an art educator began in the interactive online branch of a public relations firm in Richardson, Texas. After a brief pre-service K-12 art education
preparation period where I was one of only three students in the art education program at the small, private, undergraduate program I attended, I began a discouraging student teaching experience with the same art teacher who taught me in high school. As a result of this experience, I decided I was not adequately prepared to teach public school. Rather than apply for public school art teacher positions, I started working as a copywriter and web designer for a public relations firm shortly after I graduated college. While working at the firm, I developed my writing, editing, graphic design and client interaction skills. I also had the time to reflect on my student teaching experiences while I designed print and digital advertisements, logos, and wrote copy to sell startup companies to venture capitalists. I decided at the end of three years of writing and designing for corporate interests that while my work at the public relations firm was interesting, I felt that all my creative energy was always in support of client profit. There was an element of using my creative energy for social good that I felt was missing from my professional identity and I did not feel that working in the public relations firm where I was employed at that time would be able to meet that need. I felt I needed to give art education a second effort.

In short, after three years of working in public relations I felt I had strayed away from the reason I studied art, and particularly art education: I wanted to facilitate learning in and through the process of making and interacting with art – in particular for young people who might not otherwise have such experiences. I did not have a chance to study art in public school until high school and growing up in rural Texas I knew many people who had never had a chance to study art in school at all. I spent a year working as a full-time substitute teacher in several elementary and secondary public schools in Denton Independent School District to prepare myself for the classroom experience. The year
after my work as a substitute teacher, I was fortunate to be hired at the district’s newest middle school to teach art to students in 6th-8th grades for three years. While I found the work teaching art to middle school students challenging, it was also very rewarding. Eventually, I recognized that I was one of only three art teachers in my district without a Master’s degree. Many of my colleagues with Master’s degrees had better familiarity with contemporary theories and methods in art education and were more knowledgeable about how to find educational resources and professional development opportunities. Following my first presentation at the Texas Art Education Association’s annual convention in 2007 and a conversation regarding graduate school options for classroom art teachers with Dr. Melinda Mayer, Assistant Professor at University of North Texas, my curiosity led me to apply for a Master’s fellowship in arts leadership. I was awarded the fellowship and studied art education in the museum education graduate certificate track along with a cohort of four other art education and art history Master’s and PhD students as well as five music education, performance, and composition Master’s and PhD students.

Following the completion of a service learning placement with the Greater Denton Arts Council, internships at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art and the Dallas Museum of Art, and the successful completion of my Master’s degree, I spent a year teaching middle school art in a central Florida public school. While teaching in Florida, I was contacted about an education position in an art museum in west Texas. We were fortunate to be able to move closer to my family and I served as the Curator of Education at the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts for just over two years. While there, I had opportunities to collaborate with the education staff at Fort Concho, a historic civil
war fort, as well as with the Upper Colorado River Authority, an environmental monitoring and education agency. I also forged partnerships with faculty and students at Angelo State University, and I worked with many amazing regional artists for both adult and youth museum education programs. I developed outreach curriculum for several PK-12 public and private schools, home school families, and libraries as far as 80 miles away. It was a very exciting professional experience and every new day was unlike the prior. Thinking back to this time I remember specific curious moments I spent in the art museum that continued to hold my constantly divided attention. Those specific moments began only a few months after I started working at the museum and fueled my curiosity that formed the basis of my present research.

**Background of the Problem**

The curiosity arising from these specific moments in the museum fueled by questions I could not answer easily about what and how people were learning when they were not “officially” learning in the museum. As this study began, I understood official learning to consist of tours, programs, works selected by a curator, didactic materials, official museum rules conduct, and the unspoken social rules people impose on each other through observing others and being observed (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 2007) whereas I understood unofficial learning to be learning that occurs through encounters within and outside the museum that are not generally within the museum’s purview. (Callanan, Cervantes & Loomis, 2011). This “unofficial” learning included the conversations I had with young students riding our giant elevator during a tour about
hydraulics – for a large number of young rural students this was the first time they had been in an elevator. While the group of twenty-one third graders were officially visiting the art museum to learn about works of art in our galleries, as an educator I felt it was important to acknowledge the students’ excitement about riding an elevator for the first time and help them understand more about why we have an enormous hydraulic elevator. Prior to entering the gallery for our official tour, I explained that not all artworks or people can go up and down the three flights of stairs in the museum, so we needed a way for people and artwork to be safely moved between floors. When the students wanted to know how the elevator lifted and lowered people and art, I shared a basic explanation about how in order for the elevator to go up, a pump pressurizes oil in a tank under the elevator until the pressurized oil pushes a strong metal bar holding the elevator car upward. When the elevator goes down, the pressure is released and the oil flows back into the tank allowing the strong metal bar to slowly lower the elevator. This spontaneous, unscripted interaction did not teach the third graders about works of art in the museum, but it did help them gain a new understanding of how works of art are moved through the museum prior to and following an exhibition as well as helping the students feel comfortable and informed about a new experience.

This unofficial learning, I found, was often crucial to supporting the overall interest and comfort of people during their time in the museum. Some unofficial learning seemed not only likely to occur at some point during the delivery of the official learning agenda of tours and programs, but also essential to the delivery of the official learning content.
For example, the essential nature of unofficial learning was clear when I was guiding a tour group of retired adults’ through a contemporary ceramics exhibition in the spring of 2010 (see Figure 1.1). There were eight ceramic works I had researched and planned to discuss during their tour. As I began describing the process that an artist had used to apply decals to a work of art, one of the women in the tour interrupted me to tell us about how the decals reminded her of her sister’s china pattern. Her aside prompted two other women attending the tour to discuss their favorite remembered china patterns.

![Figure 1.1: The author leading a tour of retired adults through an exhibition in 2010.](image)

I realized that one of the pieces in the exhibition that I had not included in the tour was a contemporary appropriation of traditional English Wedgwood china. I asked the group if they would like to look at the piece and talk a little more about their memories of china.
The group was excited to take this detour from the tour and the overall interest and level of interactions from the adults attending the tour increased noticeably when I opened the tour up for them to share their recollections and memories as they related to the works. In the end, the tour group only learned about five of the eight works included in the official tour, but the group of adults and their caregivers left the museum knowing that their own personal experiences and memories were relevant to the process of encountering the works of art that day. While some museum educators might consider that tour a failure, I felt that honoring the interests and stories of the group was an important educational experience for all parties involved.

A more subversive and frequent example of unofficial learning was the systematic and intentional efforts of parents and their children to reinvent the studio activities the education team would design for our monthly “Family Day” program; disregarding the activity instructions while making artwork with the available supplies. I would lead the education department each month in a process of researching one or several works of art in a current exhibition or a cultural work derived from the monthly “Family Day” theme to create an art activity station in the museum’s large education studio. We would include photographs of the works the activities were inspired by, some facts about the works of art that parents could take with them when they left the activity to visit the gallery, an example or two of the finished artwork inspired by the exhibition, and all the supplies family members would need to complete the artwork. The education department regularly utilized high school Key Club volunteers, local Junior League member volunteers, and U.S. Air Force cadet volunteers to help families with the activity stations. The vast majority of these volunteers had a limited background in art so they relied heavily on the
educational materials and pre-program morning training we provided prior to each “Family Day” program. On a nearly monthly basis, a distraught volunteer would approach me with grave concern to report that a few parents and children were not making the artworks according to the instructions and examples at the activity stations. In an effort to better understand why this kept happening and to help the education staff and volunteers decide how to handle these regular occurrences, I began to ask the parents and children who chose to subvert the instructions why they were making those choices. Both parents and children had similar replies in these situations: I want to make my own artwork. Parents and children acknowledged that the photographs of works from the collection, directions, and example artworks were both interesting and helpful in many cases but that they did not always want to create an artwork that was, in their eyes, a copy of something else. Sometimes parents and children wanted to explore the process of making works of art together that were personal creations. Parents and children responded that they liked learning about works of art in the museum, but their own creative process of making artworks together was separate kind of learning they also valued during their time at the museum.

Related to this notion of personal creative efforts, a particular form of unofficial learning that I had also personally engaged in from time to time included people alone, in pairs, or in small groups taking photographs of artworks on display in the galleries with their mobile phones, even, and perhaps especially, when it was not permitted. I was fascinated with, and at times could identify with, the strong desire evident as people examined works of art and chose to take pictures of the artworks, sometimes in spite of museum guards, official museum rules, spatial arrangements making the process of
taking the photograph difficult, or social circumstances that made the process of taking
the photograph socially difficult or unacceptable (see Figure 1.2). While official museum
learning in a self-guided tour within an exhibition is greatly influenced by the works
selected by a curator, the arrangement of those objects in the gallery, the didactic
materials such as introductory text and art label texts, museum rules for conduct in the
gallery, and the unspoken social rules people impose on each other as a result of the
process of observing and being observed in the gallery space, there are is still room for
unofficial learning in the museum.

Figure 1.2: A man photographing a work by artist Christopher Wool in the MoMA, 2012.
A recent example of my own experience with this kind of unofficial learning took place in the spring of 2013. A group of colleagues and I were visiting an exhibition that included several works by artist Kara Walker. My colleague had been working on research related to Walker’s works and was excited to see several new pieces by her. He wanted to take some photographs of her work, but just as he started to take the photographs, he was stopped by a museum guard and informed that no photographs could be taken of the works due to the agreement the museum had with the artist. My colleague and I conferred and decided to develop a plan wherein I would distract the guard by asking questions while he slipped back into the gallery to photograph the works. We had a brief moment of excitement as we enacted out plan and he took several photographs for his research as the guard and I made small talk, both pretending, I suspect, not to know what my colleague was doing around the corner. The resulting photographs of Walker’s work were all the more interesting as a result of this encounter, but more importantly, provided my colleague with vital material to support his continued learning about the artist. The process of taking photographs of works of art in museums is not always in violation of rules or etiquette, but as I argue in this research, it is an important part of the unofficial learning that begins in a museum and it has remained a fascinating subject for me to research for the past four years. This fascination is the bedrock for this research.

It is important to note that while this research began with my interest in trying to understand kinds of learning that I understood as “unofficial” in contrast to the way I understood “official” museum learning, my research process approaches the study of adults taking photographs of works of art and artifacts in art museums from the position of resisting a strict binary relationship between “official” and “unofficial” learning.
Additionally, the way I understood “official” and “unofficial” learning was, to some extent, influenced by the various ways informal and formal learning are defined by museum and education scholars however they were not analogous to each other. For instance, both “official” and “unofficial” learning, as I understood it, would both be forms of informal learning according to some scholars. I will describe this notion of informal learning further in a following section. Prior to conducting this study I was aware that there are many times these categories of learning overlap, intersect, or create tensions with one another. This study intends to examine the photographic process adults engage in in art museums from a number of perspectives in order to reveal more complex and non-binary understandings of learning.

**Statement of the Problem**

While the language of PK-16 public education has used many terms to describe varieties of types of learning facilitated through a variety of different means one term that is frequently engaged within the context of describing and planning learning in school settings is curriculum. Curriculum is broadly defined as the entire range of student experiences that occur in the educational process (Kelly, 2009, p. 13) Curriculum often refers specifically to a planned sequence of instruction, or to a view of the student's experiences in terms of the educator's or school's instructional goals (Kelly, 2009) While the term curriculum is engaged in numerous ways in school settings, it is a term less frequently used to describe learning experiences and planned instructional goals in non-school settings. Authors writing about learning in non-school settings often make a
distinction between the school setting and the non-school setting by describing the former as *formal learning* and the latter as *informal learning* settings. According to education scholars Paul Hager and John Halliday (2006) formal learning is:

That which takes place as intended within formally constituted educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, training centers and so on. Typically it follows a prescribed framework whether or not actual attendance at the institution is necessary…In all cases however those partaking of courses of formal learning have an idea of what they are likely to learn and they accept that that learning will to some extent be under the control of the institution (p. 2).

By contrast, Hager and Halliday describe informal learning as learning that encompasses all other situations wherein people learn including occasions throughout the course of living people learn without the specific intention to learn. Informal learning, according to Hager and Halliday, also include situations within formal educational institutions when some things are leaned that are not directly intended by those employed by the institution.

In light of these definitions, it is important to note that within literature arising from the field of museum education museums are most often described as informal learning settings (Callanan, Cervantes & Loomis, 2011). While these are often the conventional ways of describing learning in school and non-school settings, describing learning as formal or informal is limiting to how both school and non-school settings can be understood. By describing these settings in this manner, curriculum takes on specific functions and limitations in both formal and informal settings that are convenient for the purpose of description but are often oversimplifications of the learning process. This
oversimplification is apparent in a review of literature regarding curriculum within museum contexts.

Presently, the available literature regarding learning within museum contexts engages the term curriculum as a document, a public program, or an educational package designed for schools (Berry & Mayer, 1989; Hein, 1998; Ott, 1975). In each of these cases the term curriculum is engaged as a noun. This is in contrast to the way Pinar (2004) describes curriculum as currere. Currere, the Latin infinitive verb form of curriculum translates to mean the running of the course. Pinar (2004) argues that this method of understanding curriculum provides educators a strategy for studying “the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interest of self-understanding and social reconstruction” (p. 35). There have been a few authors working within the field of museum education who have moved toward a more complex notion of curriculum (Vallance, 2003, 2004, 2006) wherein aspects of the museum are curricular but they are still entrenched in understanding curriculum as a noun. In relation to this view of curriculum, museum staff and professional third-party museum evaluators have focused their work on recording and analyzing the learning outcomes related to programming and exhibition content within the context of curriculum defined as such by the institution itself (Falk & Dierking, 2012; Roberts, 1997). The evaluation of non-curricular human interaction within museum space by the aforementioned evaluators has emphasized the focused attention of people in galleries toward works of art. Within the typical evaluation methods in museums, evaluators have taken a generally negative stance on the presence of digital photography within exhibition spaces (Bailey, 2014). Digital photography has not been associated positively with learning; on the contrary, it
has been discussed as a detrimental factor in the process of learning in the museum (Solomon, 2013).

Art museums have struggled to agree with what role digital photography should have within exhibition spaces (Henkel, 2013). In the late 20th century, most art museums did not allow photography of any kind in galleries because the process of taking photographs using flash photography was thought to be harmful to the artworks. One extensive study that supports this claim was conducted by Terry Schaeffer (2001) wherein Schaeffer concludes that art museums must decide, using a complex formula the author developed, if unrestricted gallery photography will exceed allowable light exposure limits based on the popularity of the object. These limits can, as Schaeffer suggests, include forbidding any photography of objects in order to prevent light exposure to sensitive objects (p.163). With the advent of compact flash-optional digital cameras, and more recently, mobile phone digital cameras, museums have been unable to completely prevent digital photography of exhibits. This inability to effectively prohibit photography caused many art museums to re-evaluate their strict “no photography allowed” rules (Miranda, 2013). While many art museums now allow some digital photography within permanent collection exhibitions, several of these museums still prohibit digital photography in traveling exhibitions (Solomon, 2013). The Toledo Museum of Art provides a good example of this shift in photography rules. The museum’s website states:

The Toledo Museum of Art is a community treasure and a popular place for photographers. While personal use photography is encouraged at the Museum, it must be conducted without disruption to Museum operations or visitors and with
the safety of the art collection in mind. Personal photography is allowed in the permanent collection galleries. This includes cell phones, handheld cameras and video cameras that are set to take non-flash photos. Flash photography is prohibited without special permission. Photography in galleries with special exhibitions is prohibited unless noted otherwise. Use of tripods requires a permit issued by security at the door. “Selfie sticks” are not permitted in the Museum (Toledo Museum of Art, 2015)

Some of the reasons for a continued ban on photography in art museums include the historical concerns for protecting works of art from perceived potential damage due to the photographic process. Additionally, some museums have expressed concerns that photography might decrease the interest in purchasing catalogues and other items from museums that utilize professional photography of art objects. Another concern that stems from increasingly complex acquisition and exhibition contracts between museums and artists or donors is the legal violation of specific contract terms that restrict or forbid photographing a work of art (Bernstein, 2013). Beyond the institutional-wide reasons for banning photography museum staff members have not, in most cases, changed their opinions of digital photography as a detriment to the art viewing process. (Bernstein, 2013). For instance, Anne Hawley, director of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, said that photography in art museums, “just destroys the intimate and meditative experience that was meant to happen here” (New York Times, 2012, F8). Hawley is not alone in her thinking - digital photography is judged by some museum employees to be a distraction from the unmediated viewing and contemplation of artworks in the museum.
This position privileges the importance of the artwork and assumes that the digital device taking the photograph interferes or diminishes the meaningful of viewing an artwork.

The negative stance of some museum staff regarding digital photography in art museums arises from epistemological views of what learning is and how it occurs within the context of museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). There is infrequent communication between scholars working within curriculum studies in the context of school-based learning and art museum education, despite both fields having similar aims. This infrequent communication between school and museum learning scholars will be explored in greater depth in a subsequent chapter, however for the present argument it is reasonable to say that both institutions share related interests: educating people. It would seem logical that these two institutions would share related research regarding their interrelated theory and practice. As the institution of curriculum studies is not tied to a singular physical setting, it might be expected that the literature of curriculum studies would be found within the research and practice of art museums as often as within K-12 public schools or within other settings curriculum is commonly discussed.

There have been prominent scholars from within the fields of both art museum education and curriculum studies who have indicated the need for such an adoption of contemporary curriculum theory by the art museum such as the American Alliance of Museums [AAM] (1984) and Eisner & Dobbs (1986). As the AAM (1984) stated: “confusion over the learning function of museums stems in part from the failure of museum professionals to articulate, to the satisfaction of all involved, the nature of the learning experience” (p.57). Despite this stated need to understand learning experience within the museum, the present communication between curriculum studies and art
museums is still limited to a few examples in published literature (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011; Castle, 2006; Ebitz, 2007; Ebitz, 2008; Lindauer, 2006; Mayer, 2007; Mayer, 2008; Roberts, 2006; Vallance, 2003, 2004, 2006).

