

# MAKING ART IN MUSEUMS

INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WITHIN  
ART MUSEUM GALLERIES

Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Proposal  
Museum Exhibition Planning and Design  
The University of the Arts  
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January 24, 2014

## **I. Title**

Making Art in Museums:  
Integrating Experiential Learning within Art Museum Galleries

## **II. Introduction**

In her blog entitled “Musing on the Museum,” Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Curator of Education at the Palmer Museum of Art, states “One of the biggest criticisms of art museums, as opposed to other kinds of museums, is that they are not participatory... So how can art museums connect with [the general population]? How do we make them feel not just welcome in the museum, but that they are part of the museum?”<sup>1</sup> This thesis will seek to explore how art museums can be participatory and connect with visitors, young adults in particular, through hands-on activities and art-making opportunities within museum galleries. These hands-on opportunities, such as those implemented by The Columbus Museum of Art, The Art Gallery of Ontario, and The Denver Art Museum, have proved successful in connecting to visitors through experiential learning and various kinds of hands-on interactivity. In these museums specifically, activities have been “designed to enhance [visitors’] interaction with art”<sup>2</sup>, whether visitors are drawing on Reaction Cards while exploring a J.E.H MacDonald painting in depth at the Art Gallery of Ontario, or visitors are making Valentines on Valentine’s Day for their favorite piece of art at The Columbus Museum of Art, or visitors are making art hands-on at Tactile Tables within the textile gallery at the Denver Art Museum. While the museums’ collections are not being touched or altered, visitors are invited to explore their creativity and react to their inspiration in productive ways while in the same space as the artwork. Similarly, this thesis aims to harness, promote and facilitate artistic creativity. As the above-mentioned art museums act as “catalyst[s] of creativity,”<sup>3</sup> this thesis will also seek to examine the social and neurological benefits of active learning and active participation. These are a positive result of the integration of creative hands-on art-making activities as part of the exhibition experience.

Therefore, this thesis will propose a themed exhibition series that can be hosted by large art museums, similar to the museums listed above, that will intentionally encourage hands-on art-making opportunities within the gallery space for young

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<sup>1</sup> Kletchka, Dana Carlisle. “Physical and Intellectual Inaccessibility.” Musing on the Museum. Web. 26 Nov 2013. <[http://www.personal.psu.edu/dck10/blogs/danas\\_blog/2008/08/physical-and-intellectual-inac.html](http://www.personal.psu.edu/dck10/blogs/danas_blog/2008/08/physical-and-intellectual-inac.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> Hovey, Kendra, “Arts preview: A new look for the CMA, A makeover of the nearly 80-year-old home of the Columbus Museum of Art meshes with a new way to experience the art.” Columbus Monthly. Oct 2010. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://www.columbusmonthly.com/October-2010/A-new-look-for-CMA/>>.

<sup>3</sup> McLean, Kathleen and Pollock, Wendy. *Visitor Voices in Museum Exhibitions*. Washington DC. ASTC. 2007.

adults (adults of and between the ages of 18 and 29.) This type of exhibition series will explore how material culture and hands-on activities can productively co-exist in an art museum setting. It will focus specifically on teaching and interpreting art-making techniques (collage, painting, mosaic, etc.) through the hosting institution's collection. One exhibition in the series will focus on one artistic technique/process at a time. When the exhibition rotates, so will the corresponding collection and technique presented, and so on and so forth. The main goal of this proposed exhibition series is to create a space within a museum gallery that "nurtur[es] public creativity"<sup>4</sup> by allowing visitors to create a piece of art that emulates the technique featured in the exhibition. The James Irvine Foundation, based in California, markets itself as a "private, non-profit grant-making foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society."<sup>5</sup> In their October 2011 report entitled "Getting in on the Act: How Art Groups are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation," they state that "time has shown that the art forms themselves are robust enough to accommodate new approaches to presentation and audience involvement."<sup>6</sup> Of new generations and new audiences, they also state, "[f]ewer will want to sit still in uncomfortable seats, and more will demand a larger role in shaping their own experience."<sup>7</sup> Consistent with John Dewey's experiential "learning by doing" educational theory, this exhibition series will use active learning and "creative play"<sup>8</sup> to demonstrate why the convergence of art and art-making can be so fundamental in connecting with visitors and shaping their experiences. This will allow the conversation about art to evolve and become more social, which will ultimately provide a unique relatability to art museums that will allow them to become more accessible. As a result of deconstructing an artistic technique for the purposes of education and interpretation in a museum setting, the technique will be, in a sense, 'demystified' and, therefore, easier to understand and more fun with which to experiment.

Additionally, this thesis will investigate various forms of potential artist involvement for the proposed exhibition series in order to personalize the targeted artistic techniques and discuss their processes. Perhaps the exhibition would use a featured artist as a lens to understand the selected technique. For instance, the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, uses Andy Warhol's work as a basis for studio classes about the process of silk-screening. Although the method of this involvement is contingent upon the artist and the museum-selected technique, an

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. "Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation." The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Mostov, Merilee, "The Wonder Room: Icing on the Cake." The Columbus Museum of Art. Blog post. 10 Jan 2014. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://www.Columbusmuseum.org/blog/author/mmostov/>>.

important artist-visitor relationship would be created, whether by means of face-to-face dialogue, or a commissioned piece of art within the gallery, or a time-lapse video supplemented by an interview, etc.

This study intends to answer the following questions:

1. How can the conversation about art be more inclusive?
2. What are some ways in which visitors can more effectively connect to and share art?
3. How can hands-on activities connect visitors to artwork in a new way?
4. Can the field of exhibition design be successfully integrated into art museums?
5. How can art museums become more participatory without compromising their values?
6. How can artists become more involved in art museums?

Nomenclature: Please regard the following list of terms and definitions as an integral part of the concepts presented hereafter.

1. Art-making: This thesis considers art-making to be an active hands-on process, during which a piece of art is produced. This can pertain to both collective and individual art-making efforts.
2. Art Museum: This thesis views art museums as any museum whose collection is predominantly art. Additionally, the approach that this thesis proposes could potentially apply to any art collection, although this thesis targets large art museums.
3. Art-making Techniques: This thesis discusses art-making techniques (also referred to as 'artistic techniques') as processes used to create art. Some examples include collage, painting, printmaking, silkscreen, etc.
4. Active Learning: This thesis utilizes the term 'active learning' to describe experiential learning, which coincides with a 'learning by doing' mentality.
5. Active Participation or Participatory: (similar to 'Active Learning') In accordance with The James Irvine Foundation 2011 Report, this thesis considers these terms to be how people actively "encounter and express their creative selves and share in the creativity of others."<sup>9</sup>
6. Neuroeducation: Neuroeducation is a term first used in 2009 by Mariale Hardiman, Susan Magsamen, Guy McKhann, and Janet Eilber in their published article entitled "Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain." This article was published as a result of their exploration of "how studying and practicing the arts might enhance creativity, cognition, and learning."<sup>10</sup> They define

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. "Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation." The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Hardiman, Mariale, Magsamen, Susan, McKhann, Guy, and Eilber, Janet. "Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain." The Dana Foundation. Dana Press. New York. 2009.

Neuroeducation as “an interdisciplinary field that combines neuroscience, psychology, and education to help create improved teaching methods and curricula.”<sup>11</sup>

Limitations of the study:

1. Personal bias: Regular art museum attendees may feel as though the art museum will lose exclusivity and/or relevance
2. Protection of collection: Fear of giving allowances in art museum galleries that visitors would potentially take advantage of in a negative way
3. Unique approach: Participatory activities within art museum galleries are still largely considered an experimental approach

### **III. Impact Statement & Significance**

This thesis proposes integrating art-making experiences that promote, encourage, and facilitate artistic creativity and active visitor participation within art museum galleries. An exhibition accompanied by a hands-on activity can create a new lens to interpret artwork. A curated exhibition can provide insight into the selected technique, whereas a corresponding hands-on experience in the same space can offer a practical application. By engaging in experiential learning, young adults reap social and neurological benefits that positively impact identity and propel personal development. As stated by Linda H. Lewis and Carol J. Williams in their article “Experiential Learning: Past and Present,” “...experiential learning becomes a vehicle for adult development by helping learners reach new levels of cognitive, perceptual, behavioral, and symbolic complexity.”<sup>12</sup> As many people participate in an activity together and experience individual growth, they also connect to each other, to the institution, and to the community. In her 2009 book entitled “The Participatory Museum,” Nina Simon writes, “[Visitors] expect the ability to discuss, share, and remix what they consume. When people can actively participate with cultural institutions, those places become central to cultural and community life.”<sup>13</sup> This thesis and proposed exhibition series will embody a “making-and-doing” philosophy that will impact the individual and the community through hands-on activities and opportunities.

