



FEMINIST ADULT EDUCATORS' GUIDE

TO AESTHETIC, CREATIVE AND DISRUPTIVE STRATEGIES IN MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY

**Edited by
Darlene E. Clover, Suriani Dzul kifli, Hannah
Gelderman and Kathy Sanford**

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Darlene E. Clover, Suriani Dzulkifli, Hannah Gelderman, Kathy Sanford



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Left: Participant artwork, photograph by Nic Dickson.

Right: Puppet in the *Disobedient Women* exhibition, photograph and puppet by Mary-Wynne Ashford.

Back cover figures:

Left: "Houses of Unrest", photograph by Sarah Williamson.

Right: (Re)Interpretation Installation of Ruth Lea Figure Taylor's collection in the *Disobedient Women* exhibition, photograph by Darlene E. Clover.

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An initiative of

The Gender Justice, Creative Pedagogies and Arts-Based Research Group,
University of Victoria, Canada

Designed and compiled by

Hannah Gelderman and Suriani Dzulkifli

Territory Acknowledgement

We want to acknowledge that we designed and compiled this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide to Aesthetic, Creative and Disruptive Strategies in Museums and Community* based out of the University of Victoria, BC, Canada, a colonial institution on the lands of the Lək'wəŋən (Lekwungen) peoples, that today are known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples that today are the W̱JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), BOŲÉĆEN (Pauquachin), SṪÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱SIŲEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nations, all which have a historical and ongoing relationship with these lands.

As settlers and visitors to this land who are also working in this institution that has an immanent connection between colonialism and all forms of violence, we, as feminist adult educators continue to work towards decolonizing and dismantling these systems of patriarchy, dominance and oppression through ways such as producing and publishing this Guide.

We are grateful to the communities of the local Peoples and Nations to be able to live, play and work on these lands. We are grateful to have the opportunity to learn from those who have lived on these lands for a millennia and who continue to resist colonization and genocide, while offering paths forward for us as human beings to respectfully be in the right relationship with these lands and each other.

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Contributors

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PRECARIOUS WORKERS BRIGADE

Precarious Workers Brigade are a UK-based group of precarious workers in culture and education. Their praxis springs from a shared commitment to research and actions that are practical, relevant and easily shared and applied. They develop tactics and tools to put an end to precarity and work towards social justice.

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Astrid Schönweger resides in Merano, Italy. She worked as a publicist for almost twenty years and joined the Women's Museum Meran in 1989. She finished her studies of political science with focus on research on women in 1997 and took over the management of the women's museum Meran until 2004. Since 2008, Astrid has been the coordinator of the International Association of Women's Museums (IAWM); and has published books and articles about women's history, concept of women's museums and IAWM.

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Introduction

DARLENE E. CLOVER

Welcome to this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide to Aesthetic, Creative and Disruptive Strategies in Museums and Community*. It brings together a collection of imaginative aesthetic, arts-based and arts-informed methods, strategies and approaches to educating and research across community and institutional settings. This collection is a culmination of our responses to a deeply troubled gendered, colonial, unjust and unsustainable world and the role we know that art and creative practices can play. We believe fully that feminist adult education and research have transformative potentials when they encourage people to think critically as well as creatively, to critique power relations yet remain playful and hopeful, and to act individually yet more importantly, collectively and intentionally to disrupt, destabilize and dismantle continuing gender and other forms of inequity that often make other worlds seem impossible to achieve. Each of these contributions uses critical artistic production and analysis as means to visually educate, aesthetically illuminate, creatively initiate, imaginatively interrogate, performatively investigate, poetically motivate or theatrically activate for a more just, healthy and sustainable world.

We, the co-editors and authors, are adult, teacher or museum educators, professors, researchers, activists, students and/or artists who work within and across various contexts. These contexts include universities, museums and art galleries, and diverse community settings. We bring these together for the first time for three important reasons. Firstly, there is a new and evolving emphasis on the greater social purpose of higher education and arts-based research; as a result, pedagogical work is being developed in university contexts that has the potential to augment the interests of gender justice and change in concrete practical ways, rather than simply as abstractions. Secondly, although museums and art galleries are often ignored they, like universities, are part of what makes up 'community'; they too are working hard to become agents of change and actors/activists for social justice and change, making them more provocative sites for critical feminist teaching, learning and research. In addition, there is exciting creative feminist pedagogical and activist work unfolding within our institutional walls which is working to disrupt, challenge and re-make normative institutional practices and purposes. Moreover, as illustrated in numerous ways in the Guide, some of their practices (e.g. exhibitions, hacks) could work equally effectively in community contexts. Thirdly, community-based artists and