As I take into consideration the fluctuating use and understanding of curriculum in the context of museum education, the contentious views of the place of photography within museum exhibitions, and my own professional experiences that bring to light a less dichotomous relationship between formal and informal learning, I have been able to develop questions to guide this research process. My research begins with two questions, with the expectation that these questions will generate additional questions for consideration:

- What roles do digital photographs play in the learning processes of visitors in art museums?
- In what ways does digital photography by visitors render art museums permeable learning environments unrestricted by physical space and traditional methods of museum education?

Theoretical Framework

This study explores the initial questions as they relate to a complex understanding of curricula that is not restricted to a singular institutional setting. I approach the study from the position of acknowledging that the researched and researcher are in a constant state of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The methodology of this study is informed by an examination of the flow of events prior to, during, and following the creation of
digital photographs in art museums. I study the subsequent flow of events surrounding
the process of sharing those photographs to social media platforms. Through description
and analysis of the photographs of adult research participants and the analysis of
interview data from participants I trace relationships of the assemblages of forces that
constitute learning.

For the purpose of this study, this approach to the broad context and content of
what is described as learning by participants is defined as curricula. For example,
museum education scholar Elizabeth Vallance (2003) describes the museum milieu as a
form of curriculum. Within this study, I seek to expand on Vallance’s notion of milieu as
a form of curriculum to incorporate Posner’s (1992) notions of concurrent curricula and
Pinar’s (1995, 2004) conception of currere. This expanded notion of curricula in the
context of art museums will be explored through the visible actions of the people
photographing works of art in museums and an investigation of the encounters before,
during, and after the photographic process. Within this research curricula are understood
to be an assemblage – an arrangement of encounters and knowledge - arising from the
physical and digital milieu. In this context, curriculum does not seek to divide space or
bifurcate learning environments; rather it creates a series of flows. This conception of
curricula is non-hierarchical, as each curriculum does not compete with another. This
study attempts to trace these flows and provide polyvocal understandings of the roles
these flows play in a broad description of learning.
Purpose of the Study

My research arises from the current gap in art museum evaluation and research literature as well as art education research literature regarding the act of taking digital photographs, using mobile phones in particular, within art museums. Digital photographs provide an entry point for challenging museological assumptions regarding learning and digital photography by focusing on the active, creative force driving the making of digital photographs within art museums. It provides a way to illuminate the relationships between cultural shifts, educational shifts, desire, technology and subversion. This study will also investigate if, and possibly to what extent, social media platforms serve to facilitate or extend the learning process amongst participants and other people engaging in these processes who were not directly involved in the study. Incorporating both the process of taking the photographs, the description and analysis of the photographs, and interview data from participants will create an assemblage of data that renders a complex series of narratives regarding the encounters participants have with art. These assemblages will lend to the findings that relate back to the guiding questions of this study. The study will push these guiding questions in an effort to seek new questions while also looking for ways to gain greater understanding about the role of photography in the learning processes within and beyond the art museum as well as exploring the permeability of learning environments.
Importance of the Study

This study is important to several related fields and will fill important gaps in existing literature. This research will provide useful data to art education literature regarding the roles digital photography and social media can serve as tools that can facilitate learning opportunities for people to discuss and explore works of art. Art education researchers have only recently begun to investigate the theoretical and practical implications of social media use and digital photography within classroom and non-classroom art education settings. This research will contribute to the growing body of research in this field. Additionally, the research will provide a unique perspective to art museums on digital photography created by adults in art exhibitions that is shared to social media platforms. Recent studies emerging from art museums that have taken digital photography and social media as their topics of study have been restricted to evaluative methods that seek specific data about exhibitions or programs within a specific museum or specific museums. As this study will begin with the process of collecting and analyzing photographs of art and artifacts taken by adults in art museums and shared to social media followed by soliciting interviews from these adults, there are no pre-limiting factors that restrict the data to a specific program or type of museum event, a specific museum or a particular geographical region.

This study is also important to the field of education at large. While art education and art museum education have more related research needs and the existing literature for both fields is often cross applicable this does not mean that this study is only of use to these two related fields. The increasingly visual nature of information encountered by
people on a daily basis has given rise to the awareness for the need to study image-oriented learning in school and non-school settings. In recent years research on image-oriented learning has increased and continues to be an area of critical investigation that educational researchers pursue. Likewise, the role social media platforms may play in learning has begun to be investigated by educational researchers. This study incorporates two foci: digital photography and social media, as key elements in this study that will yield useful findings to educational researchers pursuing related research.

Scope of the Study

This study aims to answer the two initial guiding research questions: What roles do digital photographs play in the learning processes of visitors in art museums? In what ways does digital photography by visitors render art museums permeable learning environments unrestricted by physical space and traditional methods of museum education? As with all research, I acknowledge that this study may not fully answer both of these questions to the satisfaction of every reader. Furthermore, I recognize that if this study is conducted in a thorough manner and I maintain a reflexive and critical position throughout the process, the study will generate additional questions throughout the process. These questions will become a part of the scope of the study.

More specifically, the scope of this study is defined by specific parameters that I have created through the design of the study. This study will only utilize data derived from photographs and interviews from adult participants over the age of 18. The study will only include photographs of art objects or artifacts taken in art museums that have
been shared publicly by adults to one of three social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The study will only include digital photographs as data for the initial description and analysis – no analogue or printed photographs will be included. Participants in the study will be required to be fluent in English and willing and able to complete at least one interview in order to be included in this study. There are several questions this study will not attempt to answer and several types of data that will be excluded, as well.

Summary

This chapter has provided the reader an introduction to a study that will investigate learning through the lens of digital photography of art objects and artifacts taken in art museums that have been shared publicly to social media platforms. I described the role curiosity has played in my professional journey that let my interest in scrutinizing the existing dichotomies in official versus unofficial learning as well as informal versus formal learning. I shared an introduction to the literature that informs my current understanding of how different scholars and institutions invoke the term curriculum and some of the general limitations placed on what constitutes learning within museums. I have also provided the reader an introduction to the theoretical framework that guides this study and I have identified philosophical concepts that support my approach to the collection, description, analysis, and interpretation of the data that of which this study is comprised. Following this introduction to the theoretical framework
underpinning this study, I discussed the purpose of this study. Crucial to this introductory chapter, I have provided the scope of this study as well.

Now that I have provided the reader with an introduction to this study, I will share vital and specific aspects of the study in the following chapters. In the second chapter, I will expand my discussion of the theoretical framework for this study. This theoretical framework includes several contributing bodies of literature that provide historical and contemporary support to the reader in the process of understanding how and why this study is conducted. Following this discussion of the theoretical framework, I will guide the reader through the methodology for this study. This methodological review will outline the methodology utilized in this study for the collection, description, analysis, and interpretation of the data within the study as well as providing specific methods used throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process. Following the summary of the methodology, I will provide a chapter detailing the analysis process and interpretation of the data collected for this study. Finally, this study will culminate as I guide the reader through my process of revisiting the guiding research questions and describing questions that emerged as a result of the research. I will also share several essential interpretations I made as a result of the analysis of the research data and summarize several larger ideas that emerged as a result of the analysis. I will close this study with a brief discussion of the implications for art education and art museum education as well as suggesting directions for future research.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Within this chapter I will provide the reader with an overview of the theoretical framework that supports this study. I will begin with a historical review of the reconceptualization of curriculum followed by the ways curriculum has been discussed and engaged within art museum education. Following this discussion of curriculum, I will guide the reader through a discussion of photography within the museum. This section is followed by a brief review of photography criticism. I will also guide the reader through an overview of institutional critique of museums. The theoretical discussion within this chapter will close with a section entitled creation of concepts wherein I discuss the philosophical underpinnings that guide my thinking with regard to learning. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the sections.

Reconceptualizing Curriculum

Contrary to notions of curriculum in the mid-20th century, curriculum is no longer singularly described as a linear process following narrow objectives or modernist narrative trajectories. This shift in the language of curriculum has not occurred overnight, it has been a slow process recovering from the side effects of positivist-oriented public education. Curriculum theorists seeking to re-frame curriculum include scholars such as William Pinar, William Doll, and George Posner all of whom have been influential in the
American Educational Research Association. William Pinar (1978) described the process that brought about curriculum reconceptualization in the late 1970s. The bypass of traditionalists by the curriculum reform movement weakened justification for traditional pre-service educator curriculum instruction in colleges of education. A new breed of curriculum theorists emerged in this era and a shift away from strict definitions of curriculum as a set of content tools began. A revision of the role of theory in curriculum began by first stating traditional functions of curricular theory – to guide the practice of curriculum development, design, and evaluation. This guidance was technical. The sense, prior to the mid-1970s, was that adequate curriculum theory could be applied to practical situations, transforming them from unordered situations to ones of smoothness and ordered procedure. Prior to curriculum reconceptualization, it was difficult to find curriculum writing that escaped the practical application paradigm, fueled by curriculum developers such as Ralph Tyler. Following the reconceptualization, Pinar (1978) reminded curriculum theorists working in the late 1970s that the production of curricular knowledge is important to the advancement of the field. However, if this production originates with a static intention rather than an emancipatory one, or the application of theory to practice, then no fundamental progression can occur. According to Pinar (1995), in order for movement to occur, curriculum theorists must shift their attention from the technical and the practical and dwell on the notion of emancipation. Until curriculum theorists are in emancipatory relation to their work theory and formulate strategic action will not emerge. Many heeded Pinar’s call to action, and less than a decade later the field of curriculum studies within higher education changed significantly.
Pinar’s reconceptualization of curriculum consists of a fundamental shift in the way the term is engaged. In prior iterations curriculum had been engaged as a noun. Pinar (2004) shifts the term curriculum to that of *currere*, which is the Latin infinitive form of curriculum. *Currere*, according to Pinar (2004), means “to run the course, or, in the gerund form, the running of the course” (p. 35). Pinar sees the method of currere as a strategy for students of curriculum to study the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interest of self-understanding and social reconstruction. Within Pinar’s method of currere consists of four steps or moments: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical. “These point to both temporal and cognitive movements in the autobiographical study of educational experience; they suggest the temporal and cognitive modes of relation between knower and known that might characterize the ontological structure of educational experience” (Pinar, 1994; Pinar and Grumet, 1976). Pinar’s reconceptualization of curriculum is complimentary to the complex notions of curricula introduced by William Doll.

Curriculum author William Doll (1987) described curriculum as becoming postmodern in his time. In Doll’s view, a Newtonian world-view, which is linear and reductionist, the theoretical foundation of Ralph Tyler's notions of an orderly curriculum with predetermined ends, and of B. F. Skinner's conceptions of expressing learning in discrete, quantifiable, and linear units assume the whole to be no more than the sum of the parts and lead to a curriculum that is cumulative rather than transformative. Postmodern curriculum, on the other hand, is influenced by the nature of open systems, complexity, and transformative change. Curriculum is a process of becoming, rather than inert, Newtonian mechanical structures. Specifically, Doll argues that curricula should be
structured as self-regulating "open systems" where internal transformations are encouraged. To move from a curriculum based on the simple and separate to one based on the complex and cosmological requires us not only to adopt a "new dialogue with nature" but also to adopt a radically new relationship with learners and a more integrative approach to subject matter.

George Posner’s (1992) writing on curriculum further extends Doll’s call for a radicalization of the relationship between educators and learners. Posner (1992) calls for school educators to recognize that at any given point there is not one curriculum in operation, rather there are five concurrent curricula operating in a learning setting (p.10-12). The first of these five curricula is the official curriculum. Official curriculum is the written document or lesson plan that provides a basis for student instruction and evaluation. The second of Posner’s concurrent curricula is the operational curriculum. Operational curriculum is what is actually taught and how the contents’ importance is conveyed to the learner and how learners are held accountable for their outcomes. Posner identifies the third curricula as the hidden curriculum. Posner describes the hidden curriculum as the institutional norms and values of society. The fourth of the five curricula is the null curriculum. The null curriculum consists of what is not taught. The fifth and final curricula in operation is the extra curriculum. The extra curriculum consists of all planned experiences outside the school subjects. These curricula, according to Posner, are non-hierarchical and operate simultaneously within school settings.

The work of Pinar, Doll, and Posner in the field of curriculum reconceptualization contrasts, to some extent, the ways curriculum is understood from within art historical and art museum educational practice. That is not to say that all art museum educators and
scholars are unwilling to explore expanded notions of curriculum within the art museum. The historical foundations for how curriculum has been described in art museums has provided particular impediments to complex notions of curriculum, however.

**Curriculum and the Museum**

What constitutes art museum curriculum in the U.S. has emerged from a wide array of fields. Sometimes contradictory in approach, art museum education has utilized teaching methods based largely in art historical methods, seeking to supplement curatorial practice. As increasing attention was paid to the children in the museum in the mid-20th century, a shift toward educational methods related to formal learning settings began to emerge in hybrid forms (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). A new paradigm for the shaping of knowledge through education in the museum emerged in the 1980’s (Hein, 1998). Learning came to be defined as active participation of people in the study of visual objects. Museum educators began to foster the construction of meaning through contextual experiences extended by contact with other people, or the museum community (Roberts, 1997). Museum educators developed many interpretive methods in an effort to extend the relevance of learning encounters. This new view of museum education was informed by constructivism and sociocultural theories and attempted to reposition museums as leading institutions for informal learning. Today, the role of education in the museum asserts that its practices are informed by postmodern discourse (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Roberts, 1997). Within this postmodernist museum education approach, there is an understanding of
museum literacy exceeding visual literacy, indicating an advanced use of the language of interpretation on the part of people within the museum. People access museum resources and possesses a personalized notion of the museum (Mayer, 2008). Additionally, through museum education museums can be understood as political entities, giving privilege to certain demographic groups and their ways of knowing that has resulted in efforts to design educational practices that equalize accessibility of the museum beyond the privileged few to empower people and foster museum literacy. Authors Lisa Roberts (1997) and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000) among others speak to this shift toward postmodern museum education. A focus on positionality and meaning making as a social practice guide these writers.

Prior to the curriculum reconceptualization movement within academia in the 1970s, curriculum was defined as curriculum development. Curriculum development sought to define, refine, and order what teachers would teach. Whereas curriculum development emphasized practitioner/classroom settings, today, contemporary curriculum has shifted its focus and is understood by many as curriculum theory. Curriculum theory explores why institutions/systems enact particular forms of education and what the implications of these forms are on learners and society. Pinar, Doll, and Posner are only three curriculum reconceptualists that can contribute to an evolving state of museum curriculum: one in which educators are no longer tied to strict scientific approaches to curriculum, Rather, museum educators can think of curriculum in its verb form – currere – a process of becoming and transformation with no necessary terminal points. This notion of curriculum within the museum is not widespread, however.
Given that curriculum theory and practice are a vital element in public schools, it is worth noting educators in non-school settings have only begun to incorporate curriculum theory into their thinking, thereby influencing pedagogy and research. One location that has been slowly illuminated by the unbinding through postmodern curriculum is the art museum. While other non-school learning settings such as outdoor environmental education spaces (DeMoor, 2006) have adopted curriculum theory more readily, art museums have not picked up the theories and language of contemporary curriculum writers with the same unanimity. A few authors in museum education do write explicitly about curriculum, and in a review of the relevant literature I have identified six major categories for the reader. These six categories of curriculum in museum education can be understood as follows:

1. Curriculum as content to be taught in galleries (Vallance, 2004)
2. Curriculum as what teaches us to teach (Castle, 2006)
3. Curriculum as exhibition (Roberts, 2006)
5. Curriculum as story (Vallance, 2004)
6. Curriculum as dialogic interaction (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011)

While each of these categories represents at least one author taking a position on museum curriculum that aligns with the categorical description, I am not asserting that the authors listed in this review are comprehensively representative of all views of curriculum in museum education nor am I implying that the authors associated with these categories are the sole contributors to the conversations about curriculum in museum education. Rather, these six categories reflect a broad spectrum of positions on
curriculum in the museum that I have perceived in a review of relevant literature arising from the field of art museum education. Some of these authors may have more sway within the field of museum education, while others speak from a marginal position in the field. Regardless of the notoriety of the author or the popularity of their ideas within their field, the selections of ideas expressed through their work are important to note as this range of ideas contributes to a breadth of curriculum definitions.

Likewise, while several authors may write about some of these curriculum ideas with more frequency, I selected authors to represent each theme based on the depth I found evident in their writing. While each of these authors addresses notions of curriculum in influential ways, in some art museums the triad of human actor, museum, and art object are the components that narrowly define curriculum. Presently, there are some conceptions of curriculum in museum scholarship that significantly challenge presumptions regarding interrelationships between these three elements, but they do not yet constitute the mainstream understanding of curriculum. Neither do some of these conceptions of curriculum include significant examinations of elements external to the triad. One such element external to the triad is the mobile phone. While the mobile phone is a non-living actor, the omission of such a ubiquitous object and its use in the discussion of museum curriculum is problematic. This omission reflects a limited way of defining curriculum in the art museum that some museums still utilize. A myopic definition of curriculum does not make elements external to the standard definition cease to have effect on learners. Rather, it restricts the potential for museum educators to think broadly and radically about the educational potentials of a museum experience.
Museum Photography Studies

In consideration of the effects of the use of mobile phones to photograph artworks in the museum, cultural theorists and researchers (Brown & Adler, 2008; Lessig, 2008; Mason, 2008; Shirky, 2010) argue that we have entered a new era wherein cultural production is no longer singularly the domain of experts. Alternatively, it is a shared province in which experts and amateurs build cultural knowledge together (Van House, 2011). This position contrasts the position of some art museum scholars, as described in the previous chapter. Using digital technology to produce, publish, share, and remix content fuels this shared production of cultural knowledge. Brown and Adler (2008) describe a shift from a “push” approach of education, where schools push the learning of particular content, to a “pull” approach of social learning, where new technologies enable people to pull information when they want to solve particular problems at particular times. Moreover, this switch enables people to move from “learning about” a particular subject to “learning to be” an active participant in the field (Brown & Adler, 2008, p.18). Within the arts, this shift suggests a movement from pushing high art forms to one that pulls people to participate in the arts through their interest-driven activities (Peppler, 2013). This shift has major implications not only for formal learning environments such as schools, but also for physical informal learning environments such as cultural heritage sites, museums and libraries as well as digital informal learning environments.