*Why is this project needed?*

- Can encourage a dialogue surrounding ‘how artists create?’

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, Linda H., Williams, Carol J. “Experiential Learning: Past and Present.” New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education. Jossey-Bass Inc. 1994.

<sup>13</sup> Mostov, Merilee. “Get Your Game on at CMA: Brooking Paper on Creativity Honorable Mention.” American Association of Museums. 2012. Web. 24 Jan 2014. < <http://www.aam-us.org/about-us/grants-awards- and-competitions/brooking-paper/past-recipients/get-your-game-on-at-cma>>.

- Encourages experiential learning by creating participatory opportunities within art galleries
- Allocates a role for an exhibition designer in art museums
- Invites artists involvement within art museums
- Allows visitors to renew their relationship with the museum
- Integrates artistic expressiveness and creativity within galleries

*Why should anyone care?*

- Fosters personal development and identity
- Strengthens institutional connection to community

*Who/what will this project impact?*

Primary: Visitors (Young Adults)

The October 2011 James Irvine Foundation Report states, "The relationship between participatory arts practice[s] and attendance takes on added importance with regard to younger adults, who are much more likely than older adults to be involved in participatory activities..."<sup>14</sup>

Secondary: Institution (Large Art Museums)

Large art museums likely have ample space, large collections and resources to support a rotating exhibition series of this scale. The model that this thesis proposes can be adapted on a smaller scale so long as the major participatory principles are intact, including having an art-making activity in the same gallery space as an art collection.

Tertiary: Exhibit Designers and Artists

*What will this contribute to the field of exhibition planning and design?*

In order to purposely integrate a creative space for art-making of a large scale within a gallery, one that would accommodate many visitors at once, exhibition designers would be an important and influential addition to the team of art museum professionals, which could potentially already include a Developer, Curator, and Education Director. Designers' knowledge of spatial relationships and capabilities to create and design an exhibition narrative with engaging atmospheric cues can be extremely important and can include, but aren't limited to, floor changes, ceiling changes, ramping, and lighting. These are all elements that will support the exhibition and are all integral aspects of the visitor experience. As Merilee Mostov, assistant director of education for visitor engagement states, "We can make design decisions that coax visitors of all ages to imagine and create."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. "Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation." The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Mostov, Merilee, "The F Word." The Columbus Museum of Art. Blog post. 22 Nov 2013. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://www.Columbusmuseum.org/blog/author/mmostov/>>.

#### IV. Methodology

The methodology of this thesis stems from the idea that art galleries have the potential to be a creative space for immediate artistic expression. There will be three major themes that this thesis will investigate:

- A. Doing, Not Just Viewing: Why Hands-on Visitor Participation is Important
- B. Inside the Galleries: The Integration of Hands-On Activities
- C. Artist Involvement: Personalizing the Process.

The methodology will begin this investigation with front-end evaluation. Mark Walhimer, Managing Partner of Museum Planning, LLC, a firm that plans interactive educational environments, states that front-end evaluation "...provides background about the visitors' prior knowledge and experience, and gather[s] their expectations regarding a proposed exhibition."<sup>16</sup> He also states that, "The primary goal of front-end evaluation is to learn about the audience before an exhibition has been designed to better understand how visitors will respond to an exhibition."<sup>17</sup> The information that is attained can "gain an understanding of the visitors' prior knowledge and interests related to the exhibition concept" and "test theories about visitor behavior and learning."<sup>18</sup> This thesis will conduct a front-end evaluation in order to gain more information about the target audience, young adults, and to make decisions about the proposed ideas. As young adults are familiar and comfortable with the computer, front-end evaluation will occur in the form of online surveys using Survey Monkey, or another similar survey format. On-line surveys will be advertised and conducted using social media outlets, including Facebook. Additionally, in-person interviews could be conducted at local art museums. The Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) is a likely location due to the fact that it fits the targeted category of host institutions – large art museums. These in-person interviews can occur in the lobby of the institution, or outside the doors on the grounds of the institution.

A. Doing, Not Just Viewing: Why Hands-on Visitor Participation is Important  
This thesis will further examine the concepts of active learning and active participation, and in what institutions these concepts have been implemented. This thesis will look at various professional opinions and experiences, including those of Nina Simon and The James Irvine Foundation, in order to understand how participation leads to learning and to personal and community development. More specifically, the thesis will examine in-depth the benefits of experiential learning for young adults, including those associated with social and neurological aspects. Similarly, Neuroeducation will also be examined with regard to the connection between participating in art activities and learning abilities. Moreover, the opinions of practicing artists will be researched with regards to experiential learning. The

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<sup>16</sup> Walhimer, Mark. "Museum Exhibition Design, Part VI." Museum Planner. 26 Nov 2013. < <http://museumplanner.org/museum-exhibition-design-part-vi/>>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

thesis will also strive to understand the history and basis of John Dewey's 'learning by doing' educational model, as well as other learning models in order to understand how to sufficiently accommodate all learning styles within the proposed exhibition series.

#### B. Inside the Galleries: The Integration of Hands-On Activities

This part of the thesis will investigate three different institutions that fit the profile of the targeted institution type as case studies – The Art Gallery of Ontario, The Columbus Museum of Art, and The Denver Art Museum. In each of these instances, the thesis will research what measures these institutions have taken to integrate hands-on activities and art-making experiences inside the galleries. The thesis will also acknowledge visitor feedback and professional opinions associated with these decisions. The list below consists of compiled examples of activities and/or exhibitions at the above-mentioned institutions that are fundamental.

In addition to several case studies, interviews will be conducted with individuals or groups when literature is not available or current. Also, pilot-testing the concepts stipulated in this thesis with professionals or the public may occur, as well as prototyping possible solutions and considering feedback from experts, faculty, fellow students, and the public. The proposed case studies are specified as follows, in order to closely examine the methodology of others.

##### Case Study #1: The Art Gallery of Ontario, Ontario, Canada

- Ex: Reaction Cards Activity
- Ex: Explore a Painting in Depth
- Ex: In Your Face: The People's Portrait Exhibition
- Ex: Degas Exhibition
- Ex: Modigliani Exhibition

##### Case Study #2: The Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio

- Ex: "Connector" Activities located throughout the museum
- Ex: Valentine's Day Activity
- Ex: The Wonder Room in the Center for Creativity  
The Wonder Room emphasizes 'creative play' and fun for all ages, which includes curiosity, imagination, experimentation, and storytelling. This includes investigating the importance of 'play' for young adults
- Ex: Think Outside the Brick Exhibition
- Ex: Big Idea Gallery – Color Exhibition

##### Case Study #3: The Denver Museum of Art, Denver, Colorado

- Ex: Studio Classes
- Ex: Drop-in Drawing Sessions
- Ex: Thread Studio Workshops
- Ex: Artists at Work
- Ex: Textile Talks
- Ex: Tactile Tables located within the Cover Story Exhibition  
Perhaps most similar to the proposed exhibition series, this



Exhibition dedicates an area within the gallery to make art. Visitors are able to sit at tables within the gallery, called “Tactile Tables,” where they can create their own textile image based on the amalgamation and collage of different fabrics, inspired by the various textile artworks exhibited in the gallery.<sup>19</sup> This thesis will extensively research this process of The Denver Art Museum.