creative practitioners have always been a source of inspiration and change in the quest for global equality. Yet the breadth and scope and thus value of these artist-practitioners is not fully understood in either universities or museums and art galleries beyond traditional artist in residence programmes. By bringing these institutions and settings together, our aim is to enrich and expand potential alliances of activity and activism for gender, social and ecological change. The activities, practices and thinking highlighted in this Guide range from critical reflections on working with vulnerable populations to storytelling, from instructional guides to found poems. Some authors 'mine' objects while others curate installations and exhibitions; some authors focus on language as others tackle forms of representation; some authors teach us the use of fiction as others employ theatre tactics; some authors wield cameras as others create card games; some authors muse about the power of art as others decolonize and encourage visual literacies; some authors encourage voice as others teach us how to listen. Despite the differences of emphasis, artistic genre or location, all of the work in this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide* is grounded in and informed by feminism(s) and the spirit of political intent, activism and renewal that it both fosters and embodies.

Lessons feminists teach

Sarah Ahmed (2017) importantly asks us to ponder what we understand when we "hear the word feminism?" (p. 1). Some hear a word they believe to be no longer necessary while others align with man-hating or classist white privilege. But at the core of this collection is the resurgence of feminisms and their insistence on substantive and fundamental change across all institutions and aspects of society. Ahmed, along with the contributors to this volume, therefore hear a word filled "with hope, with energy" (p. 1), with the spirit of possibility and change. Feminisms are complex because they are at once philosophies, theories, practices, standpoints and movements with multiple manifestations, incarnations and interpretations. Over the years, as feminists have grappled with an unjust world, they have learned much and we share a number of important lessons we have learned from engaging with injustice and challenge in this world.

One lesson we have learned is that patriarchy and its active binary-making and value-judgements is real, it is powerful and it has the resources with which to fight back. Despite gains made by feminists, evidence shows that "patriarchal power has reasserted itself in new ways and progress has been reversed" (Black et al., 2019, p. 15). Sometimes patriarchy is wielded openly

like a blunt violent instrument but more often it is more cleverly concealed in the folds of colonialism, imperialism, racism, classism, nationalism, ageism, heteronormativity and a gendered status quo. In other words, patriarchy works both overtly and covertly as a 'now you see it, now you don't' cycle of attempts to marginalize, oppress and exclude. This *chiaroscuro* of patriarchy, feminists teach us, requires two types of responses. The first is to act with extraordinary courage, raising heads above the parapet by taking to the streets to speak truth to power and openly defy gender and its handmaiden forms of injustice. The second approach is less detectable -- quiet, persistent and patiently considered feminist acts yet they too are critical processes of refusal and defiance that contribute to the 'nature' of the changes this world requires. The contributions in this Guide show us some of the ways this is done.

A second linked lesson feminists have taught us is that 'woman' is not a stable category; we are not all the same and we do not see or experience the world the same. This understanding of the nuances of 'woman' calls for new and deeper knowledge and responses in acknowledgement of our different subjectivities and identities, of ways in which race, sexuality, class, ethnicity, age and ability intersect, and particularly of the cultural production of gender identities as patriarchal power if we are to bring about substantive change. We must also come to see how the explicit and hidden curriculum of patriarchy works to sustain multiple injustices that have divided women, setting them apart and against each other by continually throwing up more complex hierarchies to scale, and deeper cracks to traverse. As bell hooks (1984) reminds us, it has made it "easier to ignore, dismiss, reject and even hurt one another" (p. i). Many of the authors in this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide* illustrate how we can unearth, through representation, debate, questioning, performing, and other acts of creativity, the root causes of gender injustice and separation to build solidarity and make links to allies. Forging connections and alliances modifies our political and social identities, and expands our "horizons of intelligibility" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 25).