As a culture, we increasingly communicate in images. Two decades ago, a person having visited an art museum might have discussed an interesting work of art with friends. Flash forward twenty years and it is apparent that people are more likely to take a
picture of the work of art and upload it to social media. This behavior is not restricted to people visiting a museum for the first time or those uncomfortable in an art museum setting. New York magazine critic Jerry Saltz posted a photo of himself to Facebook in front of a Marcel Duchamp work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2013. Additionally, people often remix their photographs with other visual elements and transform them into new compositions. On a daily basis, users on image-sharing sites such as Tumblr and Instagram create their own collages and themed galleries.

The transformation in the way in which people digest visual stimuli is described, by Harvard theoretician Lawrence Lessig (2008), as a shift from “read-only” culture (in which a passive viewer looks at a work of art) to “read-write” culture (in which the viewer actively participates in a recreation of it). In Lessig’s view the first step toward recreating a work of art, for most people, is to photograph it. The act of photographing a work, within such a conception of culture, does not differ significantly from the time-honored tradition of sketching. This notion of “read-write” culture is a scholarly criticism of the traditional notion of passive viewer in the museum absorbing high culture knowledge. Lessig’s reframing of culture within the museum context is but one contemporary view of a new way digital photography can be understood to function within the art museum. Lessig and other scholars’ work build on a long history of scholarship about photography that has its foundations in art criticism. In order to better understand the contemporary views of digital photography and the re-evaluation or critique of the museum proposed by authors such as Lessig in this section, it is valuable to revisit the history of photography criticism arising from a range of professional fields.
Photography Criticism

There are numerous scholars working outside the field of art education who have written on the subject of art criticism with particular emphasis on digital photography, tourist photography, and street photography. Described by Sontag (1977) as “an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering … the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the flâneur finds the world ‘picturesque’” (p. 55), and this picturesque setting provides the subject matter for street photography. The notion of the voyeur with a camera has been as readily applied to both street photographer and tourist photographer alike, but this portrayal does a disservice to both street photography and tourist photography. Granted, some street photographers are indeed voyeuristic and capitalize on their empowered, educated position and aesthetic knowledge to create works of art from encountering life by chance. Similarly, some tourists create photographs that are likely representations of an unintellectual product of a forward ambulatory progress similar to the ones described by Sontag. However, not all tourist photography is created equally.

Recent research of tourist activities reveal that some tourists demonstrate more complex interactive engagements with the subjects of their photographs and these interactions are guided by prior knowledge, present expectation, and anticipated outcome (Larsen, 2005; Van House, 2011). There are a number of factors at work in the process of taking a photograph in the context of a cultural setting that have been examined by scholars in their analysis of photography in art museums and other sites of cultural tourism that have begun to be explored by researchers in many fields (Berger, 2004;
Lippard, 1999; Richards & Munsters, 2010; Smith, 2003). Some of the analysis that arises from these contemporary studies is in tension with earlier notions of photography described by scholars who are considered foundational to the field of photographic study. One foundational text with which such studies are in tension is Walter Benjamin’s essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2007); Benjamin characterizes the mechanical reproduction of art through film as atemporal and depreciated in aesthetic value due to its lack of authenticity. For Benjamin, the photograph diminishes the “aura” of the authentic work of art. The aura of a work of art is lost in photography, notes Benjamin (2007), “by making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence” (p. 221). The aura of the work of art contributes to its ritual function and when stripped of its aura, the work becomes political. Additionally, mechanical reproduction alters the way the public reacts to works of art; quantity becomes quality.

Digital photographs of art objects taken by adults in museums is not, as some scholars would argue (Mitchell, 2005), an attempt to “capture” the original object or its “aura”, rather the representation of the object is a marker of meaningful experience. Through this process of representing experience, the reproduction has a greater aura than the original work (Mitchell, 2005, p. 320.) Digital photographs have a unique vitality all their own – regardless of their confirmation or deviation from historical aesthetic standards. The non-conforming image is critical to the shared learning experience occurring through the dialogic tension it creates: an ugly photograph of a work of art can evoke analysis, commentary, comparison, and reflection in ways that the original object cannot.

Extending these new understandings of photography through the process of criticism,
scholars, artists, and art educators have engaged in the process of critiquing the museum as well.

**Institutional Critique**

Underlying the project of institutional critique is an implicit belief that the institutions of studio, gallery, and museum are unable or unwilling to fulfill their obligations to society. The views of scholars, artists, and educators engaging in institutional critique are in direct conflict with the stated views many art museums have of themselves. Beginning in the 1960’s through the present day, artists have engaged in critique of the sometimes-myopic sometimes-xenophobic self-assuredness of institutions declaring their own value and ethical practice with regard to the public good. Author Jennifer Barrett (2011) probes the difficulty of defining public good. Barrett challenges the notion that many museums hold regarding their place in society as an institution. Museums have described themselves as being relevant institutions worthy of private and public funding and support by stating they are for “the public” and meet educational goals. Barrett challenges the notion of a fixed definition of the public. She explains that while the term “the public” has been in circulation for a great many years and is the founding concept for supporting the idea that museums and their collections should be and are accessible to all people, rather than the private property of the wealthy, the term does not hold a singular meaning at any given time and continues to remain fluid in the contemporary era. The public of the museum, according to Barrett, is founded in
Habermas’ public sphere – a sphere comprising groups in continual motion: a 19th century notion of a public.

Museums sought to ameliorate this dated notion by substituting words such as “community” in an effort to appear more democratic, yet the substitutions of such terms neither repair the reductive nature of understanding the varied peoples visiting (and not visiting) museums nor do they convey a sufficiently complex understanding of democracy. Valid criticism from many sources has been levied against the museum for these flattened views of audience, democracy, and imperialistic practices, as well as appropriation from indigenous and/or marginalized people.

These criticisms led to a movement from within museums in the 1970s, dubbed “new museology”, which sought to accommodate and engage much broader populations through shifts in exhibition practices, increased emphasis on educational content and programming, and targeted recruitment of non-museum going audiences such as low-income, racially, ability, or educationally diverse groups (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). While some change in the internal motives and visible arrangement of museums is evident following the new museological turn, the visual and spatial discourses of democracy are still problematic in today’s museum. Museums, and in particular art museums, still encounter the criticism of existing as sites striving for a de-politicized global humanism, governed by aesthetics. The inclusion of methods of internal analysis such as visitor studies, audience research, and a variety of methodologies have led some museums in the 21st century to make radical changes to features such as cost of admission. For instance, the Dallas Museum of Art moved in January 2013 to provide free membership and free admission to any interested person. Such changes do not
necessarily constitute a completed democratic project within the museum, however. As Jennifer Barrett states, “democracy is a process, not a thing in itself. To consider a museum as fixed is as inaccurate as to consider democracy as fixed, as universal” (p.173).

Many art museums lag behind in the process of democratizing – they still exist in predominately urban locations that make them less accessible to a wide audience. A great number of art museums take as their architectural form imposing, large, unusual, or temple-esque structure and many such imposing structures still charge large sums for admission. The opportunity for public discourse regarding the representations of cultures and the varied needs of stakeholders within the art remains limited. The incomplete project of democratizing art museums in the 21st century have not been missed as an opportunity by some artists to remind society at large of this incongruence between the stated missions of art museums and actual conditions contradictory to such missions.

Within the context of institutional critique, mobile phone photography occurring inside the art museum has been a polarizing subject. A persistence tension exists between art museum staff and people visiting museums regarding the act of taking photographs. The simple act of taking a small, low-resolution digital photograph using a mobile phone is sometimes seen as an act of resistance or subversion. Often, staff and guards largely ignore the action of taking a digital photograph – even if it incites quiet disdain for the photographer. At best, a few writers on art museums have come around to the notion that if people are taking photographs in art museums, there must be some value to the action, even if it is a poor substitute for memory (Henkel, 2013).
Exploring Questions

This study explores the two initial research questions with the expectation that additional questions will emerge. I approach the study from the position of acknowledging that the researched and researcher are in a constant state of becoming. The state of neither is fixed in time or space – they are not re-presentations, rather, they present themselves as a continual return of difference within the constitution of events. This study seeks to investigate the movement between events as a characteristic of the production of events. The methodology is constituted by examining the flow of events surrounding the act of creation of mobile phone photographs in art museums. Through examining the photographs of others, and the interviews, I will trace relationships of the assemblages of forces that form the person’s self and notions of learning in the context of the art museum.

This learning may be understood to be perpetually emerging. This approach to the broad context and content of what is described as learning by participants is defined, for the purpose of this study, as a curriculum. This concept of a curriculum will be described through the exploration of visible actions of people in museums. Curriculum is an assemblage arising from milieu. Semetsky (2008) argues that the creation of concepts occurs in duration through the triadic relationship of percept, affect and concept. This creation of concepts is a tracing of curriculum. Perception as tacit and representational knowledge is deterritorialized through affective shock. In so doing, it creates a concept or perception-in-becoming – a perception of that which is not given. Perception is allied with representational and commonsensical engagement with matter as well as our
perceived capacity to act on it. Perception must be disrupted through affective destabilization in order for new concepts or knowledge to form. Stated otherwise, curriculum in this sense does not seek to create divides, rather to create flows. Curriculum is born of desire – constituted as an accrual of encounters a learner experiences before within and after the art museum. “Desire is a positive, active, and creative force rather than just a reactive one, passively responding to some negativity or lack” (Semetsky, 2008, p. 446). People do not possess desire a priori; just the opposite, it is desire that “produces reality” in the guise of new objects of knowledge for the subject of experience.

Semetsky (2003) also describes a notion of the deepening of consciousness and expanded realization of meanings through education to Deleuze and Guattari’s description of rhizomatic method as a form of continuous inquiry that transforms philosophy into an open set of critical tools and artistic creations. This notion of an open set of critical tools and artistic creations move toward a reconstruction of the learning space in terms of “creating an open-ended, smooth, pedagogical space” (Semetsky, 2003, p.27) This learning space extends beyond the architectural boundaries of institutional learning environment such as the art museum or the classroom and becomes a space challenging the necessity of some superior educational aim which is imposed from without. This study seeks to understand this smooth space and to discover the communities that constitute that space and the curricula at work within it.
Conclusion

This chapter has provided the necessary theoretical framework that provides support for this study. This chapter has introduced historical and contemporary scholarship on the numerous related areas of research that contribute to my understanding of the questions this study will explore. An epistemological foundation for the methodology that will be utilized for the collection and analysis of data included in this study has been described in this chapter in an effort to better prepare the reader to understand the broader philosophical position that informed methodological selection and research methods utilized within this study.

This chapter began with a historical review of the reconceptualization of curriculum followed by the ways curriculum has been discussed and engaged within art museum education. Subsequent to this introduction, I introduced the reader to historical and contemporary issues related to photography within museums. Following this introduction to photography in museums, I provided a brief overview of photography criticism as it related to the subject of digital photography within art museums. Following this discussion of criticism, I introduced the reader to an overview of the history of institutional critique of museums. The theoretical discussion within this chapter closed with a section wherein I revisited notions of curriculum through the philosophical underpinnings that guide my thinking with regard to learning.

In the following chapter, I will describe the methodology utilized for the collection and analysis of data utilized in this study. I will elaborate on some of the ideas regarding photography criticism that were introduced in this chapter and discuss the
process of criticism through an art education lens. This discussion will be linked to the
description of the visual ethnography methodology and digital photography analysis
methods employed in this study. Finally, I will examine the limitations and delimitations
of the study and provide a brief overview of the methodology.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This chapter provides the methodology utilized for the collection and analysis of data utilized in this study. The chapter will introduce the reader to principles of photography criticism through an art education lens. This discussion of photography criticism is followed by the description of the visual ethnography methodology and digital photography analysis methods employed in this study. Ethnographic, photographic, and social media terms are defined throughout the writing. The limitations and delimitations of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study methodology.

The Photographs

The process of careful examination and description of digital photographs can be understood as criticism, according to art education scholar Terry Barrett (2011). Barrett has written extensively on the subjects of art criticism, the interpretation of art, and photography criticism (Barrett, 2012a, 2012b, 2011, Barrett, 2003). Barrett is a leading scholar in art education on these topics. There are several other art education scholars who have explored the subject of art criticism (Anderson, 2000; Feldman, 1994; Geahigan, 2002, 1999; Taylor & Carpenter, 2007). Likewise, numerous scholars working outside the field of art education have written on the subject of art criticism with
particular emphasis on both traditional and digital photography (Batchen, 2003, 1999; Barthes, 1981; Benjamin, 2007; Bourdieu, Boltanski, & Whiteside 1990; Fried, 2008; Lippard, 1999; Mitchell, 2015, 2005, 1995; Sontag, 1977). However, for the purpose of this study, I examine the relationship between Barrett’s process of describing digital photographs as a form of art criticism and the process of describing digital photographs in the context of visual ethnographic methods utilized for the analysis of digital photographs. Barrett’s (2012) principles, discussed in detail later in this research, for describing photographs provide important art education context for a methodology of visual ethnography for data analysis.

Barrett, building on the work of art critic Morris Weitz (1964), defines the parameters of criticism as including the process of describing, interpreting, evaluating and theorizing. Barrett places emphasis on the discussion of the meanings of photographs over the pronouncements of judgement. Criticism, according to Barrett, is “informed discourse about art to increase understanding and appreciation of art” (p. 3). The process of criticism is distinct from casual conversation, uninformed opinion, or journalism. Barrett describes two distinct categories of criticism: exploratory aesthetic criticism and argumentative aesthetic criticism. In exploratory aesthetic criticism, a critic focuses on the process of ascertaining a digital photograph’s aesthetic aspects as thoroughly as possible in order to enable readers to have a detailed understanding of all that can be seen in a photograph. For example, Barrett provides an example of exploratory aesthetic criticism when he describes editor and writer Ingrid Sischy’s catalogue essay on Lee Friedlander’s photographs. “Sischy pleasantly meanders in and through the photographs and the photographer’s thought, carefully exploring both and her reactions to them…we
experience the photographs through the descriptive and interpretive thoughts of a careful and committed observer.” (Barrett, p. 6) Conversely, in argumentative aesthetic criticism, a critic begins with interpretive analysis of a digital photograph and proceeds to provide a judgement based on criteria and standards determined by the critic. For example, Barrett provides an example of argumentative aesthetic criticism when he describes an essay Ingrid Sischy wrote for *The New Yorker*. In the essay, Sischy discusses popular journalistic photographs by Sebastiao Salgado wherein she “carefully and logically and cumulatively builds an argument against their worth, despite their great popularity in the art world. She clearly demonstrates argumentative criticism that is centrally evaluative…” (p. 7) Within the scope of this study, Barrett’s process of exploratory aesthetic criticism offers a starting point for how the digital photographs that are the anchor for this study might be described, and therefore critiqued. As Barrett (1994) said:

> Description is not a prelude to criticism – it is criticism. Given the rich descriptions provided by critics, we come away with a knowledge and appreciation of the art they are describing. Description, then, is language to facilitate understanding and appreciation of works of art, and so is criticism. (p. 41-2)

Describing photographs, and more specifically digital photographs, can be best accomplished if the critic follows several principles defined by Barrett (2012). Foremost, according to Barrett, descriptions of photographs should be factual – both the omission and addition of information not contained within the photograph is detrimental to the function of description. Description can be characterized as either a process of gathering *data* or a process of reporting *data*. The descriptive process is defined by the purpose of
the description. When a critic is gathering descriptive data, all details about a photograph should be treated as important rather than placing emphasis on some details at the expense of others. Information about the person who created the photograph (or artist, as the case may be), the title of the photograph, medium, date the photograph was created, size of the photograph, and location or type of presentation are essential components of descriptive data. Barrett (2012) states the process of description is impossible without interpretation and, likewise, the process of interpreting a photograph always relies on description. This interdependent relationship between description and interpretation is “meaningfully circular” (p. 42) and can be infinite. The critic determines the end point for the process of description. This end point arises when the critic perceives that additional information added to the description would not be relevant. This process of determining an end point is influenced by information that can be taken from within and outside the photograph. Such an approach to descriptive criticism of photography has implications beyond the world of fine art photography. Barrett’s principles for describing photographs share characteristics with other disciplinary approaches to the use of photographs as data.

Sarah Pink originally trained as an anthropologist now working across design, engineering, and arts disciplines to which she brings social and cultural research expertise, is recognized as an authority on visual ethnographic theory and methodology. Pink (2013) notes in her studies of digital photography practice a range and nature of commonplace ways in which people utilize digital photography in relation to the materialities of their homes, neighborhoods, and other built and natural environments alongside their use of web platforms and computing devices is revealed. Pink’s studies show that by engaging with people as they use digital media and visual photography in
their daily lives researchers can create new inroads toward understanding what and how people are learning beyond these media forms. As mobile phones and visual computing become more central to the social interactions of technologically connected populations around the world, it is important to focus additional visual ethnographic research toward these groups. Research engaging digital visual ethnography can provide a greater understanding of an increasingly technological and digitally mediated social world.

At the onset of this study, from October until the first week of November 2014, I searched Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook for fifty digital photographs of artifacts or works of art taken in art museums around the world. I selected photographs that emphasized the artwork or artifact as the primary subject matter. I did not select digital photographs that featured easily identifiable people standing in front of artworks or artifacts (commonly described as “selfies”) as these images did not allow me to easily maintain the anonymity of the research participants. During this same time period I collected screen shots of the photographs and emailed all fifty potential participants to invite them to participate in the study. Between October 2014 and December 2014 I received thirty-eight responses from interested research participants. I proceeded to analyze the digital photographs of art and artifacts taken by thirty-eight adults following their initial statements of interest.