### C. Artist Involvement: Personalizing the Process

This segment will strive to investigate various ways to create a visitor-artist relationship. As previously stated, the method and level of this involvement is contingent upon the artist and the museum-selected technique. The main goal, however, is to further personalize the presented process and convey to visitors ways in which artists create. Various ways this can be achieved include in-person dialogue (like the artist “office hours” held at the Zoe Strauss Retrospective Exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art), a special piece commissioned to be constructed in the exhibition gallery, or a time-lapse video with a videotaped interview. In asking the visitor to participate in an art-making activity similar to that of the artist, the visitor is actually assuming the identity of an artist. Additionally, it is possible that the professional artist could collaborate with the museum staff (designer, developer, curator, educator, etc.) in order to contribute to the interpretation within the exhibition and to the deconstruction of the technique. In this way, the artist would be regarded as an ‘expert’ or ‘scholar’ that would be sharing their knowledge to better inform the exhibition. Other examples of influential artist involvement include the following:

- Ex: The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA
- Ex: Science Live, The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA
- Ex: Drawn to Dinosaurs: Hadrosaurus foulkii, The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA
- Ex: Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA
- Ex: Registration for Freedom, Passion and Painting Studio Class, that uses exercises developed by artist Chuck Ceraso
- Ex: Dive Deep: Eric Fischl and the Process of Painting, PAFA, Philadelphia, PA

There is a second methodology that exists within the structure of the proposed exhibition series. This themed exhibition would focus largely on the technique and artwork of a single artist, Brazilian artist Beatriz Milhazes, for example. Although the exhibition does not require a focus solely on one artist, limiting the scope of artists somewhat would strategically assist in personalizing the process. This is especially potent if an artist is interested in being a large part of the exhibition development and design prior to and/or after the exhibition opening. The exhibition would be

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<sup>19</sup> McCance, Sally. “Making Art Hands-On.” Denver Art Museum. 26 Nov 2013.  
< <http://www.denverartmuseum.org/article/staff-blogs/making-art-hands>>.

open to people of all skill levels and would be wheelchair accessible. It would also be free with admission to the museum. All materials would be included, provided by an art supply corporation such as 'Dick Blick Art Materials.' Ideally, a company like Blick would sponsor the exhibition series in order to cut costs for the museum. This hands-on art-making activity will be incorporated in a way that does not alter the integrity or threaten the condition of the selected works from the collection.

When visitors walk into the gallery, they would see several of Milhazes' two-dimensional artworks hung on the wall, similar to the one pictured below. (This proposed exhibition could accommodate all kinds of professional artwork, including both two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork.)



"Picnic"

<http://www.artnet.com/artwork/426182520/424065188/beatriz-milhazes-picnic.html>

With a largely open floorplan, many of Milhazes' works are installed on the gallery walls, which surround a large art-making space somewhat separated from the collection by "sophisticated design aesthetic."<sup>20</sup> For instance, this may include a bold color change or a floor material change, or both. From this area, the collection remains visible, whether the visitor is seated or standing. The finished artworks are punctuated with intriguing half-finished artist studies, which further the visitor's understanding of process, and assist the visitor in getting into the mind of the artist as their thought-process becomes visible, much like in PAFA's exhibition entitled 'Dive Deep: Eric Fischl and the Process of Painting.'

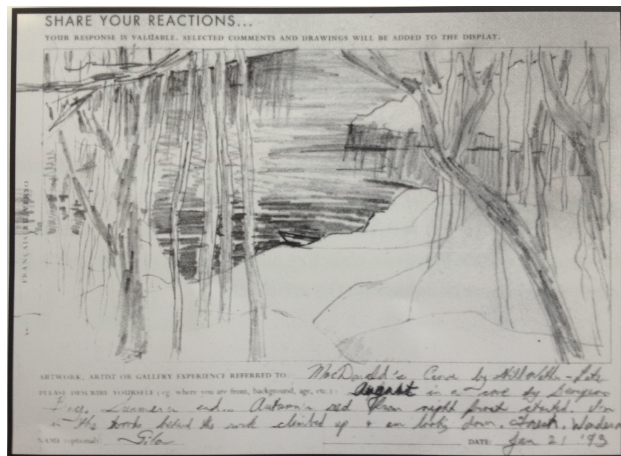
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<sup>20</sup> Hovey, Kendra, "Arts preview: A new look for the CMA, A makeover of the nearly 80-year-old home of the Columbus Museum of Art meshes with a new way to experience the art." Columbus Monthly. Oct 2010. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://www.columbusmonthly.com/October-2010/A-new-look-for-CMA/>>.

As visitors read the labels beside each piece, they will realize that they do not only indicate the year and the medium with which the piece was created, but also the specificities about Milhazes' particular design decisions and the symbolic nature behind them. For example, she is continuously inspired by certain flowers she saw as a child living in Brazil. In "Picnic," (represented in the photo above) the label might call attention to the bright circles on the right-hand side as symbolizing plates and cups upon a colorful picnic blanket, and the manner by which the bright circular forms interact with each other to create a larger, more complex form. Expressing what Milhazes' exact inspirations were will invite the visitors to think about what inspires them in their own lives as the basis for their artwork. In other words, "visitors are free to interact with the artworks in ways that encourage their own creative responses,"<sup>21</sup> like in the Art Gallery of Ontario's exhibition entitled 'Explore a Painting in Depth.' The exhibition at AGO successfully "model[ed] different ways of engaging with an artwork – from examining relevant contextual information, to consulting an expert, to eliciting personal and idiosyncratic meanings with the aid of the imagination."<sup>22</sup> During or after viewing the art, visitors could share their reactions on paper called 'reaction' or 'response' cards. These were mostly white space, which allowed visitors to draw and comment on what they experienced, and share meaningful and powerful responses. (Pictured below.) According to the museum, "Response cards...have proven to be a rich resource that provides insights into the viewing process, the painting, and the visitors."<sup>23</sup> In the case of the proposed exhibition series, the art-making activity is representative of the response cards. The visitors will have the opportunity to view several pieces of the collection before they react and respond through art.



*The Beaver Dam*, J.E.H. MacDonald  
<http://groupofsevenart.com/JEH-MacDonald-Beaver-Dam-Algoma>



Visitor Reaction card to MacDonald Painting  
 Visitor Voices in Museum Exhibitions (pg.119)

<sup>21</sup> McLean, Kathleen and Pollock, Wendy. Visitor Voices in Museum Exhibitions. Washington DC. ASTC. 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

The reaction card on the upper left displays an original pencil drawing completed in the exhibition by an AGO visitor named Gila on January 21, 1993. It's as if she entered the MacDonald painting and drew the scene from a new vantage point depicting her unique perspective of the artwork.

When visitors arrive at the art-making space within the proposed exhibition, they would have already been introduced to Milhazes through some kind of personal biography in order to understand her history, what inspired her, and the intricacies of her technique. Visitors would recognize that she works “with a collage-like technique [by] appl[ying] acrylic paint onto plastic sheeting that is then cut to shape. The dried paint is peeled from its backing, often imperfectly, and intuitively applied to the canvas.”<sup>24</sup> (For the sake of time to allow the acrylic paint to dry, the museum may have some pre-prepared painted plastic sheets in various colors available with the rest of the materials.) Essentially, the visitor would understand that the artist makes her own stencils as tools to make her elaborate collages. When they arrive at the art-making area, visitors will have enough information to be able to create their own stencils and collage them on canvas, producing unique works of art with Milhazes’ technique.