A further lesson we have learned from feminists is that there is no one single definition of feminism. Moreover, "living a feminist life does not mean adopting a set of ideals or norms of conduct" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 1). However, it does mean asking ethical questions about how to live better in an unjust and unequal world (in a not-feminist and antifeminist world); how to create relationships with others that are more equal; how to find ways to support those who are not supported or are less supported by social

systems; how to keep coming up against histories that have become concrete, histories that have become as solid as walls (p. 1).

For many who have contributed to this volume, it is also about asking ourselves how we can most creatively disrupt and destabilise the patriarchal power and privilege behind all we see, all we know and all we are allowed to see and know.

Another lesson that feminists teach is that making change is complicated and messy with no easy solutions. No movement for change is straightforward. We try, we get it wrong, we learn from that and we try again. Feminism is therefore a process, a “poiesis to come”, a becoming (Pollock, 2008, p. 277). hooks (1984) argues that we must stay engaged “in constructive confrontation” (p. xi), in learning, re-learning, unlearning. Feminisms have also taught us that women become feminists for different reasons and in different ways. Some of these are powerful and transformative, where coming out as a feminist, as Krista Scott-Dixon (2006) acknowledges, is an “‘aha’ moment of abruptly punctuated reality, when we realize that our world view has been irrevocably altered; anger at social injustice; shame and self-doubt; and a yearning to know more, to gobble up ideas and experiences that speak to a budding consciousness” (p. 11). Scott-Dixon also acknowledges that acquiring a feminist consciousness can be painful and “there are many questions” (p. 11). There are also repercussions and this path is not easy. What matters, as Ahmed (2017) reminds us, is that “we pick each other up” (p. 1) and, we would add through this volume, continue to carry on with imaginative, pedagogical intentionality.

Feminists worldwide have used storytelling as a powerful way of connecting and sharing their thoughts and experiences – they have shown us that stories matter. In particular, all those who identify as women, and all whose gender is not captured in the binary, stories matter because they are central to our ways of making sense of the world, of ourselves and the intersections between the two. However, we continue to exist in a world of stories that have persistently ignored, excluded, stereotyped and otherwise misrepresented women’s diversities, erasing women’s identities, histories, actions and lives. Central to our *Feminist Adult Educators’ Guide* is the illustration of ways that we can encourage women and other vulnerable groups to tell their stories and to show how we can create public spaces and platforms for those stories, for all those who have been silenced to speak their truths and represent their own lives because of their gender and gender expression. Some contributors share their insights through their own stories, with the invitation for you to reflect on

what they share. Others provide more explicit steps and tips on ways to share stories. The power of story is the reason this collection includes museums and art galleries, institutions that are highly authoritative and trusted and are active story tellers of history, art, culture, and society. Problematically, the stories told in these institutions around the world have for the most part been about men, their genius, exploits and conquests, upholding notions of male superiority and absenting women. In other words, 'herstory' is actively silenced by 'history'.

Finally, and building on the above, feminists have taught us that amidst the struggles and divisions, feminism remains a movement "that seeks to bring about *positive* social change" (Black et al., 2019, p. 13). It is a movement based in imagination, humour and hope. Feminisms are hopeful when they celebrate; they are hopeful when they build the resistant, radical and resilient imagination. Hope is what

animates struggle [and] gives a sense that there is a point to working things out, working things through. Hope does not only or always point toward the future, but carries us through when the terrain is difficult, when the path we follow makes it harder to proceed. Hope is behind us when we have to work for something to be possible (Ahmed, 2017, p. 2).

Feminist hope reflects the ability to realistically assess one's environment through a lens of equity and justice while also envisioning the possibility of a better future.

For Indigenous scholar Joyce Green (2017), reclaiming feminism offers us a means to address "issues ranging from colonialism, racism and sexism, sexuality, environmental integrity, and infrastructure, to identity...and political liberation" (p. 17). Moreover, it allows us a means to address what Rajan et al. (2019) call the "violence against women embedded in institutions and structures of society" (p. 255).

Feminist adult education

The question of how we can educate to create unexpected moments that afford both promise and possibility also lies at the heart of this *Feminist Guide*. Our work is grounded in feminist adult education with its history and commitment to the baseline values of gender, social, ecological, economic, and political justice, cultural diversity and equity. These values enable us to work towards decolonization and to use diverse strategies of teaching and learning to promote an active and engaged citizenry. These values, and the ideas included in our *Guide*, encourage new subjectivities and ways of being, particularly to

instil the capacity to imagine and bring into being an equitable and just world.