The digital photographs I analyzed were shared publicly on social media platforms and analyzed using a method influenced by visual ethnographer Gillian Rose (2012). For all thirty-eight photographs I took a screen capture of the photograph and associated data so I could conduct the analysis. I kept a digital file of each of these analyses on my computer while I awaited responses to the requests for interviews. A total
of sixteen people completed an interview via either by e-mail or Skype between November and December 2014. I invited each of the sixteen participants to send the original digital file of the photograph. For the purpose of this study, my analysis is focused on five purposefully selected participants. I selected these participants from a larger pool of sixteen participants who completed the semi-structured interviews. The five selected participants represent a broad range in age, as both the youngest participant and the oldest participant are included in the selection. Additionally selected participants include two females and three males. Selected participants also represent a broad range of geographic locations as selected participants self-reported home addresses are in Florida, Texas, Washington, Singapore, and The Hague. The selected participants also represent users of each of the three social media platforms utilized to collect data for this study.

The analyses of the photographs taken by these five participants emphasize four areas of study described by Gillian Rose, Professor of Cultural Geography at The Open University. Her research interests include visual research methodologies and contemporary visual culture. Rose’s work provides an important framework that shapes the method I employ to analyze the photographs included in this study. The following four areas of study are adapted from the work of Rose (2012, pp. 287-289) and are important in this study for the analyses of digital photographs taken by the research participants.

1. The content of the digital photograph as well as the presentation form.
2. The co-construction of the nature of the photograph’s objectness through digital interactions.
3. The process of tracking the photographs as they travel in physical and digital space.

4. The examination of the interrelationships between the effects of the materialities, mobilities, and practices.

Within the context of this study *presentation form* is defined as the social media platform or platforms where the photograph is hosted and made publicly accessible. For example, Twitter is a social media platform on which two of the participants posted photographs.

For more detailed information regarding the key social media terminology as well as some basic facts about the three social media platforms utilized in this study as well as a fourth platform that is discussed in relation to one participant’s photograph, please refer to Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4-1**: Overview of social media platforms utilized in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Platform:</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Tumblr</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How platform is described by its parent company:</td>
<td>An online social networking service allowing users to create a profile, add other users as &quot;friends&quot;, exchange messages, post status updates and photos, share videos and receive notifications when others update their profiles. Users may join</td>
<td>An online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called &quot;tweets&quot;. Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them.</td>
<td>A microblogging platform and social networking website allowing users to post multimedia and other content to a short-form blog.</td>
<td>An online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them on a variety of social networking platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook Initial release:</td>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td>March 2006</td>
<td>February 2007</td>
<td>October 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter Initial release:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tumblr Initial release:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instagram Initial release:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Terminology:</td>
<td>“like”: a button users can click to display a gloved hand with thumb up icon indicating they like a comment by another user. “comment”: “share”: a button a user can click to copy another user’s post to their own status update or to a group to which they belong. “hashtag”: any word preceded by a pound sign (#) and no space (#example) allowing the word following the pound sign to be searchable by other registered users (depending on post and profile privacy settings)</td>
<td>“reply”: a button that a user can click to create a comment that replies directly to another user’s tweet. “retweet”: a button a user can click to copy a tweet from another user to their own Twitter feed. “favorite”: a button users can click to display a yellow star icon indicating they like a tweet by another user. “hashtag”: any word preceded by a pound sign (#) and no space (#example) allowing the word following the pound sign to be searchable by registered and unregistered users.</td>
<td>“reblog”: “like”: a button users can click to display a red heart icon indicating they like a blog post by another user. “hashtag”: any word preceded by a pound sign (#) and no space (#example) allowing the word following the pound sign to be searchable by registered and unregistered users. “comment”: a button a user can click to leave a text comment about a photograph. “like”: a button users can click to display a red heart icon indicating they like a photograph by another user. “hashtag”: any word preceded by a pound sign (#) and no space (#example) allowing the word following the pound sign, attached to the photograph in a caption or comment, to be searchable by other registered users (depending on profile privacy settings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Number of Users:</td>
<td>1.44 billion active users (Facebook, “Investor Relations”, April 2014)</td>
<td>302 million active users (NYSE, April 2015)</td>
<td>234.2 million blogs (Tumblr, “About Us”, March 2015)</td>
<td>300 million active users (BBC, December 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image Capabilities:</td>
<td>Users can upload photographs as large as 25 MB or videos as large as 1,024 MB or 20 minutes with a</td>
<td>Users can upload up to four photographs for each tweet. No video upload capabilities as of</td>
<td>Photo Post: up to 1280 by 1920 pixels. Text Post: As of March 30, 2015, inline images can</td>
<td>Users can take photographs and videos (square dimensions) within the application or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Capabilities:</td>
<td>More than 60,000 text characters for status updates, group posts, and wall posts.</td>
<td>Up to 140 text characters for a single tweet or reply. Unlimited number of tweets and replies.</td>
<td>500,000 characters, or approximately 75,000 words for a Tumblr page.</td>
<td>Unlimited number of text characters for photograph captions or comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Customizable Features:</td>
<td>Limited customizability. User may include a profile picture, background picture, and a range of personal demographic data. Use of hashtags provides limited search capabilities depending on user determined privacy settings.</td>
<td>Limited customizability. User may include a profile picture, wallpaper image, and a short biographical description and external link to a website. Use of hashtags provides extensive search capabilities for both registered and unregistered users.</td>
<td>More customizable. User may choose from a variety of interface templates or customize the interface with their own HTML editing. Users have a dashboard to manage content.</td>
<td>Limited customizability. User may include a profile picture, background picture, and other demographic data. Use of hashtags provides extensive search capabilities for registered users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware:</td>
<td>Users access Facebook through the website interface or one of several mobile device applications.</td>
<td>Users access Twitter through the website interface, short message service (SMS), or mobile device applications.</td>
<td>Users access Tumblr through the website interface or mobile device applications.</td>
<td>Instagram’s primary interface is the mobile device application for Apple and Android hardware but a limited feature website interface is...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, within the context of this study, the *co-construction of the photograph’s objectness* is defined as the ways in which both the photographer and social media viewers interact with the photograph. Examples of this are captions or other data added to the photograph by the photographer as well as captions, data, and comments added to the photograph by social media viewers are a part of the co-construction of the photograph’s objectness. Related to this co-constructed objectness, the process of *tracking the photograph* as it travels in physical and digital space is defined in the context of this study as researching and reporting the reproduction of the photograph in either digital or analog forms and the location of those reproductions. Specifically, when one of the digital photographs utilized in this study is re-posted by the photographer to another social media platform or website, this re-posting is reported as part of the analysis of the photograph. Finally, within the context of the study, *examination of the interrelationships* between the effects of the materialities, mobilities, and practices is defined as the process of bringing together data gathered from the previous areas of study. This process is enacted in the case of each participant’s photograph. With these four areas of study in mind, I share the visual ethnographic analysis of each single photograph or social media communication posted by the five participants that I used to initiate the subsequent interviews and exchanges of ideas.
It is important to note that within this study, the work of Barrett (2012) has provided a methodology for describing photographs as a component of art criticism that arises from art education scholarship. While the purpose of this study is not to critique photographs of art objects shared on social media, Barrett’s work serves as a foundation for ways in which the description and analysis of photographs occur in the context of art education. The work of Pink (2013) follows the work of Barrett as her writing is intended to function as a methodological liaison between Barrett’s notions of criticism and the visual ethnography methodology that is the framework for this study. While Pink’s work provides the methodological framework for analysis for this study, there are specific methods explored by Rose (2012) that are particularly appropriate for the type of data described and analyzed within this study. Rose’s areas of study guide the description and analyses of the following five selected participants’ photographs.

In the following chapter, I will take Rose’s four areas of study and apply them to analyze the single initial photographs provided by five purposefully selected participants. The first photograph was collected from James’ Instagram account; the second photograph was collected from Paul’s Twitter account. The third photograph was collected from Taya’s Twitter account. The fourth photograph was collected from Sam’s Facebook account. The fifth photograph was collected from Donna’s Facebook account. I will describe the content of each of these digital photographs as well as their presentation forms. Next, I will discuss the co-construction of each of the photograph’s objectness through digital interactions. Following the digital interaction discussion, I will provide evidence of tracking the photographs as they travel in physical and digital space. Finally, I will examine the interrelationships between the effects of the materialities, mobilities,
and practices evident through the social media contexts where each of these photographs was shared publicly. This description and analysis of these photographs will seek to respond to the two guiding research questions: what roles do digital photographs play in the learning processes of visitors in art museums? In what ways does digital photography by visitors render art museums permeable learning environments unrestricted by physical space and traditional methods of museum education? Additionally, this analysis process will seek to uncover additional questions.

**The Interviews**

Following an initial analysis of the visual elements of the digital photographs, I invited thirty-eight participants to engage in semi-structured interviews during which the creators of the photographs were given the opportunity to engage in verbal exploration of their images. Of the thirty-eight invitations, I received sixteen completed interviews. Eleven interviews were completed via e-mail and five interviews were completed via Skype. I asked participants the following questions:

1. Why did you take this photograph?
2. Why did you choose to share it publically via social media?
3. What about this object made you want to take a photograph of it?
4. How has your understanding of this object changed through the process of taking the photograph?
5. How has your understanding of this object changed as a result of sharing this photograph via social media?
In addition to the sixteen initial interviews I invited all research participants to complete an unstructured follow-up interview. I conducted two follow-up interviews with willing participants Paul and Taya. Paul and Taya were the only two participants of the remaining sixteen who were willing to complete the follow-up interview. As the reader will notice in the following chapter, in both the analysis of the photographs and the semi-structured interviews, data from the five participants diverges from museums as the central focus of the study. Much of what the participants discussed in response to questions regarding their photographs in relation to learning was not anchored solely in their experience within the museum. Rather, the museum provided the genesis for interactions, reflections, and learning through the participants’ digital photographs and conversations that diverged from a singular focus on the museum.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

The limitations of this study include several factors related to the demographic characteristics of the research participants as well as the setting for data collection. This study is limited to English speaking participants who are over the age of 18. Participants must be current users of at least one social media platform utilized for this study. Study data will only be collected from the three selected social media platforms. Participants must have visited an art museum and must have taken at least one digital photograph within the museum and this photograph must have been shared publicly to one of the social media platforms utilized for this study. Additionally, this study is limited in scope to digital photographs shared within at least two years of the onset of the study. Digital
photographs shared to social media platforms prior to this date will not be included in the study. This study is also limited to collecting interview data from participants who are willing and able to conduct interviews via Skype or e-mail. Participants unwilling or unable to conduct interviews using one or both of these tools will not be included in the study. The study data will be limited to the inclusion of digital photographs of artworks selected by participants within museums selected by participants. While this will provide a range of photographic data, it will not be an encyclopedic representation of works of art nor will it be a comprehensive representation of all museums.

An important delimitation of this study is related to the existing methodology and methods of research within museums. The field of museum education has predominately utilized visitor studies surveys and direct observation of people engaging in free-choice interactions in galleries (Burnham & Kee, 2011, Carr, 2010, Falk & Dierking, 2000). The field of visitor studies within museums has grown quickly over the past few decades. Despite this growth, there are still crucial gaps in the understandings gained about the art museum experience from visitor studies. Multiple factors contribute to these gaps. For instance, much of the present body of visitor studies research employs survey research to either collect data in order to create demographic profiles or they employ evaluation studies to measure the effectiveness of specific programs or exhibitions (Goulding, 2000; Roberts, 1997). Most studies do not involve in-depth investigation of the complexities of the art museum experience. Additionally, much of what is known about the art museum experience is derived from studies that emphasize cognitive engagement and learning outcomes. Only recently have researchers examined a broader range of experiences and benefits that museums provide to people (Packer, 2008; Silverman, 2002). While such
research data has some value to art museum professionals in their efforts to evaluate educational programming and exhibition design, it is limiting in the kind of data it produces. Both surveys and direct observations of interactions create conditions that alter the behavior of the research subjects subsequently altering their learning experiences (Everett & Barrett, 2009, Roberts, 1997). Such altered behavior can include answering surveys in anticipation of the desired result. Additionally, directly observed persons in galleries may significantly alter their path, time spent looking at a work of art, or physical relationships to other people and objects within the art museum galleries as a result of the self-consciousness arising from being closely observed by a stranger.

**Conclusion**

Within this chapter I have outlined the methodology that will be utilized for the process of collecting and analyzing photographic and participant interview data. I have introduced the reader to Barrett’s principles of photography criticism and I have described the relationship between criticism and visual ethnography. I guided the reader through a description of the visual ethnography methodology and digital photography analysis methods that will be employed in the following chapter. I have also defined key terminology related to ethnographic, photographic, and social media platforms, as they are applicable to this research. I have also described limitations and delimitations of the study.

In the following chapter, I will guide the reader through the process of analysis of the data collected from the study. The chapter will begin with the description and analysis
of five digital photographs that served to initiate the research process. Following the analysis of the photographs, I will share the subsequent semi-structured interview data collected from the five participants as well as the analysis of these interviews. The semi-structured interviews are followed by two unstructured follow up interviews as well as a comparison analysis of both the unstructured interviews and the prior semi-structured interviews. The chapter will conclude with key points that emerge from the analysis of the data included in this study.
Chapter 4

Analysis

This chapter provides analysis of the data collected from the study. It begins with the description and analysis of the digital photographs. Following this analysis, the chapter will share the semi-structured interview data and subsequent analysis. These interviews are followed by two unstructured follow up interviews and the subsequent analysis. The chapter concludes with four points drawn from the analysis of the data included in this study.

Participant #1: James

The analysis process begins with an examination of James’ photograph. This photograph is a detail of Koishumi Kishio’s *Irises at Horikiri*, posted to the social media platform Instagram in September 2014. The photograph (Figure 4.1) depicts two figures in traditional Japanese kimonos holding parasols while standing or crossing a flat wooden bridge over a small body of water. Violet and white irises grow along the banks of both sides of the body of water. A small group of waterlilies is visible in water to the left of the bridge. The woodblock print that is the subject of the photograph was on view at the Frost Museum in Miami in an exhibition titled: *A Wolfsonian Teaching Exhibition: Koizumi Kishio—Remembering Tokyo* on view from October 1, 2014 through January 11, 2015. I found this photograph by searching the hashtag #art on Instagram. This
photograph had twenty-one likes associated with it on Instagram. There were no
comments on the photograph. The lack of comments is not unusual for photographs
posted to Instagram – the majority of photographs posted to this platform garner multiple
likes but often comments about photographs on Instagram are brief and do not frequently
result in conversations.

Figure 4.1: James’ photograph from Instagram.

This same detail photograph was automatically posted to James’ Tumblr account (Figure
4.2) from his Instagram account along with two other detail photographs from the same
exhibition. James used the following metadata as descriptors for the photograph in order
to identify the artwork it depicts and make the photograph more searchable on both
Instagram and Tumblr: “‘Irises at Horikiri,’ 1934 detail by Koizumi Kishio
The photograph is square in shape and reflects James’ cropping of the total composition of the print the photograph depicts. The square shape of the digital photograph was pre-determined by the Instagram mobile application – all Instagram photographs must be square. The way James’ chose to crop the photograph is a reflection of his decision to include a portion of the print rather than his other available option given the constraints of Instagram’s square image format.

He could have decided to depict the entire rectangular print as well as the frame holding the print and the wall behind the print. James’ decision to crop the photograph is important to note, as it is a conscious decision reflecting his choice of how to use the medium of digital photography within the constraints of the Instagram application. Likewise, the digital photograph also has a pink hue that the original print lacks. The pink
hue is a result of James’ selection of a digital filter feature available on the Instagram mobile application. Both the decision to use a filter and the decision to crop the out portions of the total composition found in the woodblock print the photograph depicts are important choices affecting how the digital photograph is represented and understood by fellow social media users. The choice of social media platform used to create and share the photograph is also important to how this photograph can be accessed and by whom the photograph is accessed. James’ chose to create this photograph and share it through a social media platform that is image intensive and does not privilege text conversations. The emphasis on the photograph as the primary form of communication over text-based communication is not continuous across all social media platforms, evident in the analysis of the next photograph.

Participant #2: Paul

Paul’s single social media communication on Twitter, or tweet, was posted on September 9, 2014 and consists of four sharply focused photographs of a single painting accompanied by a small amount of text. All four of the photographs depict portions of a painting by Laurits Tuxen titled Summer Day on Skagen Beach With Figures from the Skagens Museum in Skagen, Denmark from an exhibition titled: Laurits Tuxen - Colour, Countryside and Crown, on view from May 3, 2014 through September 14, 2014. The first photograph (Figure 4.3) is rectangular in dimensions and is a detail photograph depicting a fair-skinned girl, likely a young teenager, with dark hair worn in a long braid, tied with a black ribbon. The girl is nude with the exception of a white cloth or towel she
holds in front of her to cover her torso from the chest to just past her waist and a thin gold bracelet visible on her right arm. The girl is nude with the exception of a white cloth or towel she holds in front of her to cover her torso from the chest to just past her waist and a thin gold bracelet visible on her right arm. She is standing on a sandy beach with a large body of water that has small waves lapping toward the shore in the background. The sky in the distance is blue and devoid of clouds. The sunlight on the girl is bright and indicates intense early afternoon sunshine.

Figure 4.3: The first photograph in Paul’s tweet.
The second detail photograph included in the tweet is rectangular in dimensions and depicts two girls on a beach. The girls are the same approximate age as the girl depicted in the previous photograph (Figure 4.3). The first girl (depicted in Figure 4.4), on the left side of the photograph, is wearing a light pink dress and a gold bracelet on her right arm. She is lying on her left side on top of white fabric spread over the beach sand. The girl is barefoot and wears her light brown hair in a bun. She is exploring a blade of sea grass with her right hand. The other girl depicted in the photograph to the right of the girl in pink is nude with the exception of a gold bracelet worn on her right wrist. She is sitting on a white cloth.

Figure 4.4: The second photograph in Paul’s tweet.
Her blonde hair is parted in the middle and hangs in two loosely braided pigtails. Her back is turned toward the bright afternoon sun. She is holding a stem of small lilac-colored flowers in her right hand while her left hand is placed on the sand near the sea grass.

Figure 4.5: The third photograph in Paul’s tweet.