Examples of materials visitors would use in this activity:



Painted plastic sheets (similar image)  
[http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41AYVjErgL\\_Sy300\\_.jpg](http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/41AYVjErgL_Sy300_.jpg)



Small Canvases  
<http://www.bfranklincrafts.com/CraftIdeas/CraftIdeas-ScrapOnWall.html>

The art-making space would consist of several individual ‘desk-like’ stations, although each station could fit two people comfortably in the event a friend wishes to pull up a chair to work on the project with another visitor. Although these stations are defined as ‘individual,’ they do not have large barriers, so that visitors are not prevented from conversing with other visitors or seeing what other visitors are creating. Within this set-up, visitors can engage in dialogue with each other. This design creates a sense of community, in that everyone is participating in the same

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<sup>24</sup> “Beatriz Milhazes: Horto.” Maharam. Durham Press. Web. 24 Jan 2014.  
<<http://www.maharam.com/stories/beatriz-milhazes-horto>>.

activity at the same time in the same place. (As previously noted, there will also be many different sightlines to the art while visitors are working for visual reference and inspiration.) This activity does not require a certain time commitment from visitors – they will be able to stay for as short or as long a time as they want. Although the activity will be accompanied by directions at each station, the activity is largely self-directed and self-initiated, calling upon the unique creativity of each visitor. Visitors can come, experiment and leave, and even return later in the day to experiment more with the art materials if they desire.

Finally, the exhibition activity will allow visitors to produce an original piece of artwork which they can either take home with them as a souvenir, or leave at the museum as an addition to the curated exhibition. (If they choose the latter, they will have the opportunity to pick up their artwork at the museum when the exhibition ends.) Similar to a 'feedback wall,' visitors would be able to hang their artwork on the wall, serving as further examples of the artistic technique highlighted by the exhibition. As a result, visitors will become part of the exhibition and be able to engage in an artistic dialogue with each other. When discussing how to nurture public creativity in this way, Douglas Worts, previous Interpretive Planner at The Art Gallery of Ontario, writes,

“...people seem to want to see themselves reflected, either literally or symbolically, in their imagery...This has been an important psychological phenomenon for AGO staff to become aware of: People want to see themselves reflected in their visit to museums. This has potential to affect dramatically the way in which art displays are conceived and installed...This idiosyncratic material provided a glimpse into a powerful area of creative meaning-making that is part of the potential of every visitor.”<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, The James Irvine Foundation stated in their October 2011 Report that, “creating an original work of art can activate a sense of pride and satisfy a deep desire to leave a legacy.”<sup>26</sup> This ‘legacy’ that they refer to would occur by visitors viewing their own work in the exhibition, as well as viewing other visitors’ artwork. The exhibition, as a whole, would serve as a catalyst for new meaning-making and will establish a new accessibility by encouraging visitors to participate in a hands-on activity within the gallery.

In order to facilitate an inclusive learning environment and create a didactic tool by means of the exhibition, it will be useful for the exhibition designer to understand ways in which art is being taught in schools, and understand how much

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<sup>25</sup> McLean, Kathleen and Pollock, Wendy. Visitor Voices in Museum Exhibitions. Washington DC. ASTC. 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. “Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation.” The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.



interpretation and direction young adults typically need in an art class-like environment. Understanding educational goals could also assist the exhibition designer and the exhibition team in making appropriate design decisions in order to facilitate those connections. By this method, the museum could be an alternative place (in addition to a school) for artistic expression.

Other important examples include:

1. Jackson Pollock retrospective exhibition, MoMA, 1998/1999
2. Claude Monet exhibition, Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, France, 2010  
This thesis will examine how these exhibitions made different art-making techniques apparent by comparing works of the same artist.
3. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
This thesis will examine how these museums created a successful activity within the gallery inspired by Valentine's Day, similar to that of CMA.
4. The Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, California  
This thesis will explore Oakland's successful hands-on art-making activities and interactives, specifically an interactive entitled "You Are Here." This interactive is a digital drawing activity in the art gallery which allows visitors to draw a self-portrait. The museum has found that art-making activities "provide the visitors with an awareness of the creative process that in turn gives them another way to interpret the artworks."<sup>27</sup>
5. Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland  
This thesis will examine how Kelvingrove re-established its identity on the basis of becoming a "visitor-centered" museum. In doing so, visitors experienced a new sense of 'ownership' pertaining to the collection. The community felt as if it belonged to the museum, and that the museum belonged to them, by being able to relate to objects and material culture in a new way.<sup>28</sup>

Potential interviews include:

1. Kathleen McLean, Museum Consultant
2. Mark O'Neill, Director of Policy and Research, Glasgow Life, Scotland
3. Staff Member of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to discuss the Zoe Strauss artist "office hours" experience in which visitors were able to interact directly with Strauss herself.
4. Staff Member at The Art Gallery of Ontario to discuss the Degas Sculptures Exhibition (October 11, 2003 to January 4, 2004) and the Modigliani Beyond the Myth Exhibition (October 23, 2004 to January 23, 2005.) In both exhibitions, visitors were invited to create art.
5. Jen Sontchi, Exhibition Director at the Academy of Natural Sciences in

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<sup>27</sup> Nelson, Karen G. "From Analog Prototypes to Digital Drawing in the Gallery." Web. 26 Nov 2013. <<http://museumeducation.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Nelson.pdf>>.

<sup>28</sup> O'Neill, Mark. "Museums, Wisdom, Wellbeing and Justice." Presentation: Collaborative Approaches, Meaningful Experiences Symposium. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 11 Oct 2013.

Philadelphia, PA to discuss the Science Live interactive in which visitors are able to watch and converse with scientists while they work.

7. Jason Poole, Paleo-artist and Manager of the museum's Dinosaur Hall and Fossil Prep Lab, The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, PA
8. Practicing Artists, which potentially include Eric Fischl, Beatriz Milhazes, and Zoe Strauss
9. Judy Koke, Director of Education and Interpretive Programs, Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
10. Ellen Owens, Executive Director, Magic Gardens, Philadelphia, PA
11. Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Curator of Education, The Palmer Museum of Art
12. Merilee Mostov, Assistant Director of Education for Visitor Engagement, Columbus Museum of Art

## **V. Expected Findings**

This thesis will expect to find that an exhibition that includes hands-on art-making activities in proximity to the museum collection will be a powerful and effective way to create meaningful experiences. By doing so, this approach will strive to attract new audiences without alienating current audiences and will inspire a sense of comfort and identity within the museum and in the community. These expected findings are anticipated to be in line with D. Garth Taylor's correlation between art practices and neighborhood stability and improvement. Taylor is the author of a book entitled "Public Opinion and Collective Action," and he has studied these principles in-depth in Chicago. He states,

"There is a significant correlation between the amount of...arts activity and neighborhood stability and/or improvement. This correlation is evidence of magnetization, an increase in the desirability, commitment, social integration and quality of life in a community area. The idea that neighborhoods can be 'magnetized' by participatory arts practice[s] is powerful and appeals to civil leaders."<sup>29</sup>

## **VI. Application**

Based on the studies that will be conducted by this thesis, the application of this project will demonstrate that art-making in art museums can be powerful and resonate through a themed exhibition series addressed at length in Section IV Methodology. A potential application of this thesis may include the partial

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<sup>29</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. "Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation." The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.

hypothetical development and design of an exhibition based upon the principles presented by this thesis proposal.

## **VII. Evaluation Schema**

In addition to a front-end survey instrument, there will be strategies and methods that will be developed in order to understand the viability, relevance and impact of the thesis. This evaluation will be a tool to understand the impact on visitors.

This thesis will seek to conduct a self-evaluation on the following criteria:

1. Who will most likely benefit from this experience?
2. How will this thesis serve the museum?
3. How will this thesis serve audiences?
4. How will the exhibition interactive prove successful?
5. What methods will be used to determine if the exhibition will do what it has been set out to do?

There will be both attitudinal and behavioral components that contribute to the answers of these questions when evaluating visitors. Ideally, if the exhibition were to come to fruition, evaluation would include the examination of the following in order to answer the questions listed above:

- Is visitor attendance increasing?
- Are visitors participating in the hands-on activity? If so, are they producing pieces that reflect the exhibition topic? Are they enjoying participating in the activity?
- Are visitors choosing to leave their work in the gallery space as part of the exhibition?

Furthermore, the exhibition will seek to answer the following questions inspired by the findings of The James Irvine Foundation. In order to design and create a successful exhibition, these evaluation questions must be considered.