Similar to 'feminisms', there is no one method of feminist adult education and no one type of educator. It is therefore best characterized as an intentionally facilitated process "of collective learning and knowledge production that enable[s] and provoke[s] self and social transformation toward the realisation of contextually determined feminist goals" (Manicom & Walters, 2012, p. 3). Feminist adult education is a standpoint as well as a very political process of teaching and learning; it is a movement for change and reconciliation and a series of methods and strategies that begin with women's lives, their similar yet diverse experiences of gender oppression, silencing and marginalization (Clover et al. 2015). For Yayina Hazirlayanlar, Merral Akkent and Nehir Kovar (2019), feminist pedagogy

is a gender-based tool that accepts multiple identity characteristics of the individual and aims at individual and social transformation. This tool provides an opportunity to discuss multiple oppression and discrimination processes, to make them visible, to enable learners and [educators] to be aware of authoritarian [patriarchal] tendencies, to emphasize the emotional dimension of learning, [and] to gain skills to produce and apply alternatives (p. 3).

Feminist teaching and learning is also "fundamentally about knowledge" – uncovering, deconstructing and challenging traditional, authoritative patriarchal epistemologies of 'mastery' that limit our vision and allow us to see and to know only "what we are being taught to see [and to know] and to remain blind to what [we] are being taught to ignore" (Cramer & Witcomb, 2018, p. 2). In uncovering and deconstructing, we become aware of our own complicity in the stabilization of patriarchy and the maintenance of injustices such as colonialism, classism and white privilege. Equally, feminist teaching and learning is about applying theory so as to acquire new understandings of the world and how it operates, both overtly and covertly, in order to work toward emancipation and change. Feminist adult education therefore offers "both a language of critique, exploring the origins of women's subjugation and exclusion, and a language of possibility, that is, designing learning environments that enable and support women" and others who have been subject to patriarchy's intolerance of 'difference' through the making of 'the other' (Butterwick, 2015, p. 12).

Through "a conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations [through an] oppositional analytic" (Mohanty, 1989, p. 208), the central strategies of feminist adult education are to build a sense of agency

and confidence, re-frame power as something we have collectively, encourage a more theoretically political understanding of daily lived experiences of oppression and to teach strategies of resistance and defiance. Within this frame, 'voice' as a strategy of empowerment is central to creating spaces for women to tell their stories, as is authentic listening. Butterwick and Selman (2003) speak of the critical need for "deep listening" which they define as an "embodied and active standpoint" of working across difference (p. 7). In this volume they teach us one way to engage in deep listening through participatory audience-making. Other authors show us how to see and to hear women's untold, hidden or misrepresented stories in ways that can, to borrow from Audra Simpson, story of our resistance and story of our refusal to continue to be made invisible and devalued (See Jafri, 2020).

Finally, feminist adult education is about creating 'safe' spaces to share concerns, fears, experiences and stories. But it is equally about risk which can range from engaging in the public actions that attract often fierce and abusive backlash and critique but also about seeing and learning to overcome problematic assumptions ingrained into us by patriarchy and our own complicities in its perpetuation.

Representation and visual literacies

Two other important foundations of this *Feminist Guide* are representation and visual literacies. Higonnet (2009) once asked if it made any difference if a subject was represented? The answer, as clearly discussed earlier in this Introduction, is an astounding affirmative. Just as women's stories and those of others who find themselves outside the important narratives of the world matter, so too does the ways in which they are symbolized, imagined, and portrayed. Mis-representation and exclusion have had a profound effect on attitudes that people have about themselves. These negative "attitudes in turn shape the metaphors" through which women imagine themselves, their creativity" and their place and role in society (Macedo, 2015, p. 90), including issues of body image for women. Representations of masculine creativity and superiority, alongside women's objectivization and fragility, impregnates our vision of subjectivity as non-existent and women, for example, "envisage themselves not as the artistic creator but the art object" (Macedo, 2015, p. 90). Underlying assumptions – the hidden curriculum – that govern seeing demarcates a social imaginary of ignorance in which men perform actively, deeply and intentionally on the world, and women are relegated to passive, shallow, and undervalued roles. Critical visual literacies are therefore important