The third detail photograph (Figure 4.5) in Paul’s tweet is square in dimensions and is a more closely cropped image of the two girls depicted in the second detail photograph (Figure 4.4). This photograph is focused on the hands of both girls and the legs of the nude girl on the right as well as the sea grass growing from the sand between them. The photograph emphasizes an area of the painting that utilizes color to create the illusion of contrasts of golden sunlight and blue shadows on the small blades of beach.
grass and the hands and legs of the subjects. The brush strokes in the painting this photograph depicts are much more evident in this closely cropped photograph and some strokes, such as those on the sleeve of the girl’s pink dress, are impasto. The fourth detail photograph (Figure 4.6) in Paul’s tweet is square in dimensions and is another closely cropped photograph; this time depicting only the blonde nude girl on the right.

![Figure 4.6: The fourth photograph in Paul’s tweet.](image)

This photograph emphasizes the bright sunlight reflecting off the pale shoulders of the girl and the bright white fabric on which she sits. Likewise, this photograph underscores the contrasting blue shadows under the girl’s body and along the edges of her body opposite the intense sunlight. Warm pink mid-tones wash the girl’s face, left arm,
thigh, and torso. Bright golden highlights are in the girl’s blonde hair are more evident in this photograph.

I found this photograph by searching for images associated with the hashtag art museum. Paul included text written in English with the two photographs stating: “Photos in museums are good. You can capture hard to remember details.” The post has two replies, one in English that is a reply to the post with a re-tweet of the photograph (the replication of the original tweet on another Twitter user’s profile) and text with a RT and the added text after Paul’s statement saying “agree!” The second reply is in Dutch and when translated to English also says, “agree.” The post was “favorited” three times.

Paul’s decision to utilize Twitter as the social media platform for sharing his photographs as well as his text commentary is crucial to how he wants his photograph to be accessed and understood. Paul chose to create and include four photographs and share them through a social media platform that is often text and hyperlink intensive. Twitter users are limited to 140 text characters per tweet and frequently employ text combined with hyperlinks to comment on outside websites and direct other Twitter users to investigate hyperlinks. Additionally, Twitter users including Paul have used hashtags to make their tweets more searchable by other users of the platform who share similar interests. Paul’s decision to use Twitter as a way to share photographs he took in an exhibition deviates from the format of the majority of tweets. This is also a deviation from the format of the majority of Paul’s tweets. Paul has made an effort to push the functions of Twitter to accommodate the kind of representation of his photography that he feels is the best fit for his intended audience. As a result, Paul is able to generate brief
conversation threads on his tweets and his tweets with art museum exhibition photographs included are often re-tweeted and favorited.

**Participant #3: Taya**

Taya’s photograph (Figure 4.7) was posted to the social media platform Twitter. The photograph is rectangular in dimensions and was posted August 19, 2014.

![Figure 4.7: Taya’s photograph from Twitter.](image)
The photograph is taken from a low position underneath a large sculpture made from long, dark human hair and pink plastic curlers of various sizes suspended from the ceiling in an exhibition titled: *S.P. Hidayat and Basuki Prahoro Duo Exhibition* at the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Singapore on view from July 5, 2014 through August 21, 2014. The caption for the image states: “Went to the #ArtMuseum only to see a levitating Cousin It in his hair curlers!” (Taya, 2014). I found this photograph by searching the hashtag #artmuseum. There are four favorites on the photograph, no re-tweets and no replies.

Taya’s Twitter account byline states: “Commentary on Classical Music, Books, Pop Culture and Retweets of things I find interesting” (Twitter, 2015). Taya’s Twitter account has very few tweets that include photographs of works of art in museums. Instead, over half of Taya’s tweets are re-tweets of popular culture and high culture content with an emphasis on classical music. In a review of one hundred tweets posted by Taya from February 2, 2015 through February 26, 2015, sixty-six tweets contain visual images or photographs and thirty-four tweets are text-based with no images included. While Taya’s tweets do not focus on visual art exhibitions, roughly two thirds of her communication on Twitter contains photographic or image components.

**Participant #4: Sam**

Facebook user Sam’s photograph is rectangular in dimensions and was posted July 5, 2014 (Figure 4.8). The photograph depicts a large offset arch shaped room constructed entirely of clear glass windows. Hanging from the ceiling of this room in
clustered formations are yellow, orange, and red variegated glass sculptures in round organic shapes. The sculptures are evocative of flowers or jellyfish. The clustered arrangements of the glass sculptures suggest a weightless flow through the upper region of the room. Several indistinct people are standing below the installation looking up at the work while a few people sit on benches in the background. An additional yellow glass sculpture constructed of numerous long twisting and tapered tubes can be seen in the green landscaped garden visible beyond the room through the glass windows.

Figure 4.8: Sam’s photograph from Facebook.
The room is a permanent installation at the Chihuly Garden and Glass Museum in Seattle.

Sam’s photograph was “liked” by three people and another person is tagged in the photograph. Additionally, a Facebook user commented on the photograph on July 5, 2014 stating: “Oh, I love that!” (Facebook User A, 2014). Sam liked user’s comment. In addition to this photograph, additional photographs taken at the Chihuly Garden and Glass Museum in Seattle are visible in Sam’s Facebook photo album.

Participant #5: Donna

Facebook user Donna’s photograph (Figure 4.9) depicts her cartwheeling in front of a light installation by Dan Flavin at the Chinati Institute in Marfa, Texas. The light installation is part of a project by Flavin consisting of six army barracks buildings on the former Fort Russell site. The photograph was posted to Facebook June 15, 2014. I found this photograph by searching for images using the hashtag #artmuseum. Donna had two additional photographs of works from Chinati in an album she titled “Marfa.” All three photographs included the hashtags #Chinati #artmuseum #Marfa in their descriptions. There were sixteen likes associated with the photograph and four comments. The first comment states, “I love this series, Donna!” (Facebook User A, 2014). The second comment was a reply from Donna (2014) stating, “I love making the series, Rachel. You should join us next time!” The third comment asked, “Did you go to the Prada store?” (Facebook User B, 2014). The fourth comment was a reply from Donna (2014) stating, “We drove by the Prada store but didn’t stop. I was more interested in Flavin’s work.”
The photograph is tagged with two other people’s names, and both of these tagged Facebook users liked the photograph. These people tagged are not commenters on the photograph. This photograph is a good example of the level of interaction Donna’s photographs posted to Facebook generate. The majority of photographs Donna posts to Facebook generate likes and comments. In a review of one hundred photographs posted by Donna to Facebook from July 2014 through March 2015 only eight photographs

Figure 4.9: Donna’s photograph from Facebook.
depict art objects or artifacts from art museums. More than 90% of Donna’s recent photography is constituted by other photographic content.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Following an initial analysis of the visual elements of the digital photographs, I invited thirty-eight participants to engage in semi-structured interviews during which the creators of the photographs were given the opportunity to engage in verbal exploration of their images. Of the thirty-eight invitations, I received sixteen completed interviews. Eleven interviews were completed via e-mail and five interviews were completed via Skype. I asked participants the following questions:

1. Why did you take this photograph?
2. Why did you choose to share it publically via social media?
3. What about this object made you want to take a photograph of it?
4. How has your understanding of this object changed through the process of taking the photograph?
5. How has your understanding of this object changed as a result of sharing this photograph via social media?

What follows is a brief discussion of the interview responses from five participants.
Why did you take this photograph?

All five of the participants answered the first question in a similar fashion making statements that indicated the initial motivation for engaging in photography in art museums is one of personal meaning making. For instance, James (2014) replied:

I took photographs of the works by Koishumi Kishio because I found the colors in them attractive and the technique involved sophisticated. The result of the print on the woodblock looked beautiful to me, and the deep colors used by Kozui caught my attention almost immediately.

James responds to particular visual qualities in works of art by taking photographs. More than 50% of his Instagram account photographs are of works of art – some are works in art museums, some are from galleries, and some are public works of art. A continuous thread throughout James’ photographs is his own aesthetic preference for primarily two-dimensional works of art exhibiting strong use of color, line, or pattern.

Similarly, Paul (2014) replied to the first question by stating:

Normally I try to make pictures of paintings that I love much. So, especially from the paintings I appreciate much, I make paintings and also I love to make details of them… Many times, especially if the painting is large, there are several details that ah could ah build a small composition on its own. And you could pay more attention to that, if you make a photograph of the details.

Paul has even more specific preferences for the kinds of works of art he chooses to photograph in museums. The art photographs on his Twitter account are almost entirely oil paintings, although a few photographs (roughly 20%) depict architectural details of
the insides and outsides of museums as well as a few photographs of people in museums, regional festivals, and regional landmarks. Paul does not fit the stereotype of a tourist who takes photographs of works of art in a haphazard or random fashion – rather he has a very narrow aesthetic preference for works of art he chooses to photograph and he is extremely precise in his photographic process. None of the photographs he posts to social media are out of focus or tilted. He takes great care to photograph all works of art from a direct angle and he often includes carefully selected close-up photographs to compliment photographs of whole paintings.

Taya (2014) was less specific in her reply: “I took this photograph because it made me laugh, firstly, and I also wanted to show people on Twitter art events happening in Singapore.” Even though Taya’s reply is not very detailed, she touches on two important motivations for taking her photograph: she experienced an emotional reaction as a result of viewing the work of art and she felt a desire to share an art event in Singapore with a wider audience.

Sam’s (2014) reply was brief yet conveyed a similar motivation of personal meaning making, “I took this photograph because Chihuly’s glass sculptures are so vivid and dynamic. They are just beautiful!” Sam, like James, is motivated to photograph works that fit his definition of beauty. Sam chooses to describe Chihuly’s work as vivid and dynamic: terms that help define what constitutes Sam’s notions of beauty. Through this process of reflecting on his photographic choices he is able to also share some of his own aesthetic preferences.

Donna’s reply did not reveal specific aesthetic preferences, on the other hand. She is not initially interested in talking about the work of art or the museum where the work is
displayed. Instead, Donna (2014) answered the first question briefly stating, “This photo is part of an ongoing series of me cartwheeling at a variety of locations.” Without additional context, Donna would seem to fit the general stereotype of a tourist who takes photographs in the proximity of a work of art without any particular regard for the work of art. Donna’s photograph could be classified as a selfie or “an image of oneself taken using a digital camera especially for posting on social networks” (Merriam-Webster, 2015) however given the brevity of her initial response, it is difficult to fully understand the context, motivation, and meaning of her photograph without further information.

**Why did you choose to share it publically via social media?**

The answers for the second question varied greatly in length and content. James’ response was clear and direct:

I run my own social media profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr as part of what I do as an art journalist. The purpose of having each channel is to present art that I feel is meaningful or important. Any photographs I post to any of these channels have to fit those requirements. So, in this case, I posted the picture because I felt this was an important exhibition of work that was personally meaningful.

James’ art journalism is predominantly constituted by visual images. Unlike previous generations of self-defined art journalists that felt compelled to write descriptive accounts of exhibitions or art events, the bulk of James’ journalistic efforts are photographic. His use of text is extremely minimal – often restricted to hashtags alone. James prefers to
concentrate on using social media to share his photographs with the information about the artists, exhibitions, locations, and other key information about his photographs as searchable metadata.

Paul’s response was much longer and complex. He stated,

I think there are several reasons. I started with Twitter one and a half years ago. Before that time I also visited museums and, if possible, I took pictures. But that is something that is going on not for so long that is allowed to take pictures. And I was also reading my art books. I also collect books about art, but ah, I was a little bit like a hermit. So I was doing it in my home, reading the books and visiting the expositions but normally talking with nobody about it. But it’s a greater pleasure if you can share it with other people, and especially for me it’s also nice to share it with museum people. Normally, you see the results of the work. You see the exhibition, but the curator; normally you don’t see him or her. Maybe you have the opportunity that he or she gives a lecture and you can attend this lecture but normally…that…that’s it. But with social media, and with museum people on social media, it is possible, to get, sometimes, discussions about paintings, about museums, and what you see and what is your experience. So that’s much nicer.

Paul has a very specific audience in mind for his tweets and he focuses his interest and efforts toward generating conversation with professionals who work in museums or with art objects as a means to gain more information about works of art he enjoys. Paul has learned to utilize social media, and in particular Twitter, as an avenue to gain access to information about works of art he did not have prior to using social media as a learning tool.
Taya responded to the second question by reiterating her motivation for taking the photograph stating:

I have a strong desire to show people on Twitter what kind of cultural events are available in Singapore. I am a music lover, a musician, and I love all the arts. My Twitter feed is set up so that I can share my loves with others in the form of pictures and writing and to re-tweet things that relate to my loves.

Similar to Paul, Taya has a very specific idea of how she can use Twitter for educational purposes. Unlike Paul, however, she is more interested in taking a primary role as an educator rather than as a learner. Many of her tweets, including the ones that showcase arts in Singapore, take an informative tone and several of them include hyperlinks to related web content so that people reading her tweets can learn more about the information she shares.

Sam’s response to the second question reflects his interest in sharing his photograph for two reasons and, perhaps two distinct audiences:

Ok, well my answer has two parts. The main reason I posted the photo to social media was to show people that haven't seen his work examples of what Chihuly’s work looks like. I also travel a lot for business. When I’m traveling, I try to post a lot of good quality photographs to document my travels and what I've seen so my friends and family who don’t travel can share some of the things I encounter while I’m away from home.

Sam’s response indicates an interest in informing or teaching people in his Facebook network about the work of an artist, in this case Chihuly, that he feels is important to see. Additionally, he makes an effort to document his travel in an attempt to inform friends
and family about his encounters. These two purposes are not mutually exclusive nor are they bound. Sam may seek to teach some of his network about works of art while seeking to keep others informed of his travels. Sam acknowledges this dual purpose in sharing the photograph.

Donna’s response to the second question relates to a larger project for her photography within the context of sharing photographs on Facebook:

I shared this photo because it fit well within the photo series I have been working on. I take photos of my friends cartwheeling in front of artworks and they take pictures of me doing the same. I also shared the photo on Facebook because it documented a fun road trip with friends.

Donna and her friends have shared photo albums on Facebook that consist entirely of photographs they have each taken of each other doing cartwheels in galleries, museums, in front of indoor and outdoor art installations, and in front of notable scenic locations such as Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, New Mexico. Donna and Sam, both Facebook users, both relate a desire to engage on a more personal social level with members of their social network when they post photographs to Facebook. This interest in posting photographs to Facebook reflects recent research stating that 54% of women and 39% of men cite seeing photographs and video posted by friends as the number one reason they like using Facebook (Aaron Smith, Pew Research, 2014).
What about this object made you want to take a photograph of it?

The answers to the third question ranged from practical to whimsical. James’ reply points toward both personal and professional goals. In his reply he stated:

I shared each of the photographs, firstly, because I consider myself to be an art journalist. The purpose of having an Instagram and Tumblr account is to present art that I, personally, find beautiful and/or meaningful. I always look for either aesthetic pleasure or social commentary in art. When I see something that fulfills either of these qualities, I enjoy taking photos of it and publishing my photos on social media. I take joy in sharing what makes me joyful.

James’ description of his process of sharing photographs via social media as sharing what makes him joyful is important to note. While James self-identifies as an art journalist, his primary interest in art journalism is less about showcasing specific events or institutions and more about sharing his own personal preferences for particular works of art that evoke an emotional response. James is motivated to photograph and share works of art that encourage an emotional connection with other users of his social networks rather than promoting institutional or event marketing or education goals.

Somewhat similarly, Paul is motivated to photograph very specific kinds of artworks based on personal taste. He stated:

I love especially the Scandinavian painters from the time 1850-1920. And that means that I do not only love special paintings but also special museums. So often, when I read about an exhibition in that museum I will try to take some holidays and travel to this museum. This painting takes place on the beach of
Skagen. Skagen is in the north of Denmark. There was an artist colony, and the exhibition, well these paintings represented was from one painter, so a solo exhibition: Laurits Tuxen and it’s interesting to see that the most Skagen painters were presenting also bathing scenes but normally you would see only boys in nude bathing. And here we have a painting, a portrait of girls naked, or almost naked, and in a very natural way. So this was something new for me. And I did read in the catalog, and in the catalog there was a chapter about vitalism. So at the time of the, ah, I think in German it’s called the reform movement so a nature movement, healthy and sun, and fresh air - nudity is very normal. It seems also in these paintings from Tuxen that it is also very normal for him to paint it. There are many paintings from Skagen painters from ten or twenty years before and you see only boys. So you see here a shift. That was also a reason. But I think the most, ah, the first reason is always a sort of emotion, it’s intuition.

Paul is very knowledgeable about the works of art he carefully selects to photograph and share via social media. His photographs have a particularly didactic quality about them as well. They are very carefully composed images that often emphasize details Paul feels are important to notice and understand. His photographs on Twitter often feature close-up detail photographs that feature a particular painter’s ability to capture qualities of light and shadow adeptly. This interest in light and shadow is not something Paul discusses explicitly in his interview, but it may be a part of the intuition or emotion that he refers to as his motivation for photographing works of art.
Taya’s response to the third question emphasized both her initial personal connection to the work of art she photographed as well as a deeper connection with the work that was a result of her learning more about the artist. She said:

I took this photo for a number of reasons. Of course I want to share the visual art I see while I’m here in Singapore, but this exhibition was a surprise to me. My family is originally from Indonesia. There is a long-standing cultural practice among women to modify their hair in many …um… labor-intensive ways. The goal of all this modification is to achieve hair that looks Western. While I was in the museum I found out the artist who created this sculpture is an Indonesian artist. I already liked the work because it reminded me of how I look when I wake up in the morning but…um… I think liked the work even more when I realized that the artist was poking fun at the hair traditions of Indonesian women who work so hard to make their hair look Western.