1. What artistic technique does the exhibition propose to engage?
2. What scale or breadth of impact does the exhibition plan to make?
3. How might technology be used to extend impact? (social media, instagram, etc.)
4. What does the exhibition plan to accomplish in terms of participant outcomes and community outcomes?
5. To what extent will the activity yield an artistic outcome that is visible to the community?
6. What community partners might be brought into the project? (ex: Dick Blick Art Supply Store)
7. What degree of technical proficiency is required of participants?
8. Does the activity allow for solitary participation, social involvement, or both?
9. To what extent will professional artists be involved? What qualifications will they have?



10. How many entry points into the activity can be created? Is the activity accessible to people who cannot physically attend?<sup>30</sup>

### **VIII. S.W.O.T. Analysis**

This S.W.O.T. analysis demonstrates an assessment of the thesis to determine what skills are naturally brought to the project and what skills are needed through additional research and from others:

#### **Strengths:**

- Possess a background in studio art and a significant understanding of artistic techniques
- Exhibition will provide technique-based experiences that will facilitate visitor learning
- Art-making activity will provide social and neurological learning benefits
- Visitors can feel as though they leave a 'legacy' by contributing their artwork to the exhibition
- Collections are not being touched or altered, visitors are invited to explore their creativity and react to their inspiration in productive ways while in the same space as the artwork

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Not a lot of museums have art-making as a part of exhibition, as art-making in art museums is typically part of educational programming in a separate space
- Participatory activities within art museum galleries are still largely considered an experimental approach

#### **Opportunities:**

- Can expand the role of exhibit designers in art museums
- Nurture the relationship between the museum and the community through visitor participation
- Can foster new relationships and connections
- Art museum galleries can become a catalyst for immediate artistic creativity and reaction, which nurtures public creativity
- Experiential learning can occur within art museum galleries
- Can celebrate the artist in everyone
- Exhibition can create a visitor-artist relationship within the community

#### **Threats:**

- Allowing messy art-making processes and tools into a gallery space
- Giving allowances in art museum galleries that visitors would potentially take advantage of in a negative way

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. (reflects questions 1-10)

- Regular art museum attendees may feel as though the art museum will lose exclusivity and/or relevance

## **IX. Research and Scholarship Done to Date**

*This section demonstrates a brief summary of the research and scholarship conducted thus far. Media reviews, empirical research, interviews, and front-end evaluation will prove fundamental in this thesis' analysis in addition to literature reviews.*

As stated previously, this thesis will examine three major branches of information relevant to the proposed exhibition series:

- A. Doing, Not Just Viewing: Why Hands-on Visitor Participation is Important
- B. Inside the Galleries: The Integration of Hands-On Activities
- C. Artist Involvement: Personalizing the Process.

Individually and collectively, these three elements will extensively explore what has already been accomplished by museums. Based on that data, this thesis will suggest how to further integrate art-making into art museums as part of the exhibition experience.

### **A. Doing, Not Just Viewing: Why Hands-on Visitor Participation is Important**

Experiential learning, or “learning by doing,” was first conceived of as an educational theory of John Dewey (1859 – 1952). Dewey, a philosopher, psychologist and educator, presented progressive ideas that significantly contributed to educational reform. His contributions are closely associated with the Constructivism Educational Theory, which is based upon the idea that people can construct their own meanings based on real-life experiences. Therefore, Dewey considered experiential education to be just that - “focused on the process of learning by constructing meanings from direct experiences.”<sup>31</sup> Dewey said himself, “Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.”<sup>32</sup> His theory is based on the premise of hands-on projects, problem solving, critical thinking, group work, development of social skills, and understanding as action. He believed that that students “thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum.”<sup>33</sup> In order to thrive by these ‘learning by doing’ principles, it is required that the person, or people, in question be actively participating in the task at hand. In a museum setting, ‘participatory practice’ is

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<sup>31</sup> “John Dewey.” Mindmaps. 26 Nov 2013. <http://mindmaps.wikispaces.com/John+Dewey>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

often defined as beginning when visitors become “expressive participant[s] in the making of the artistic experience,”<sup>34</sup> in other words, doing – not just viewing.

The James Irvine Foundation, a private non-profit grant-making foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society, published a report in 2011 titled “Getting in On the Act: How Art Groups are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation.” The report states that participation in the arts is “being redefined as people increasingly choose to engage with art in new, more active and expressive ways.”<sup>35</sup> In reference to this statement, the report discusses the current seismic shift from a “sit-back-and-be-told” culture to a “making-and-doing” culture. According to the report, this movement “carries profound implications, and fresh opportunities for the nonprofit arts sector.”<sup>36</sup> Although the report addresses participating in both performing and visual arts, the intrinsic benefits remain equally positive – in fact the report makes no distinction between the two categories. It is the act of participating or engaging in experiential learning that elicits results. This thesis is primarily interested in what the Foundation defines as “participant-based” activities, in which the project’s main purpose is to focus on the process of artistic creation and to “provide a fulfilling creative experience for those who participate.”<sup>37</sup> These activities are usually designed to celebrate the artist in everyone through the “shared experience of participating in the physical activity”<sup>38</sup> of construction (as in making an original piece of artwork). Aligned with these principles, the proposed exhibition series will look to “celebrate the creative spirit through the act of making art.”<sup>39</sup>

The art-making activity in the proposed exhibition series includes artistic experimentation and is largely self-directed. Therefore, according to Tara J. Fenwick, author of “Experiential Learning in Adult Education: An Overview of Orientations,” it is considered an “informal” learning experience as it takes place outside of a classroom or academic setting.<sup>40</sup> She does write that although “informal,” people who engage in experiential learning have the ability to recognize the power of their own experiences. Moreover, she states that this learning theory is transforming from a progressive philosophy to one of “institutional policy and

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<sup>34</sup> Murawski, Mike. “Doing, Not Just Viewing: Working Towards a More Participatory Practice.” 6 April 2012. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://artmuseumteaching.com/2012/04/06/doing-not-just-viewing-working-towards-a-more-participatory-practice/>>.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. “Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation.” The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Fenwick, Tara J. “Experiential Learning in Adult Education: An Overview of Orientations.” Web PDF. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://methodenpool.uni-koeln.de/situierteslernen/fenwick2.pdf>>.

professional good practice.” Because of this, experiential learning is continuously being “incorporated [and] absorbed into the formal system of educational provision.”<sup>41</sup> This transformation clearly speaks to the relevance and influence of experiential learning practices.

The exhibition series proposed by the thesis will foster a deeper appreciation of art among visitors by accessing different parts of the brain and senses. Experiential learning is proven to have significant scientific advantages. Neuroeducation, a relatively new term, describes the interdisciplinary field of cognitive neuroscience, the arts, and learning. As stated previously, the primary focus of the field is to create improved teaching methods and curricula based on the correlation between artistic involvement and the brain. A study published in 2009 called “Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain,” reflects multiple three-year studies from seven universities. These studies examined whether arts training could cause changes in the brain that would consequently enhance other aspects of creativity, cognition, and learning. After much testing and examination, they indeed found that activity in the arts “enhance[s] cognitive development of all ages,”<sup>42</sup> which includes the target audience for the proposed exhibition series – young adults. The study states,

“...arts integration subjectively suggests that carefully structured arts-based pedagogy can improve students’ learning and academic experiences, resulting in demonstrably positive outcomes that include deeper engagement in subject matter and better retention of content; greater emotional involvement in the learning process and deeper social awareness; and the ability to apply principles across disciplines...Arts integration is also important from a national, macroeconomic perspective: graduates are entering the workforce without critical skills that arts-based learning is known to promote—collaboration, creative problem-solving, and the ability to apply learning across different disciplines. Further, exposure to the arts as a participant or observer has the potential to have profound effects on learning and memory, context, and comprehensive creative thinking.”<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, the report declared explicitly that practice in art forms actually changes cognition and the efficiency of the neural networks involved in attention. As demonstrated by the photo below, #2 indicates what areas of the brain are affected by the study of visual arts. The report states,