Taya’s response is consistent with the content she regularly posts on Twitter. Many of the images and links Taya posts operate on multiple levels – they can be understood for their face value but are often times humorous or culturally encoded with multiple meanings. This photograph is an excellent example of this kind of duality: the photograph is visually intriguing and Taya’s caption is humorous to a wide Western audience familiar with any of the many adaptations of American cartoonist Charles Addams’ “The Addams Family”, originally a single panel cartoon published in the New Yorker in the late 1930’s. Simultaneously, this photograph and caption are intended to spark interest in art events in Singapore as well as making a cultural connection to other Indonesian Twitter users.
Taya is not the only participant posting photographs to social media for multiple purposes, however.

Sam responded to the third question stating: “I was compelled to take this photograph because of the colors, the workmanship, the beauty of this artwork. I knew it would be a photograph people would enjoy seeing on Facebook and the light in the room was perfect.” Sam conveys an interest in creating photographs of works of art that serve the functions of creating enjoyment for others and conveying his own appreciation for the craftsmanship and appearance of the work of art. This dual-purpose approach to which artworks Sam chooses to take photographs of in art exhibitions is consistent with other photographs visible on his Facebook profile. Sam’s photographs of works of art are consistently well lit, carefully composed photographs that showcase entire works of art. He shares very few photographs from any given art exhibition and tends to share photographs of works that are particularly eye-catching or well known.

Donna’s photograph is the result of a collaborative effort. She said in response to the third question:

As I mentioned before, this photo is part of an ongoing series of me cartwheeling at a variety of locations. Even though I did not make the photograph I did stage it and direct it. I picked this work because I like the diagonal lines of the work and the colors and there was room to cartwheel and no one was looking. The photo is a more of a documentation of a happy occasion of being on vacation with friends. Donna’s response to the question also reveals her interest in capturing the encounter she had with the work in a social context rather than simply an effort to document the artwork alone. While Donna does not elaborate much about the work of art itself, it is clear that
she made a thoughtful choice to take this photograph in front of the Flavin work because she liked particular visual characteristics of the work as well as the space in which the work is exhibited. While it might be easy to dismiss Donna’s cartwheeling series at first glance as a lack of engagement with the works of art she is in proximity with while cartwheeling, a close analysis of her interview responses juxtaposed with the analysis of her photographs reveals a carefully executed effort to create photographs that both highlight artworks Donna likes as well as conveying a carefree mood. Capably depicting the artworks in clear photographs as well as capturing a person cartwheeling in front of the artworks is anything but unengaged.

**How has your understanding of this object changed through the process of taking the photograph?**

Answers to the fourth question had the widest variation in detail and length of response of all the interview questions. James provided a detailed reflection on how the process of photography had influenced his understanding:

I took photographs that varied in the distance between myself and the object. I took some photographs that contained the complete object and others that contained just a detail of the object. I took the full-object photographs for my own keeping, and to appreciate the whole work of art. The details were taken for Instagram, which allows for only a square orientation for a photograph. Instagram is the main feed for my Facebook page and Tumblr feed. Thus, most of my viewers will see photographs of mine that are in a squared format. Thus, for a work of art that has a rectangular shape, I usually have no choice but to
photograph the object either up-close - with only a detail of it captured - or with ‘white space’ above and below it (which I tend to avoid). Photographing a detail of an object, however, helps me focus a little more on the detail in an object and the effort put into this detail. For example, when I photographed at The Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan, I took a close-up of one of the stained glass windows exhibited. The window was very tall. I might have been able to take a photograph of the whole thing, but room space would have probably made it difficult. Even if it was do-able, I would have decided on this close-up anyways, especially for Instagram. The close-up included the most interesting part of the window, in my opinion. It was a symbol, the colors of which looked aesthetically pleasing against the cream-colored rest of the glass. One thing I am disappointed about as a result of taking the photos of Kishio’s works is the glare and reflection visible in them. In some of the photographs, you can see my reflection on the glass of the artworks’ frames. I wish the glare and reflection wouldn’t appear, but that was out of my control, in a sense. I noticed this more when I left the museum, and saw the photographic results. Nevertheless, I wanted to put up these images, because they were the only proof I had of seeing these works in person - which is a very important thing for me, as an art journalist. I want both to put up works of art that I love and to show that I am visiting works of art in person. I like to educate myself, and I love to show others how I educate myself by visiting these works of art. Hopefully, it will inspire others to do the same!
James’ response is useful to broadening the notion of how he defines what constitutes art journalism as well as broadening the general understanding of how some people who photograph works of art and share them to social media learn through the process of taking the photographs. James has a clear sense that he must negotiate many different variables each time he chooses to photograph a work of art. He is careful in his decision making process to consider the outcome of the photograph within the context of providing a visually engaging photograph as well as a form of proof of his engagement with the work of art. This notion of proof in visual form diverges from the use of textual descriptions of works of art traditionally utilized in art journalism. The primacy of images as a form of journalism is consistent with Lawrence Lessig’s (2008) argument that contemporary Western society is undergoing a shift from “read-only” culture (in which a passive viewer looks at a work of art) to “read-write” culture (in which the viewer actively participates in a recreation of it). Lessig argues, and James’ photojournalism supports, the first step toward recreating a work of art, for most people, is to photograph it.

Paul recognized the tension that photography can cause him while simultaneously serving as mediating process for new kinds of looking at works of art. He responded to the fourth question by stating:

I think that’s one thing: I pay more attention for the details. There is one disadvantage. Because it costs time, and normally if you are on holidays, or on a journey, you have not whole day to spend in the museum. You also miss some paintings. So there are times that I say to myself, well, next time I should not take pictures but just look and then I will see more paintings. But, there are both sides.
Paul’s response indicates a different kind of examination of a work of art occurs when he photographs works of art. This attention to the details in the paintings he photographs comes at a cost. Paul is aware that deeper engagement with the works of art he chooses to photograph depletes the total amount of time he can spend looking at works of art during a given visit. The social expectation of viewing many works of art in a museum while on holiday must be compromised in order for Paul to encounter works of art using his detail-oriented photographic process.

Taya’s response indicates she feels that a photograph can create avenues for extending the learning experience beyond the exhibition space. Taya replied to the fourth question by reflecting on her photograph and stating:

Well, as I look at it now, I am thinking about how I took the photo because of the connection I had with the humorous appearance of it. After I took the photograph, I read about the sculpture on the card in the museum. I had this curiosity about the sculpture and I felt a connection to it beyond its ability to amuse me. When I got home, I kept …um…looking at that photo and I liked it more and more. I decided to do some more research on the artist. I ended up posting the picture with a funny caption because…um… I was hoping other people would see the photo on my Twitter and have the same curiosity about the artwork that I did.

Through the process of photographing the sculpture, Taya had the realization that she wanted to know more about the work of art. As a result of this curiosity aroused through her photographic process, she extended her learning about the work. Taya’s chose to
share the photograph on social media in hopes of generating a similar curiosity about the work are a result of the learning process facilitated by her photography.

In his process of recalling the photographs he created of Chihuly’s work, Sam replied to the fourth question by stating:

This process made me realize the tremendous amount of time and skill that it takes to make just one component of these sculptures. I mean, by thinking of how I wanted to frame the photograph and looking closer at the work really made me realize so much more about these sculptures than I would have if I had just been casually walking around with my friends. So, I guess it helped me spend more time thinking about Chihuly’s work.

Sam’s response to the fourth question is intriguing because the response indicates Sam sees an analogous process between Chihuly’s sculpting and his own photographic process. Sam talks about his effort to frame the photograph and look closely at Chihuly’s work as an artistic process that gave him new insight into the time and skill necessary for the creation of Chihuly’s work. Sam’s response gestures toward an arts-based learning process that does not rely on institutional didactics; rather, it is a process of personal exploration, study, reflection, and creative production.

The realization that digital photography has the ability to enable a different kind of understanding about works of art is also evident in Donna’s reply to the fourth question. Donna responded:

Now that I have the photo I find it easier to recall the subtle changes of color as we moved through the exhibition and how the colors of light blended together. I know you see those things in the exhibition when you’re there, but I think you
don’t notice them because you are moving through the space. So, in that sense the photo helped me see things I couldn’t see otherwise.

While some of Donna’s previous responses were brief, this response reflects her realization that the photographic process has enabled her to have a new encounter with the work of art that she was either not acutely aware of at the time of her visit or was unable to see. Donna’s appreciation for the work of art was changed as a result of her process of setting up the photograph and creating the scene. Her collaborative photograph depicts her original intent to cartwheel through the space while also revealing details about the work of art of which she had been previously unaware. Donna’s reflection about this photograph indicates that the photograph itself has the potential to provide an educational encounter that is distinct from the artwork it depicts.

**How has your understanding of this object changed as a result of sharing this photograph via social media?**

The participant responses to the fifth question were also widely varied. In reflecting on the fifth question, James related:

My perspective on the object doesn’t really change when I share it to social media, but my perspective on the legacy of the object slightly changes. Through social media, an object’s image has the potential of having an elongated legacy. I guess I can also say that my own preferences and understanding of an object and its aesthetics further influences my viewers, or has the possibility to influence them. I am more than eager to take on this responsibility as an art journalist.
James’ response to the fifth question is a curious one considering the common mission statement of many art museums to collect works of art and preserve them. James’ notion of what constitutes the object’s legacy is in direct opposition to this traditional view of the museum as a place that provides an official history and legacy for an object. James’ response to this question is worth further consideration, however, in light of the many cases of theft and destruction of cultural objects and heritage sites. While the notion of a digital photograph having the ability to outlive the physical object may initially seem preposterous, there are a few arguments that support James’ notion of the digital photograph’s legacy extending beyond the physical object’s legacy. The digital photograph can be re-posted, copied, downloaded, saved to magnetic hard drives or optical storage discs and replicated exponentially – one such example of this digital photograph’s legacy exists within this chapter. Conversely, a natural or man-made disaster could strike the museum where Koishumi Kishio’s original prints are housed and they could cease to physically exist. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that James’ understands his work as a journalist has the potential to influence other people’s tastes and aesthetic preferences. James’ journalistic efforts may not carry the social gravity of professional art journalists, but the broad net that his digital art journalism casts has a similar potential for exponential reproduction similar to how he discusses the potential for extending the art object’s legacy through sharing his digital photograph. A key point to note in James’ argument regarding legacy is he makes no distinction between the original work of art and the digital photograph. This is also contrary to some conventionally accepted notions of a work of art and its reproduction being two distinct things from each other.
Paul expressed a sense of curiosity about how people interact with photographs he posts to Twitter. He replied to the fifth question by stating:

Normally, I do not get a lot of response. I’m always a little bit interested: will somebody re-tweet this or not? There was one tweet that was thirteen times re-tweeted. It was a little bit surprising for me, too. It was a tweet when I said: you have one week to see this, afterwards it will go to that museum. And this tweet, you can say was valuable for more or less one week, was also re-tweeted seven or eight weeks later… So probably I think it has to do with the pictures… that was a little bit amazing if some tweets are re-tweeted and direct discussions over a painting are exceptions. So, I can’t often say that my understanding of the object always changes but there is always a chance.

Paul’s response indicates his expectations for learning more about a work of art through social media are not always met. He is also secondarily interested in the circulation of his tweets but he does not seem to see the circulation of his tweets as particularly valuable to his own learning experience about the object he has photographed.

Somewhat similar to Paul, Taya expressed some disappointment with her experience of posting the sculpture photograph to social media in her response to the fifth question:

I always get hopeful that my photos will get re-tweeted or that they will start a conversation. I really didn’t get the chance to talk to anyone about why this artwork was important to me or what it references. I think my caption for this image was too humorous and it prevented me from having any conversations about the artwork. I was really happy to finally have the chance to remember the
artwork and tell someone about it when you contacted me. It has been a while since I posted the image and I just thought it would be lost in my Twitter feed but you found it and I had a chance to teach someone about my family’s culture.

Taya’s excitement in having the opportunity to discuss the work of art she photographed with me bears resemblance to Paul’s specific goal of generating conversations about works of art on Twitter. It is interesting to note that both participants who choose to use Twitter as the primary social media platform have narrower expectations for the kinds of interactions their photographs will elicit. This may explain why these two participants are the only ones to express feelings of unmet expectations as they reflect on how their understanding of the object is changed by sharing their photographs to social media.

Sam’s response regarding how his understanding of the work has changed as a result of sharing his photograph on Facebook reflects several realizations:

I realized after I posted the photo to Facebook that I have piqued the interest of several friends to go and visit this museum and experience it for themselves. My own appreciation for the artwork has changed as I think about how the photos I took can encourage my friends to get out and experience art. I also feel like as I notice which photos from my travels get people the most interested, it makes me think more about what I photographed and what about the photo got people interested, too.

Sam recognized that sharing images of his visit to the Chihuly exhibition could influence his friends and family on social media. This, in turn, changed the way he understands his photography as a tool to guide or influence others. This reinforces the notion that Sam is
interested in using social media as a teaching tool primarily and as a learning tool secondarily.

Donna made a point to emphasize in the interview that the learning impact of sharing her image to social media was not limited to the social media platform. She said:

I had some comments on my Facebook but they didn’t really change how I understood Dan Flavin’s work. The photo did get others who have been to the institute to share their experiences with me in conversations later on, though. I think I learned to like Dan Flavin’s work more as a result of the conversations about my photo than I did while I was there and it has allowed me to see new friends in a different context.

Donna’s response brings to light an important consideration that is not apparent in the other participants’ responses. As a result of sharing her photograph to Facebook, Donna was able to generate face-to-face conversations about the artist Dan Flavin that resulted in new learning and appreciation for the artist. This response is particularly valuable in considering the potential for incorporating digital photography social media sharing into formal curricula in museum and classroom settings as a way to facilitate both online and face-to-face dialogue. This is but one potential implication of the findings that emerge from the analysis of the data in this study. Additional implications emerge through the analysis of the follow-up interviews in the next section.
Follow-Up Interviews

In addition to the sixteen initial interviews I conducted two follow-up interviews with willing participants Paul and Taya. Paul and Taya were the only two participants of the remaining sixteen who wanted to be interviewed as follow-up. These follow-up interviews were unstructured. Both of these interviews were conducted via Skype and provided the participants with the opportunity to guide the direction of the conversation and emphasize their continually developing thinking on the photographs that they had discussed in the prior interviews as well as other photographs, related themes or ideas that emerged subsequent to our initial conversations. I analyzed this data in comparison with the initial interview data. The resulting comparison revealed participants’ efforts to approach the analysis of their prior photographs shared on social media with more detail as well as an effort to create new photographs with purposeful intent to be shared on social media. For example, I have provided a selection of these new images, created by participant Paul, which can be reviewed in Appendix A.

Both participants related their interest in making a greater effort to generate more conversations about photographs they shared on social media. For example, Paul joined an additional social network, HintMe. HintMe is a mobile application built using Twitter’s application programming interface (API) designed for art interpretation and engagement to be used by many European museum partners. Paul stated he finds HintMe provides him with the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with curators about Danish works of art he enjoys. He followed this by reiterating a point he made in our prior conversation: he felt such intimate conversations with museum professionals would
be impossible for him to have in a face-to-face setting for at least three reasons: curators are often physically separated from the public in a museum setting as they are rarely in the galleries, social customs dictate that when the general public is with the curator it is generally in a formal context such as a lecture, and finally, Paul describes himself as a socially private person so he would not approach a curator to ask questions in a face-to-face setting. He feels he would not be able to gain access to answers to specific questions about works of without the benefit of social media as a technological arbitrator to museum professionals. Taya’s efforts to generate more conversations about photographs she shares on social media include a greater attention to the content of her Twitter captions. She related that the process of discussing her photograph and reflecting on her expectations for interest versus the resulting lack of interaction have helped her realize that she can include a little more factual information about photographs she posts and include more searchable hashtags and she is already finding that she is generating some replies to her tweets, more re-tweets, and more of her posts are favorited by her network. Taya also speculated that as a result of her efforts to revise her captioning strategy for her tweets she has gained more followers on Twitter. She said that since our initial conversation she has gained sixteen new followers. Taya said she could not be certain that her new followers are a direct result of her strategy change, but she is happy to have them either way.

Both Paul and Taya made a point in their interviews to emphasize the importance of their sense of belonging to an online community that served needs that could not be met in their current face-to-face communities. For example, Taya was very clear about how her engagement with Twitter provided her with a way to share her multicultural
experience of being a woman of Indonesian ancestry from the United States living in
Singapore studying classical violin from a world-renowned Chinese violinist while
working for a multinational technology company. She uses Twitter as a way to share the
arts and culture of every location she lives and she said she feels passionately that Twitter
is a community that embraces non-Western visual art and music in a way that generates
both discourse and discord – both of which she feels are vital to societies. In Paul’s case,
he reiterated that he is a very private person in his daily life. He is an IT specialist and he
and his wife take holidays together often as they both near retirement. Paul and his wife
had previously been content to visit cultural events, heritage sites, and museums together
without interacting with other people at these sites. As Paul’s curiosity about certain
Danish paintings increased, he began collecting exhibition catalogues and other books to
try to learn more about the works. He found this kind of learning did not answer all his
questions but he was not comfortable e-mailing or speaking to museum professionals in
person. On the advice of a colleague, he joined Twitter less than two years ago and
discovered very quickly that he could find museum professionals on Twitter and ask
them questions related to artworks in current exhibitions that generated the kinds of
learning about his favorite works of art he could not attain through other means.