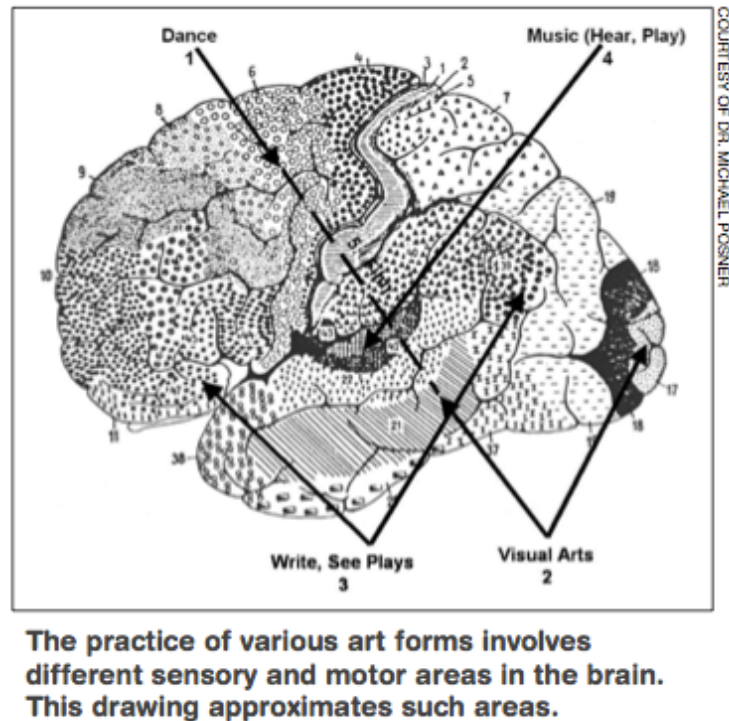
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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Hardiman, Mariale, Magsamen, Susan, McKhann, Guy, and Eilber, Janet.  
“Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain.” The Dana Foundation.  
Dana Press. New York. 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

“Art forms involve distinct brain circuits, including, of course, sensory networks. For example, music engages the auditory system and the visual arts engage the visual system. Studies have provided a detailed analysis of the many brain areas involved in each of the art forms; these areas are quite distinct...”<sup>44</sup>



Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts and the Brain - The Dana Foundation

Therefore, this study’s powerful conclusion reads as follows: “...performance or practice of any art form strengthens the network involved in that art form. So on the question of whether the brain is plastic—can it change with experience—yes, it certainly can.”<sup>45</sup>

## B. Inside the Galleries: The Integration of Hands-On Activities

On May 24, 2013, Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Curator of Education at the Palmer

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Museum of Art, posted on her blog. She wrote, "I've long been an advocate of creating educational experiences that invite museum visitors to engage in a sort of dialogue with works of art – a narrative dance between person and object that evolves over time and changes as visitors have new experiences."<sup>46</sup> Inviting experiential learning within the atmosphere of art galleries would create new hands-on experiences that engage visitors in the unique 'narrative dance' that Kletchka refers to. Furthermore, in his book "Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century (2012), Graham Black deduces that "people today increasingly refuse to be passive recipients of whatever governments, companies, or cultural institutions such as museums offer."<sup>47</sup> Since Black infers that modern audiences prefer active participation, the addition of a hands-on activity in an art gallery would naturally be of importance to young adults. The exhibition series that is proposed by this thesis supports both the 'learning' and the 'doing' of experiential philosophies in a museum environment. The curated collection serves as the 'learning,' while the integrated hands-on art-making experience serves as the 'doing.' This will enliven art galleries in a unique manner, much like the galleries of The Art Gallery of Ontario Museum, The Columbus Museum of Art, and the Denver Art Museum. This type of active environment is also supported by Willard L. Boyd, author of "Museums as Centers of Controversy." He states,

"The extent of interpretation in American Museums is rapidly expanding as museums see their mission changing from offering a passive venue for the already educated to being an active center of leaning for a public of diverse educational and cultural backgrounds."<sup>48</sup>

This kind of museum experience that combines 'learning' and 'doing' will create a sense of a newfound identity within the institution. The act of art-making will be an activity that allows visitors to invest themselves on a personal level, which will also contribute to the discovery and creation of identity and meaning-making. In this way, visitors will feel comfortable in the environment of the exhibition. They will be able to learn on their own terms and at their own pace in the midst of the self-initiated art activity. The comfort and confidence inherently generated in this exhibition experience directly relates to John H. Falk's adjoined theories of identity and visitor experiences in museums. In fact in his book entitled, "Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience," Falk states,

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<sup>46</sup> Kletchka, Dana Carlisle. "Trust You Instincts." Blog post. 24 May 2013. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <<http://sites.psu.edu/danack/>>.

<sup>47</sup> Murawski, Mike. "Possibilities for Evolution: Artists Experimenting in Art Museums." Art Museum Teaching blog post. 14 Oct 2013. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <[artmuseumteaching.com/2013/10/14/artists-experimenting-in-art-museums/](http://artmuseumteaching.com/2013/10/14/artists-experimenting-in-art-museums/)>.

<sup>48</sup> Boyd, Willard L. "Museums as Centers of Controversy." 26 Nov 2013. <[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/anthropology/schildkrout/6353/client\\_edit/week13/boyd.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/anthropology/schildkrout/6353/client_edit/week13/boyd.pdf)>.

“The secret to attracting and building audiences is helping potential visitors understand that the museum can meet and satisfy their individual identity-related needs...Creating museums that work for visitors requires changing how we think about visitors and museum exhibits and programs. We need to stop seeing these as parts of a whole and start seeing them as a single complex, integrated system. Specifically, we need to move away from thinking about types of visitors to types of visits (which vary by identity-related motivations), and from exhibits and programs with specific, singular outcomes to ways of experiencing and using exhibits and programs that allow visitors to achieve multiple, personally relevant goals.”<sup>49</sup>

In “changing how we think about visitors and museum exhibits and programs,” as Falk suggests, the proposed thesis exhibition transitions art-making from programs to the exhibition space. An Excellence and Equity report from the American Association of Museums specified that,

“Concepts of the ‘meaning’ of objects and the way museums communicate about them are changing. Objects are no longer viewed solely as things in themselves, but as things with complex contexts and associated value-laden significance. Each visitor supplies yet another context and another layer of meaning by bringing individual experiences and values to the encounter with objects in a museum setting. Changing interpretive approaches will have a strong impact on museum collections and the public’s understanding of them.”<sup>50</sup>

This statement echoes the way in which this thesis will examine how Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, Scotland created a sense of community ownership with their collection. As seen in The Art Gallery of Ontario, The Columbus Museum of Art, and the Denver Museum of Art, experiential learning also creates a sense of community identity. In one instance in 2006, The Art Gallery of Ontario created an exhibition based on visitor portrait art called “In Your Face: The People’s Portrait Exhibition” (pictured below). It was an open-submission exhibition that featured 17,000 portraits on 4” x 6” postcards. It was an exhibition created by visitors and for visitors. The only requirement (besides the 4” x 6” format) was that a signed copyright release accompany each portrait submittal. The James Irvine Foundation views this specific exhibition as having “buil[t] institutional relevance

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<sup>49</sup> Falk, John H. “Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience.” Left Coast Press, Inc. California, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> McLean, Kathleen. “Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue.” 26 Nov 2013. <<https://blogs.stockton.edu/amst5005/files/2013/01/McLean-Museum-Exhibitions-and-the-Dynamics-of-Dialogue.pdf>>.



and shift[ed] the organization's role from gatekeeper to catalyst of creativity. Programs of this type broaden community 'ownership' by opening their proverbial doors to community artists and inviting their creative voices to be a part of the organization. In doing so, the projects take on a life of their own, exceeding expectations."<sup>51</sup> The exhibition generated so much interest and creativity, a space in the gallery needed to be set aside in order for visitors to immediately create their own portrait to add to the collection. Gillian McIntyre, The Art Gallery of Ontario's coordinator of Adult Programs reflected on the exhibition in the book entitled "Visitor Voices in Museum Exhibitions" edited by Kathleen McLean and Wendy Pollock. She remembered, "There was a tremendous sense that individuals were contributing to and being part of a collective whole through their portraits. As one visitor in the gallery said: 'It's depicting the soul of the society.'"<sup>52</sup> The proposed exhibition will not only inspire creativity and identity, but also create an important sense of belonging and ownership in the institution.