These two follow up interviews were particularly revealing of the importance of a
broad definition of community. Such broader definitions of community can be found in
the work of philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy’s (2000) “Being Singular Plural”. In this
writing, Nancy argues against a binary arrangement of individual versus community. In
“Being Singular Plural”, beings navigate the existence of singular plurality as well as
plural singularity in ontological ways, for example in ways that shape how we might
think about the condition of existence (including what we experience in the social world). But this co-existence does not infer a collective of singulars in some unified society or common-being community. Rather, being singular plural hypothesizes connection as opposed to sameness; a togetherness “insofar as it spaces them [that is the togetherness spaces the plurality of singulars]; they are ‘linked’ . . . [but] they are not unified” (Nancy 2000, p. 33). Therefore, while with gestures to the possibility of connection and between, as conceptualized by Nancy (2000, p. 5), these are complex notions in that they expose, as well as bridge, the distances, differences and spaces separating singular (plural) selves. For Nancy, the importance of connection and between exists in a conception of community as a connection of beings-in-common that distances at the very moment that it appears to bind. Within the context of Nancy’s conception of community it is important to acknowledge that each of the sixteen participants becomes part of many communities throughout the ongoing process of learning. Paul, for example, became a member of Twitter and has been involved in museum-initiated projects on Instagram as well as using the mobile application HintMe yet his experience in and through these communities is singular and non-binding. Paul can, and often does, move between digital and physical spaces and through communities at will. These communities are “linked” as Nancy would say, by shared common interests in encountering works of art yet the resulting encounters are not, as Nancy would describe, “unified” The multitudes of communities that participants belong to are not, therefore, static. Even the physical settings of the museums are not static as exhibitions change and the encounters a person has within the gallery differ from moment to moment and are influenced by other people within those same spaces. For instance, as participants in this study modify their social media profiles, add
or delete accounts, or make connections the participant’s community of shared common interests is no longer representative of the same set of shared common interests yet it is a group of beings-in-common in an non-binding arrangement. Participants’ engagements with these communities have reciprocal impacts on the communities and the participants – such as in the case of Taya’s Twitter microblogging. While she pursues a personal mission to share culture and develop a group of interested people willing to participate in conversations, in turn she is affected by the resulting conversations, Twitter users at large, and Twitter’s interface and functions. Additionally, in the absence of location-specific and time-specific limitations, such communities facilitate kinds of interactions not possible in communities formed based on physical proximity or daily schedules.

It is interesting to note that while all sixteen participants who completed the initial interviews were invited to participate in follow-up interviews, the only participants who chose to participate in these interviews were both participants who use Twitter as their primary social media platform. Additionally, both participants are currently living outside the US. In both follow up interviews, each participant made a point of articulating their idea that social media platforms are tools they use in very specific ways. As Paul noted:

Social media is, many times…ah…a kind of tool for each user. Normally, I could not have the variety of interaction with people that I have when I use social media. But, I think for many people it allows for needs to be met in new ways. Social media is a support for many different users with many different needs. Some users will use this to learn things they could not before.

Paul illustrated this point by describing ten different tweets that he has shared on Twitter from November 2013 through December 2014 that each allowed him to gain new
knowledge about a work of art he had photographed or provided new information to another Twitter user about a work of art he had photographed. Paul’s awareness of the multitude of kinds of social media users, user needs, and how those needs are met or unmet by various social media platforms is crucial not only to how people can now describe and analyze digital photographs of art and artifacts taken in art museums, but how people describe and analyze an ongoing learning process social media users can experience through ongoing encounters with the social media milieu.

These ongoing encounters within the social media milieu can be understood broadly as forms of curricula. As I discussed in a previous chapter, while some museum education authors have pushed notions of curriculum in influential ways (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011; Castle, 2006; Vallance, 2003, 2004) descriptions of curriculum within the context of the museum sometimes still rely on a triad of human actor, museum, and art object. These descriptions of curriculum neglect to include significant examinations of elements external to the triad. Several elements external to the triad are mobile phones, social media platforms, and social media users who have not visited the physical museum yet interact with digital photographs of art objects. The omission of these external elements in the discussion of museum curricula is problematic. Alternatively, museums still focused on object-centered curriculum should consider the actions and language of people encountering art objects with and through digital photography shared via social media as indications of multiple curricula in operation. These curricula include the person, the museum, and the art object but they also include the unique time-based encounters, desires of each person, and unpredictable variables within the museum as they choose to photograph a work. Additionally, these curricula should consider the
desired outcomes each person has for sharing these photographs via social media –
keeping in mind, as Paul stated, “Social media is a support for many different users with
many different needs” (Paul, 2014). Art museums have been reticent in the past to
relinquish the notion of curriculum as an exhibition plan, a set of didactic materials, or an
educational program. Embracing the learning that occurs within social media
communities yet outside the official purview of museum-sanctioned learning as part of
what constitutes museum curricula will provide museums with a richer, more meaningful
way to engage and understand both the people who learn through the process of taking
digital photographs of art objects and sharing them on social media platforms but also the
people who interact with these photographs via social media who do not directly engage
with art objects in the museum.

My analysis of the data I collected in this study emphasize the importance of
sharing digital photographs taken in museums via social media for the participants
involved and how the process provides these photographers and other users of the social
media platforms opportunities to learn more about works in a collection in a number of
ways. Additionally, art museums whose works were photographed and shared by these
participants have the potential to learn more about how some people are engaging with
their collections in ways that are not possible to easily study within their physical
museum settings. It can be useful for the art museums whose works were photographed
and were subsequently the subjects of study in this research as well as other art museums
not represented in this study to consider the importance of the photographer’s original
intent for taking the photograph and the results of sharing the photograph via social
media becomes open to public interpretation through the sharing process. This publicly
negotiated interpretive process that has no time-sensitive end point, as in the case of a
discussion in a gallery, provides an opportunity for both the photographer and the public
to continually negotiate meanings. Such ongoing negotiations of meanings and the
potential for exponential linking, sharing, and reproductions of both the digital
photographs and the subsequent discussions could provide museums with a wealth of
new insights regarding contemporary non-expert understandings of their collections,
exhibitions, and programs.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a guide for the reader to understand the role of
description as a form of criticism and the relationship of criticism to the methodological
foundation of visual ethnography utilized for the analysis of data within this study.
Additionally, the chapter has outlined the rationale for the methods employed for analysis
and has defined the key guiding questions guiding the analysis of photographic data as
well as essential terminology related to these questions and terminology endemic to
social media platforms. Following the definition of terminology, the aforementioned
analysis method was applied to five photographs and the resulting analysis was shared in
detail. The data provided by this process was enriched by the analysis of five semi-
structured interviews with the research participants who provided the photographs. Prior
to the analysis of these interviews, the five interview questions were stated and each
interview question was utilized as a sub-section for the purpose of clarity for the reader in
reviewing the interview analysis process. Finally, the chapter shared the data arising from
two unstructured follow-up interviews conducted with willing participants. These follow-up interviews provided additional data that was valuable to supporting several findings resulting from this study.

Through the process of analysis of the photographic and interview data generously provided by the study participants, several crucial analysis points became evident. The first of these analysis points is the results of participants sharing digital photographs via social media provide participants multiple opportunities for learning. The learning opportunities included the process of photographing the work of art and the choices involved in choosing the work, framing the composition, and other related decisions involved in taking a digital photograph. Likewise participants had the opportunity to learn through their decisions to share the resulting digital photographs to social media. Participants’ choices of social media platforms utilized to share the photographs, which photographs to share, if and how to caption the photograph, and if and how to utilize hashtags for increased visibility to other social media users through the use of hashtag searches all provided participants avenues for learning. The process of sharing digital photographs via social media also facilitated opportunities for participants to learn about the art objects in ways that they had not previously experienced in physical museum settings. Similarly, the process of reflecting on their choices to share digital photographs via social media helped participants reflect on their own desired outcomes for how people would engage with their digital photographs. Some participants sought to fill a role of educator or cultural guide while other users sought to fill a role as a learner while other participants adopted a blended role of both educator and learner.
The second analysis point resulting from participants sharing digital photographs via social media provides new insights into understanding how we can describe communities and, in particular, learning communities. These new descriptions for communities include groups of people linked by shared common interests in encountering works of art yet the resulting encounters are not unifying. Analysis of the participants’ interview data suggests communities that participants belong to are not static. Both digital communities and physical settings of the museums remain in flux as exhibitions change and the encounters a person has within the gallery differ from moment to moment and are influenced by other people within those same spaces and likewise participants modify their social media profiles, add or delete accounts, or make new social connections. In this sense the participant’s community of shared common interests is no longer representative of the same set of shared common interests yet it is a group of beings-in-common in a non-binding arrangement. Participants’ engagements with these communities have reciprocal impacts on the communities and the participants through the fluid and non-culminating nature of the interactions that take place in these communities.

A third point arising from the analysis of the semi-structured and unstructured interviews is a broadening of the notion of curricula. As previously described such curricula understood within the context of this study include several human and non-human actors such as: people, museums, and art objects as well as time-based encounters with other people and physical space, the desires and motivations of each person, and unpredictable variables within the museum as they choose to photograph a work. Such curricula include the desired outcomes each person has for sharing these photographs via social media. Embracing learning that occurs within social media communities yet
outside the official purview of traditional written curricula will provide art educators working in many educational settings more meaningful way to engage and understand both the people who learn through the process of taking digital photographs of art objects and sharing them on social media platforms but also the people who interact with these photographs via social media who do not directly engage with art objects in the museum.

Finally, a fourth point related to the third arising from data analysis that is not directly indicated by the photographs or the participant interview data but is suggested by the conclusions about both sets of data taken in concert is the potential implications of this study data to art museum exhibitions and programs. While participants did not speak directly to how they felt their process of photographing works of art and sharing them to social media are related to how they do or do not engage with specific aspects of an exhibition or an educational program, it is logical to conclude that museum professionals can attain different kinds of evaluative data from the analysis of photographs taken of objects in a given exhibition, museum event, or educational program. The resulting data could be incorporated into future exhibition planning, event planning, or the design or re-design of educational programs.

While these four points provide a brief glimpse into the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of the photographic and interview data included in this study, they are by no means comprehensive. In the following chapter I will explore the findings and implications for this research in greater detail. This detailed exploration of the findings and implications will be contextualized in a review of the guiding questions that provided the initial impetus for the study as well as the questions that emerged throughout the study as a result of my interactions with the participants and my
interactions within social media communities. Following this contextualization, I will guide the reader through several categories of implications for this research.
Chapter 5

Discussion

In the previous chapter, I shared an analysis of the digital photographs and subsequent interviews conducted with the research participants. In this chapter, I will revisit the questions that gave rise to this study and explore how the findings that have resulted from the analysis of the research data relate to these original guiding questions as well as giving rise to new questions. I will share my interpretations of these findings, providing three overarching categories in which the findings can be grouped. Following a discussion of these three categories, I will share the implications of this study for art education. These implications will lead the reader toward a section that considers the implications of this study for future research. Finally, I will summarize my understandings arising from this study and leave the reader with my final thoughts on the study for consideration.

Introduction

Many influencing forces inspired this investigation of the digital photographs of art and artifacts taken by adults in art museums and shared publicly to social media platforms. Initially, my professional experiences as a museum educator my curiosity about adults taking photographs of art within gallery settings and how this process might broaden notions of learning. While working in art museums I regularly observed people look at a work of art, raise their mobile phone, frame a composition, and take a photograph; sometimes many times over. This process led me to wonder what would
became of those photographs after each person left the museum. In an earlier incarnation of this research, I had planned to approach people within museum galleries who had just taken photographs in museums to question them about the fate of these images and their motivations for taking the photographs. As I began to research the methodological approaches applicable to such a study, I realized there were particular shortcomings to the process of interviewing participants within the gallery that I felt were important to avoid. Interviewing participants within the gallery privileges the institution rather than the participant. The next way I envisioned the data collection process was to interview participants after they had exited museums. I had a vague awareness that interviewing participants outside the museum rather than within the gallery space would produce a different rapport between the participants and me thus producing different, and I hoped, less biased data. As I contemplated an appropriate methodology for this study, I continued to try to understand the critical moment in the existence of a digital photograph of an art object that would yield useful data to research.

Photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson’s (1952) discussion of the “decisive moment” in photography had influenced my thinking. In the essay from his book “The Decisive Moment” (1952) Cartier-Bresson stated:

I believe that, through the act of living, the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us which can mold us, but which can also be affected by us. A balance must be established between these two worlds – the one inside us and the one outside us. As the result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one. And it is this world we must communicate.
Does the critical moment of the balance between these worlds within a photograph occur the moment the image is created? Was there a critical moment not only in its making but also in a digital photograph’s ability to shed light on the thinking process of its maker? Was the critical moment the point that the image was edited, shared, saved on a computer, texted to a friend? Was the critical moment a single moment…or many moments? This last question began to lead me toward several realizations regarding what I determined to be important to the study regarding the theories and methodology that provided the foundation for this study. I began to recognize the importance of multiplicities within this study: multiple moments within the life of a digital photograph; multiple moments of interaction between people, works of art, and gallery spaces; multiple moments of interaction between people and digital content in digital space. These multiplicities brought to light the notion of assemblage, as described by philosophers Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987):

An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines (p.8). These lines, or breaks in systems of control such as subverting the rules (officially or socially) regarding gallery photography, for example, were important to understanding the digital photography assemblage.

These multiple moments within the life of a digital photograph and multiple moments of interaction between people, works of art, and gallery spaces became more evident as I immersed myself in the digital space of social media. As I browsed the social
media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram on both my computer and my mobile phone I began to see complexities of multiple moments of interaction between people and digital photographs. I began to recognize the necessity of my research shifting away from a linear sequence of events wherein a person views a work of art, photographs the work of art, determines to share the photograph with others via social media, and interacts with viewers of the photograph via social media. The research was necessarily becoming achronological, acentered, and nonhierarchical. In many ways, this study became a process of mapping conversations, images, and interactions rather than a process of tracing a linear sequence of events.

Revisiting Questions

I entered the research process with a desire to remain open to the fluid nature of learning how the collection, description, analysis, and interpretation of data can shape and re-shape the questions a researcher seeks to answer. Prior to the realization that this study would be a process of mapping conversations, images, and interactions, the research process began with two guiding questions:

1. What roles do digital photographs play in the learning processes of visitors in art museums?

2. In what ways does digital photography by visitors render art museums permeable learning environments unrestricted by physical space and traditional methods of museum education?
These two questions, I acknowledged at the onset of the study, would lead to other questions.

The study did, to a large extent, answer these two questions. I will provide a detailed discussion of the answers to these two questions in a subsequent section of this writing entitled *Interpretations*. It is important to acknowledge prior to this discussion some of the questions that arose as a result of the data collection, description, analysis, and interpretation process. The new questions that arose as a result of collecting and interacting with the data provide a foundation for the *Directions for Future Research* section of this writing, explored in detail later. In an effort to build this foundation, I will introduce the questions that arose within a brief section entitled *Emergent Questions*. One of the earliest questions that arose as a result of the study related to the semantics used in the first question.

**Emergent Questions**

Specifically, a question arose regarding the use of the term “visitor” to refer to people taking photographs in art museums. In other words, is it important to note how people describe themselves while in museums or while interacting with others on social media? Both the photographs taken by people in museums and the language used by people in describing their photographs and interacting with others on social media was important to note in the data analysis process. The language the participants used to describe themselves was an indication of how participants identified themselves and their comfort level as they participated in the study. Only one of five participants uses the term
visiting or visitor to describe their encounter in the museum or their identity throughout the interview process. None of the participants use the term visitor in their photograph captions. This may not seem significant initially, but the pervasive use of the term visitor to describe people within museums who are not museum employees by professionals working in the field of museum visitor studies and museum education creates a distanced position between the museum evaluator and the participant. This is not how participants describe themselves, so the question regarding how participants describe themselves is a significant question to consider for future studies.

Additionally, while the first guiding research question asked what roles digital photographs played in the learning processes, this question did not account for other variables. What additional variables beyond the digital photographs were influential in the learning processes? Research participants described multiple influences as having an impact on their encounters with art in museums and the subsequent encounters with other people in sharing, discussing, and reflecting on their photographs via social media. Some of these influences were internal and personal, such as a desire to share business and vacation travel experiences with friends and family. Other influences were external, such as specific limitations or capabilities of each social media platform. These internal and external influences were also important to how each participant characterized their learning throughout the photographic and social sharing process.

The second guiding research question asked: in what ways does digital photography by visitors render art museums permeable learning environments unrestricted by physical space and traditional methods of museum education? While this question acknowledges digital photography may serve as a conceptual bridge between the
physical space wherein the photograph is created and the digital spaces it may potentially
inhabit, this is not purely the product of the digital photograph. Following data collection,
description, and interpretation it is clear that there are several variables that can render art
museums permeable learning environments such as traditional face-to-face conversations;
text and voice conversations carried out online; and video or photographic conversations
carried out online. These were all ways research participants indicated to have facilitated
a permeable learning environment. These findings suggest the question: which variables
provide adults the best learning permeability to extend learning beyond traditional art
museum space and education methods? Additionally, how can art educators determine
the best methods for utilizing these variables to facilitate permeable learning
environments?

These new questions provide a foundation for continued studies related to the
present research that will be explored further in a subsequent section. The initial guiding
questions, however, provided a structure that rendered several findings. The following
section is a brief review of these findings described as broad interpretations.

Interpretations

While no study can comprehensively understand a subject, there are numerous
findings that resulted from this study that relate to the two original guiding questions.
This study has revealed some of the roles digital photographs play in the learning
processes of people both in art museums and outside art museums. A discussion of these
roles is best begun by following the process utilized to collect, describe, analyze and
interpret the data of this study. This process began by searching three social media platforms for digital photographs taken by adults in museums. Fifty photographs were collected in this initial phase of the study. While the subject matter, focus, cropping, techniques, and image sized varied widely there were several indications of a very basic learning process at work in the photographic process. In several instances the initial photograph selected was not the only photograph posted to social media from a given museum or, in some cases, of a specific work or art. In many of these cases, subsequent images posted to a participant’s social media account reflects the photographer’s recognition of self-defined errors in the focus, cropping, or other technical aspects (see Appendix B for examples of photographs shared by participants that are defined as “poor” or “bad” photographs by participants) While I did not select any of these photographs to serve as the first image for analysis and as the interview anchor, some participants chose to discuss them during the interviews and in some cases sent these images later for my review. Participants’ discussion of these photographs often reflected their struggles or frustrations with the device used to photograph the work of art, the limitations of the social media platform in sharing the image, or physical restrictions affecting the outcome of their photographic attempts such as difficult navigating the gallery space or large numbers of people within the gallery obstructing the desired composition for a photograph. Several participants discussed the photographic process as a learning experience. Looking carefully at the results of their photographic efforts sometimes revealed outcomes that participants found unsatisfying. Many participants discussed decisions such as if and how to crop the composition of an artwork for the sake of the photograph or how close to stand to the work for an ideal photograph. While each
of these, and the numerous other decisions the participants made in the process of taking
the photographs included within this study do not constitute complex learning, the
decisions do reflect the development of a way of seeing and differentiating visual forms
that provide a foundation for participants’ digital aesthetic development.