<http://www.ago.net/in-your-face>



<http://www.ago.net/in-your-face>

In a paper entitled "Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue," Kathleen McLean discusses the potential for varying styles of exhibition presentation possible with the addition of different professional opinions and perspectives. For this reason, the thesis' proposed exhibition series would like to involve exhibition designers and practicing artists. She states,

"As museums give more credence to the diversity of ideas, cultures, and values in our society, museum professionals are becoming increasingly conscious of the need to diversify the pool of curators, exhibit developers, and designers who have control of exhibit content and style of presentation... Traditionally, most museum exhibitions have been a one-way conversation

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<sup>51</sup> Brown, Alan S., Novack-Leonard Jennifer L. and Gilbride, Shelly. "Getting In On the Act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation." The James Irvine Foundation. Oct 2011.

<sup>52</sup> McLean, Kathleen and Pollock, Wendy. Visitor Voices in Museum Exhibitions. Washington DC. ASTC. 2007.



‘designed around the cognitive order in the minds of curators.’ Curators assembled the objects, established the conceptual framework, and wrote the exhibition ‘statement’ and labels. Designers then packaged the curatorial material in a three-dimensional form, usually embodying the curator’s vision. Afterwards, the educators prepared interpretive materials that could help visitors make sense of the exhibition experience.”<sup>53</sup>

In this paper, McLean also states the importance of the duality of content and experience in an exhibition. “Historically, exhibition reviews have focused on curator-based content concerns with little or no analysis of form and experience, or design-based aesthetic concerns with no consideration of content and experience.”<sup>54</sup> The proposed exhibition will strive to combine content and experience in a unique way that enriches the conversations between exhibition and visitor, as Dana Carlisle Kletchka asserted in her blog post.

Furthermore, the concise list of related examples of exhibitions and museums provided in Section IV, entitled “Methodology,” demonstrates extensive research regarding the three institutions chosen as case studies.

### C. Artist Involvement: Personalizing the Process.

As already stated in this thesis proposal, with the involvement of artists, a valuable visitor-artist relationship can be established, which assists in propelling the artistic creativity of the visitor. In turn, the visitor will feel a connection not only to the artist, but also to their technique featured in the exhibition. This will personalize the process and allow visitors to feel confident experimenting with an artistic technique that perhaps they’ve had no previous experience with. Artists will serve an integral role in the exhibition methodology, and therefore it is important that they believe in the principles and power of experiential learning - Mark Allen is one example. Allen, an artist, an educator and a curator based in Los Angeles, strongly believes in active participation. In fact, he has stated, “I don’t think ideas are very valuable in themselves. It’s only in the doing of the idea that you learn anything, or anything interesting happens.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> McLean, Kathleen. “Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue. Web. 26 Nov 2013. <<https://blogs.stockton.edu/amst5005/files/2013/01/McLean-Museum-Exhibitions-and-the-Dynamics-of-Dialogue.pdf>>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Murawski, Mike. “Possibilities for Evolution: Artists Experimenting in Art Museums.” Art Museum Teaching blog post. 14 Oct 2013. Web. 24 Jan 2014. <[artmuseumteaching.com/2013/10/14/artists-experimenting-in-art-museums/](http://artmuseumteaching.com/2013/10/14/artists-experimenting-in-art-museums/)>.

Similar to the thoughts of Kathleen McLean, Annelisa Stephan, a participant of a 2012 discussion held at the J. Paul Getty Museum entitled “Do We Need Artists in Museums?,” remarked that “inviting artists into the institution...has ramifications far beyond any individual project. Including artists means taking risks and ceding control; it means changing how museum staff work together; and it even means shifting what a museum is, from a space for art to a space of art.”<sup>56</sup> An art museum that acts as a “space of art” truly will nurture public creativity in a way that the proposed exhibition will seek to capture.

Including an artist to the level that this thesis proposes is still often considered experimental. However, according to The James Irvine Foundation Report, “...more and more institutions are working with artists in ways that expand far beyond simply placing their works on the walls, instead inviting artists to bring their artistic practice to bear on creating experiences that actively engage visitors...”<sup>57</sup>

This thesis will examine many examples of artist involvement in museum settings to accurately anticipate how and to what level artists could participate. Several examples of artist involvement in museums are listed in Section IV “Methodology.”

#### **X. Front-End Evaluation (see attached)**

As stated in Section IV “Methodology,” a front-end evaluation survey will be conducted targeting visitors (young adults, age 18-29) in order to effectively shape the progression of this thesis. This will collect information about the audience and inform decisions about the proposed ideas. This will occur in the form of online surveys and in-person interviews. Online surveys (using Survey Monkey, or another similar format) will be shared through social media. In-person interviews can occur in the lobby of the institution (or on the grounds of the institution).

#### **XI. Mind Map (see attached)**

#### **XII. Idea Trap**

- Are examples of performance art that occur in the gallery relevant or useful in proving that visitors can get engaged in a different way? Although visitors do not participate, they often watch while artists perform in the gallery. (Ex: Janine Antoni at The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, 1996).

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

- How does the institutional construct and context effect approach? These factors can change based on location and culture of a particular city that houses the museum. This could possibly effect what museums attempt to execute this approach.
- What would the directions be at the individual art-making stations? How much interpretation and direction do young adults need or want? Would this be the responsibility of the museum educator? What form of directions would be most successful – Words? Imagery? Words and imagery combination? Video tutorial? Instructions by artist whose work is on display?
- Should there be an option within the exhibition to contribute to a community piece using what they produce during the art-making activity? Instead of everyone making an individual piece, visitors can make something specifically to add to and build upon a piece that other visitors have already contributed to. This would further strengthen the community bond. Where could this be exhibited after completion? (Inside the museum vs. Outside the museum.)

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#### **XIV. Proposed Timeline (see attached)**

**1) How often do you visit art museums?**

- a) less than once a year   b) 1-2 times a year   c) 2-5 times a year   d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**2) Have you ever been invited by an art museum to participate in a hands-on activity inside a gallery space?**

- a) Yes. If so, when/where/what kind? \_\_\_\_\_

b) No.

**3) If 'yes' to #2, did the activity improve your experience during your museum visit?**

- a) Yes. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- b) No. Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**4) If all materials were provided for you, would you be interested in being able to experiment with art-making tools to make a piece of original artwork?**

- a) Yes. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- b) No. Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**5) If 'yes' to #4, would you be interested in allowing the museum to display your artwork with similar artwork that other people made in the exhibition?**

- a) Yes. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- b) No. Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**6) Would you be interested in meeting and talking with an artist whose work is on display in the exhibition?**

- a) Yes. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- b) No. Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**7) What's the best way you learn?**

- a) Reading directions

- b) Instructional diagram with pictures

- c) Both written directions and diagram

- d) Video tutorial

- e) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographics:**

**What gender do you identify with?**

M      F      Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip Code** \_\_\_\_\_