In addition to learning resulting from the photographic process, digital
photographs played an important role in the process of remembering, reflecting on, and
seeing works of art in new ways. Several participants stated that they were able to
understand specific aspects of a work of art differently as a result of photographing the
work. Participants were able to notice new details, color, shape, or other formal aspects of
a work of art. Likewise, some participants described that reflecting on the photographs
helped them have a greater appreciation for the artistic processes necessary to create a
work of art. Many of the participants stated that they found their digital photographs
helped them recall memories about not only the work of art but also details about their
encounter with the work of art. In particular, some participants described how the
photograph helped them recollect specific people; spatial particularities of the gallery or
space the work was exhibited in; or meaningful interactions, conversations, or thoughts
they had while viewing the work of art.

This study has also revealed some of the ways digital photography can facilitate
permeability to learning environments. Digital photographs also played an important role
in capacitating both face-to-face and online conversations about works of art or
encounters within exhibition spaces. These conversations allowed both participants in the
study and other people not directly involved in the study who engaged in these
conversations to learn from the photographs and each other. Within the museum setting,
participants talked about the role digital photographs played in their interest in revisiting exhibitions or favorite works of art as a result of their photographic processes. This is contradictory to the assumption that taking photographs of works of art will decrease a person’s interest in seeing the original work of art in person. Similarly, some participants expressed that in the process of reviewing their digital photographs, they were more interested in visiting new exhibitions. Digital photographs also seemed to help participants maintain a continued interest in learning more about works of art. In some cases this interest included traditional research about the works of art via didactic materials available in exhibitions or through the review of catalogues or artist monographs. In other cases this research took the form of online and face-to-face discussions about the artists or works of art. A tremendous influencing factor in the how digital photographs can facilitate this permeability of museum learning are the social media platforms where they are shared. Social media platforms are themselves permeable learning environments.

As I described in the previous chapter, social media platforms provide an environment that allows communities of shared interests to form, re-form, and dissolve on an ongoing basis. The open frameworks of social media platforms, their non-compulsory membership, and lack of requirements for specific types of participation or prior knowledge or expertise allow them to function as educational environments on a number of simultaneous levels. At the surface, social media platforms allow users to learn about colleagues’, friends’, and families’ daily activities. Social media platforms also provide a means for users to dive deeper into learning about topics of interest through conversation-enabling features. While these forms of social learning do not
conform to conventional notions of curriculum in the sense that there are no stated expectations, steps outlined toward specific learning goals, or methods for evaluating learning outcomes, it would be difficult to argue that learning is not facilitated through social media. A remaining question regarding social media platforms is whether or not the learning that is facilitated by social media is of similar value to the learning that is facilitated through traditional curriculum? I will address this question and return to the two original research questions in the next section of this writing as I summarize some key interpretations of the data analysis described in the previous chapter.

**Summaries**

The interpretations that arose as a result of investigating the initial two research questions have provided broad answers through the analysis of the data. These broad answers can be further analyzed to provide three categories of findings that arise from the analysis of the digital photographs, semi-structured interviews, and follow up interviews. I began to describe some of these interpretations in the previous chapter as part of the analysis of the data, but I will elaborate further within this section.

**Curricula: Donna**

In the first chapter, I defined curriculum as the entire range of student experiences that occur in the educational process. This definition still gestures to a classroom-oriented understanding of curriculum. Following the analysis of the research data, I would define
curricula as: the measurable and perceivable *official* educational content as well as the simultaneous and ongoing presence of immeasurable and imperceptible *unofficial* encounters influencing a learning process. My definition derives from the language used by the participants within this study and the acknowledgement by both the researcher and the participants that their learning, and my own, were not encapsulated within a particular time frame or within particular settings. The learning processes, and therefore the curricula, are an ongoing process of becoming. It is evident that while this study can analyze and provide findings utilizing an accumulation of data, this data can be understood numerous ways and the learning opportunities for participants has not ended as a result of the culmination of data collection. While this statement seems obvious, it is an important distinction to make, as the traditional conceptions of curriculum do not fully acknowledge this limitation to the way curriculum is defined.

Participant Donna illustrates this broader definition of curricula well in a careful examination of her interview responses. On the surface, Donna’s interview responses are very short and to the point. She does not begin the interview process describing her photography as learning and her interview responses were lighthearted and reflect her perception that the photography series she is involved with is primarily about documenting travel with friends. As the interview progresses, Donna’s responses begin to reflect subtle changes in her thinking. She starts to acknowledge that she is able to see the work of art in a different way as a result of the photograph. She also recognizes that through sharing the photograph to social media, she was able to have conversations about the artwork and the artist in face-to-face settings that she might not have had otherwise.

There are curricula at work throughout this process: the curriculum that is her
process of recollection, the curriculum of the photographic process, the curriculum of social media. Such curricula as these are in play often simultaneously and defy simple definitions for origin or termination points. The difficulty in describing where these curricula begin or end or where they overlap does not, however, preclude them from being understood as curricula. Rather, these curricula are in a state of constant becoming and provide another way of understanding learning that is rhizomatic and resists the strict territory of curriculum as a planned document with pre-determined end points.

**Personal Learning Networks: James**

Related to this expanded notion of curricula, the analysis of the data from this study supports existing research regarding the value of people developing *personal learning networks*. Personal learning networks are “reciprocal learning systems in which people participate by sharing with and then learning from others through self-directed, independent learning experiences, most often online” (Nussbaum-Beach, 2013). Personal learning networks bridge the gap between *communities of practice* and *communities of interest*. Communities of practice are centrally defined by learners with shared expertise or knowledge participating in activities within a community. Within the context of the community of practice learning involves developing and becoming an identity in practice in the context of a community of practice (Hemphill & Leskowitz, 2012). Communities of interest are, on the other hand, are a group of people interested in sharing information and discussing a particular topic. Members are not necessarily experts or practitioners of the topic, as membership is not dependent upon expertise (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
James’ interactions across several social media platforms constitutes a personal learning network and demonstrates how he is neither solely a member of a community of practice nor a community of interest. Specifically, James has a level of knowledge and expertise regarding the works of art that he photographs and shares, but he does not solely engage people with similar levels of knowledge or expertise within his personal learning network. James expresses an interest in helping to educate or inform people within his social media networks about works of art, but he is also interested in learning from these members. James is also not exclusively interested in learning solely from experts; he is open to learning from people with limited expertise. James’ development of a personal learning network constituted by both experts and novices has provided him, and doubtless other cross-social media platform users, a range of learning engagements and a complex community in which he can learn.

Different Users, Different Needs: Paul

Participant Paul’s discussion of the importance of recognizing that social media and museums are alike – they serve a variety of different users with a variety of needs and these needs change over time. Some art museums, such as the Dallas Museum of Art, are acknowledging that a variety of people visit the museum for many reasons and bring a variety of learning expectations to their experiences in the museum (Pittman & Hirzy, 2011). While some museums such as the Dallas Museum of Art are making these efforts to understand the variety of people who visit museums and their variety of needs, there are particular limitations to the types of learner-friendly programs that can be developed
to meet the varied needs of people in the museum. These limitations are due largely to the physical nature of the museum. Social media platforms, on the other hand, are not restricted by physical space and are therefore more scalable and provide different accommodations to people in the museum.

Social media platforms are designed to serve a variety of different users and they each have differentiated functions. According to informal education scholars Douglas Thomas and John Seely-Brown, social media platforms support social learning, collaboration, and agency that can be understood as collective indwelling. “Collective indwelling is fundamental for the emergence of a networked imagination” (Thomas & Brown, 2011, p.105). This networked imagination is important to the development of an environment where “learning happens on a continuous basis because the participants are internally motivated to find, share, and filter new information on a near-constant basis” (Thomas & Brown, 2011, p.107).

Each of these three categories of findings that arose from my analysis of the digital photographs, semi-structured interviews, and follow up interviews have potential for application within art education. In the following section, I will explore some of the implications of these findings for art education. While the implications for art education are several, this section cannot be comprehensive as some of the implications for art education arising from this research may not yet be clear.
Implications for Art Education

One immediately clear finding from this study suggests that art educators consider learning communities broadly. While many art educators working within public schools willingly embrace the descriptions of the classroom, the school, the neighborhood wherein the school is located, and the school district as overlapping and related communities, art educators working in public K-12 settings have sometimes wrestled with more complex and nuanced understandings of community. Different forces exacerbate the difficulty art educators have experienced in understanding community as something that is not static and is not necessarily tied to geographic location. These forces include the geographic emphasis demographic information used to assess and track students and families involved in public education. Many public schools have experienced a reduction in the time and resources available to facilitate teachers’ and students’ engagement with learning outside the school and in differing community settings such as in the case of field trips or even on-campus outdoor learning. Additionally, many public schools have struggled with understanding appropriate, affordable, or meaningful ways to engage students in learning that occurs in virtual settings such as in online environments. There are numerous financial, political, and legal factors that have created these conditions that could constitute an entire study of their own, however for the purpose of these implications I encourage the reader to pursue a review of these factors independently. Should art educators decide to resist these limiting factors that reduce the teachers’ and students’ access to complex and overlapping communities, there are existing tools in place that can serve this mission. As I have
described throughout this writing, there are several art education scholars and other authors who have provided research-based evidence of the usefulness of teachers and students engaging in social media platforms to develop personal learning networks. Furthermore, scholars Douglas Thomas and John Seely-Brown (2011), among several other authors, have provided evidence to support that online communities such as gaming communities are also important places for teachers to consider for student learning as well. In short, art educators can and should find ways to extend notions of community beyond the classroom as it can provide valuable learning opportunities that are more complex and related to student encounters with learning during non-school hours.

Another important finding from this study that is related to complicating the notion of community is that art educators consider curricula in more complex terms that push the definition beyond the traditional learning plan. While this study data is derived from adult participants, it is reasonable to apply the findings related to simultaneous curricula in operation to the understanding of learning in the broad sense for people under age 18. Recognizing and supporting teacher interests, student interests, and the range of encounters that occur within and outside the classroom are an important step toward expanding the possibilities for learning in and beyond the classroom environment.

Finally, as art educators look for ways to engage students in self-initiated investigations of works of art, the role that digital photography can play within the classroom and beyond is an important implication of this study to consider. As the findings have indicated, digital photography can function not only as a mediating process to learning about works of art but also as a form of creative production that is a learning process in and of itself. Digital photography as a learning process can facilitate learning
in classrooms, in museums, online, and in blended settings that are both digital and analog. In both student-led and teacher-led digital photography learning there are numerous possibilities for ways to incorporate the process of photographing works of art, sharing them, and utilizing them to facilitate learning.

These are but three implications of this study for art education. As I continue to work with the data I collected for this study that was not included in this study, there will doubtlessly be other implications for art educators. As such implications arise, or as a result of subsequent studies, I intend to share such implications with art educators in the future.

**Directions for Future Research**

As I indicated in a previous chapter and I acknowledge in the prior section, there are limitations to this study and therefore the resulting findings. These limitations are highly valuable to consider at the close of this study, as they are indicators for areas yet to be researched. In the following section, I will discuss a few of the directions for future research that arise from the limitations of this study that emerged during the process of collecting, describing, analyzing and interpreting the data included in this study. I have grouped the directions for future research into three categories, but I acknowledge that these categories overlap.
Social Media Findings

While this study included three primary social media platforms as sources for data collection, these three social media platforms are by no means representative of the broad range and number of social media platforms where digital photographs and other images are shared and discussed by members. There are a number of social media platforms that have enhanced sharing features or are image-intensive such as Pinterest or Polyvore that would yield valuable data regarding ways in which users not only share their own original digital photography of artworks but also appropriate or digitally alter other users’ digital photographs of artworks. Niche social media platforms and social media mobile applications with small user groups that are highly specialized and are designed to facilitate conversations about works of art such as HintMe, application mentioned by participant Paul, could potentially provide more complex types of digital conversation data as well as interview data as the self-selecting nature of the users of these niche platforms and applications ensures a certain level of interest and engagement in the process of photographing and discussing works of art.

Another important direction for future research as it relates to social media is the potential for focusing on particular demographics of each of the platforms utilized within this study. This study was designed to provide a very broad cross-section of users with regard to sex, age, geographic location, and professional backgrounds. While a study that samples broadly can provide an important range of participant data with regard to the photographs and the interviews, there are not sufficient numbers of participants utilizing one specific platform to provide data that inform readers about specific characteristics of
each social media platform that are particularly essential to the learning experiences of users. This study was also restricted to the collection of data from adult users. As I discuss in the prior section of this writing, the findings from this study regarding communities and curricula are applicable to a range of learners. It would be valuable to support this thesis further with additional studies exploring the learning experiences of social media users under the age of 18 who share digital photographs and develop personal learning networks that include these social media platforms.

Community Findings

While I have acknowledged in previous chapters that there is a growing body of research that focuses on broad notions of community, the findings from this study suggest that there are additional areas of research on community within the context of social media that can be explored further. Understanding more about what motivates and sustains interest in participating in personal learning networks or participating in single social media platform communities is an area of research that will provide important support for broadening the way communities are defined and understood within the context of education and beyond. This study examined the way adult participants engaged in sharing and learning within their social media communities. It would be valuable to follow up with the study participants to engage in additional collection and analysis of photographic and interview data to see if there are patterns in the participants’ interactions that support or disagree with the thesis that participating in online
communities provides important learning opportunities that are not possible in traditional face-to-face learning settings.

The findings from this study restrict our understanding of the roles of personal learning networks and social media communities as a result of having only solicited adult participants. A valuable area for future research regarding communities should include participants under the age of 18 who develop personal learning networks or are learning through social media communities. Given the rapidly changing social dynamics inherent to youth populations, such a study would likely reveal a less stable and more variable definition of community as a result of studying which online groups youth choose to become members of and how youth develop personal learning networks.

**Museum Findings**

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the potential for art museum educators and art museum evaluators for further research as a result of this study. While the study findings indicate the process of photographing works of art in art museums and sharing them to social media has numerous potentials for interest in works of art and new and repeat visits to the museum, there are many institutionally specific questions this study does not address. The data from this study does not provide specific information about learning engagement with specific programs, exhibitions, or demographics. Art museum educators and evaluators could replicate aspects of this study such as the data collection methodology that began by collecting digital photographs first and inviting participants to engage in interviews following image collection and analysis while tailoring other
aspects of the research process to provide data that is institution-specific. Additionally, museum educators and evaluators could utilize aspects of this study to develop or re-develop programs, exhibitions, or events that promote the process of digital photography and social media photograph sharing. Such programs, exhibitions, or events could then become sites for data collection and analysis that would provide a more detailed picture of the learning interests and process of people who visit a specific museum. This institutionally specific research could, in turn, lead to additional changes in exhibitions, programs, or events as well as revealing new areas for study.

These are three critical areas for future research that emerge as a result of the findings of this study. While the reader may perceive additional areas for potential research arising from these findings, I have made an effort to provide areas of future research that are uniquely tied to the methodology and data sources. As with any study, I acknowledge that my positionality in relation to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data has, in turn, had an effect on the kinds of future research I can suggest. This positionality creates its own limitations and potential areas for research.

**Conclusion**

Through the course of this study, I found that the questions that initially arose as a result of my professional experiences were influenced by the close examination of the photographs and interviews with participants. Certainly, learning happens in art museums around the world. Art museums in the U.S. have strong missions to provide educational experiences to broad audiences. These would be difficult statements to wholly deny. This
study has revealed that the ongoing territorialization and deterritorialization of the art museum as a permeable learning environment as mediated by digital photography and facilitated through the use of social media platforms and engagement with personal learning networks complicates the binary narrative of formal versus informal learning – or as I have described official versus unofficial learning.

The study revealed the presence of individuals with singular desires to interact with works of art in particular ways for particular ends. Simultaneously, the study revealed groups formed in both physical and digital space that shared desires, encounters with art and digital photography, and interactions with each other facilitated by images and text. These communities are organized, to an extent, by the social media platforms that they use. The learning within these communities is not dependent on social media, however. Many participants identified community members and learning experiences occurring outside the social media platforms where their digital photographs were shared.

I began this study with the intent to understand, to a fuller extent, the critical moments within the process of taking a digital photograph of a work of art in an art museum and sharing that photograph to social media. What has resulted from this process of research are numerous findings that relate to the original research questions, new questions that emerged as a result of the study, and directions for future research. Much like the way that I have characterized learning throughout this writing, this study is constituted of multiple curricula at work in my own learning and this learning process will not end with the close of this study. I look forward to my continued encounters with learning through many communities and future research.
References


Falk, J. & Dierking, L. D. (2000). Learning from museums: Visitor experience and the making of meaning. Walnut Creek, CA; AltaMira.


Appendix A

A Selection of Paul’s Additional Images

One of four images included in a tweet on 8/25/14 from Paul’s Twitter account.

The second of four images included in a tweet on 8/25/14 from Paul’s Twitter account.
The third of four images included in a tweet on 8/25/14 from Paul’s Twitter account.

The fourth of four images included in a tweet on 8/25/14 from Paul’s Twitter account.
The first of two images included in a tweet on 9/26/14 from Paul’s Twitter account.

The second of two images included in a tweet on 9/26/14 from Paul’s Twitter account.
Appendix B

Participants’ “Bad” Photographs

A photograph Sam took December 3, 2013 in London not posted to social media.

A photograph Taya took in August 2012 in Paris that she didn’t post to social media.
VITA

Lillian Louise Lewis

Education

Ph.D. Art Education The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 2015
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Selected Publications


Selected Presentations


Panel Chair and Presenter: *Permeable territories: Art, affect, and becoming through a Deleuzian-Guattarian lens.* Panel presentation “Lines of flight in encounter photography: deterritorializing exhibition through Twitter.” The Tenth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, May 2014