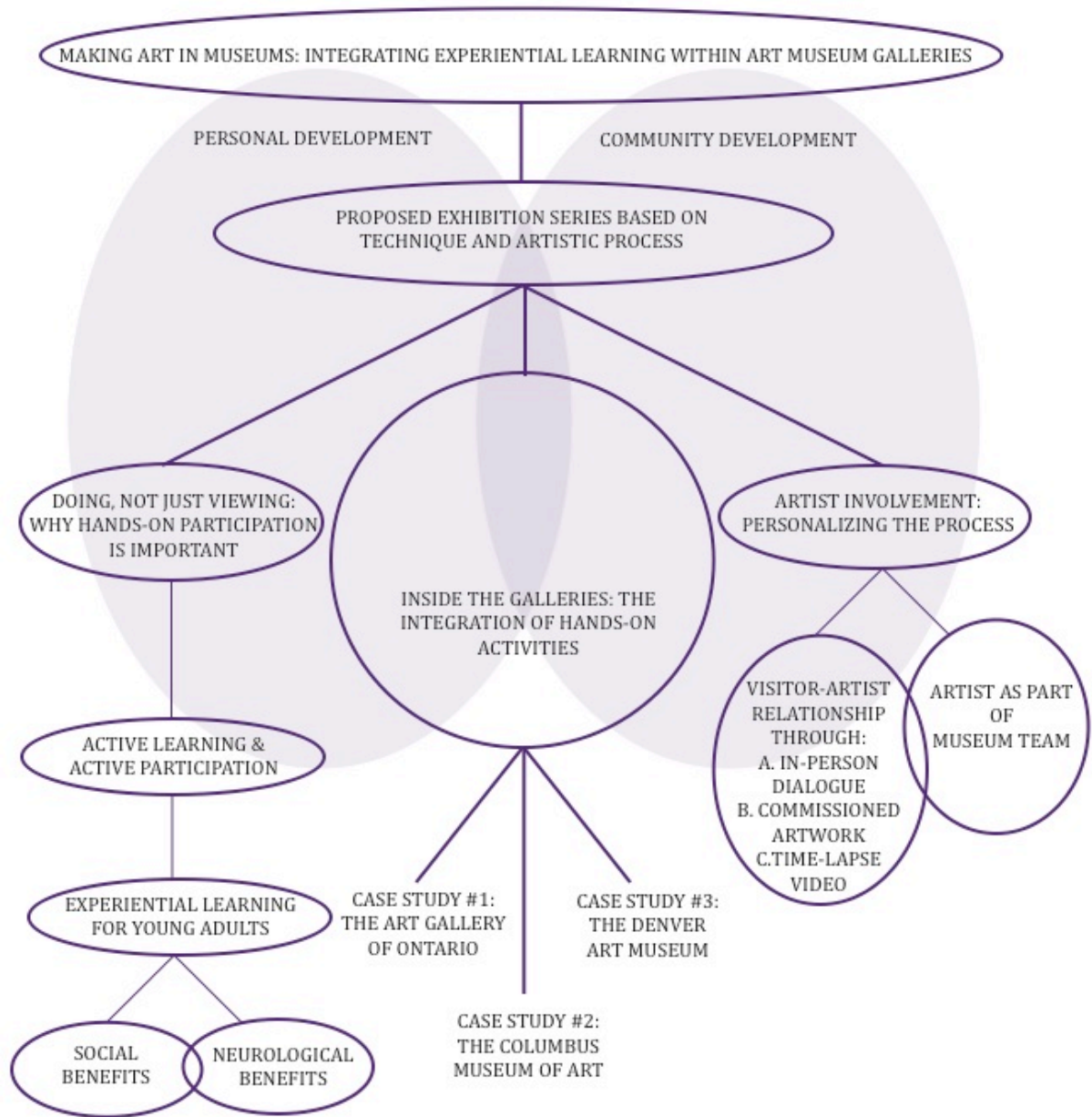
**What is your age range?**

- a) 7 – 17      b) 18 – 29      c) 30 – 39      d) 40 – 49      e) 50 – 59      f) 60 – 69      g) 70+

**What is your highest level of education?**

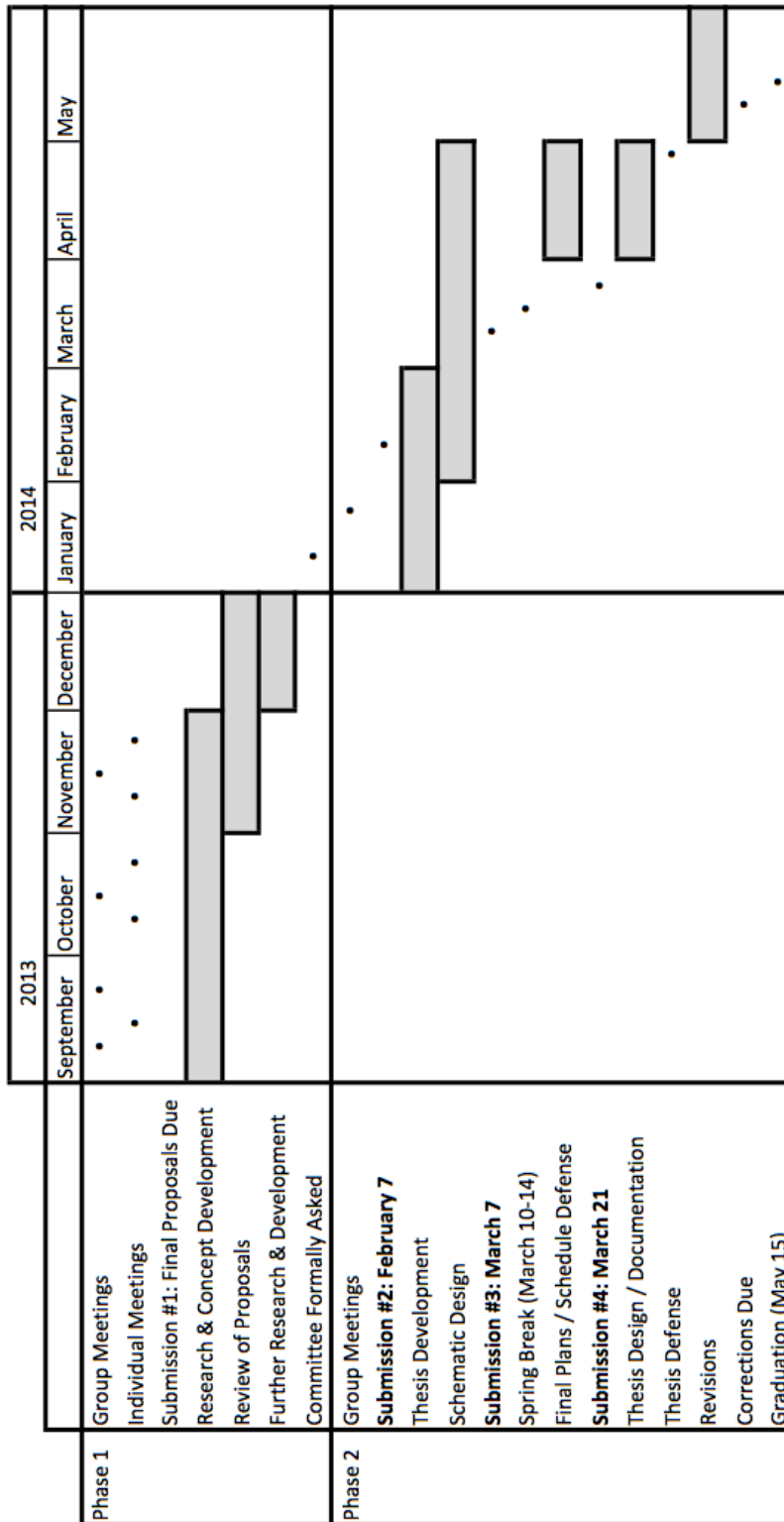
- a) High School      b) College      c) Graduate School      d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Mind Map  
Ashley Geremia



## Proposed Timeline

### Ashley Geremia





## Spring 2014 Thesis Schedule – Important Dates

### January

- **Tuesday January 21:** Spring Semester Begins

### February

- **Friday February 7:** Thesis Submission
- **Friday February 7 – Friday February 14:** Committee Review and Comments (written or verbal)

### March

- **Friday March 7:** Thesis Submission
- **Friday March 7 – Friday March 14:** Committee Review and Comments (written or verbal)
- **Friday March 21:** Targeted Thesis Submission
- **Friday March 21 – Friday March 28:** Committee Review and Comments (written or verbal)

### April

- **Friday April 11 – Friday April 25:** Thesis Defense Conducted  
**Final Submissions** due 7-12 days before Defense date

### May

- **Monday April 28 – Friday May 2:** Committee Chair/Student review of corrections
- **Friday May 2:** Final addressed comments due to Chair and program director