because they go beyond normative practices of visual literacy, enabling people to read and use the arts toward critical readings of what we ‘think’ we see rather than engaging in passive, unquestioning consumption. Various authors in this *Feminist Adult Educators’ Guide* show us, from a feminist perspective, how we can teach people to read images (and ‘texts’) as political, as systems of meaning housed in representations that are linked to practices that carry privilege, assign value, and produce subjects meaning that are never neutral. Feminist visual and discourse analysis enables analytical looking and the demystification of how representations maintain gender power relations and ideologies (Clover & Sanford, 2019; Clover & Williamson, 2019; Lazar, 2005). A second practice of visual literacy in this volume engages people in the actual making of art, both individually and collectively which turns them from passive consumers to creators and makers. Without the power to define and imagine ourselves in our own interests, women will continue to be subject to the representations of others (e.g. Clover & McGauley, 2015; Marshment, 1993; Pollock, 2008).

Aesthetics practice and the radical imagination

Linked to feminism, feminist adult education, representation and critical visual literacies is a final aspect central to this volume: aesthetics and the radical imagination. What is represented by this *Feminist Guide* is the ‘aesthetic turn’ that has been taken by feminist adult educators. One manifestation is an increase in the use of artistic mediums – theatre, photography, documentary films, metissage – by women to decolonize, revitalize and re-politicize. The understandings of aesthetics in this volume guide us to ways we can become better connected through the conditions in which we live, work and how we can create the political subjectification necessary to interrupt normalized and normalizing codifications of society and distributions of power through creative and alternative ways of knowing, seeing, identifying, and being and working together. For Rancière (2010) and Carson and Pajaczkowska (2001), politics can be aesthetic as it reconfigures ‘the distribution of the sensible’ – the making of common sense – in terms of what we are able, allowed or being made to see, hear and thus, to know. How we radically reorder the making of a patriarchal ‘gendered common sense’ inspires what Manicom and Walters (2012) call the ‘pedagogies of possibility’ central to this volume. This brings us to the imagination, and the right to imagine the possible. For Greene (1995), the role of the imagination is not to resolve but to awaken, to open up our consciousness. For the authors in this book, the role of the feminist radical imagination is to allow that which can be seen, thought, known and produced once patriarchal relations of power are rendered visible.

Our invitation

We invite you to use the methods and practices in this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide* and/or adapt, change and modify them to your own contexts.

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1

M O D U L E O N E

**THE FEMINIST
MUSEUM HACK**

The *Feminist Museum Hack*: A Pedagogical and Interventionist Strategy

BY DARLENE E. CLOVER

As a feminist adult educator, I commit to gender justice and change by designing ways to educate critically and creatively around issues of sexual oppression, exploitation, marginalisation, social control and objectification. I focus on museums and art galleries because through sleight of hand, they tend to position men and masculinity at the centre of the world's stories and creative practices and push women in all their diversity to the peripheries. This patriarchal practice has implications for how women see their place and role in the world and their sense of subjectivity and identity.

The *Feminist Museum Hack* (*FMHack*) is a flexible and adaptable method I have designed in collaboration with colleagues to stimulate an oppositional feminist gaze and encourage acts of disruption to the hidden engendering practices of art and cultural institutions. The *FMHack* has been applied to a variety of permanent and temporary exhibitions in anthropological, historical, textile, war and military, protest, photography, doll and art museums in countries such as Canada, Italy, India, Portugal, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The diversity of museums and the issues they raise means the *FMHack* can never be fixed; it must be a flexible, adaptable tool and therefore, for each site, we modify the *Hack* to align with the museum content. We have explored these sites as researchers and with students and community groups. Below I outline the rudiments of the *FMHack* -- its questions, practices, adaptations, illustrate what it looks like through photos and weave in some of the comments we have heard from participants and students.

How to begin

There are two activities that can be used to set the stage for the *FMHack*. One is to begin by asking workshop participants or students to name five male artists and then five female artists. In most cases, names such as Van Gogh, Dali, Picasso, Rembrandt and Gauguin will come very easily for the former; eyes will cast downward and nervous laughter or dead silence will meet the latter. It has become obvious in the room what has just happened and we then take it further. "Save gender", we note, "we had set no other parameters yet what you visualised and understood was 'European', 'famous' and 'painter'", or whatever fits at the time, and believe me, this is likely to be it even in India, so deep is

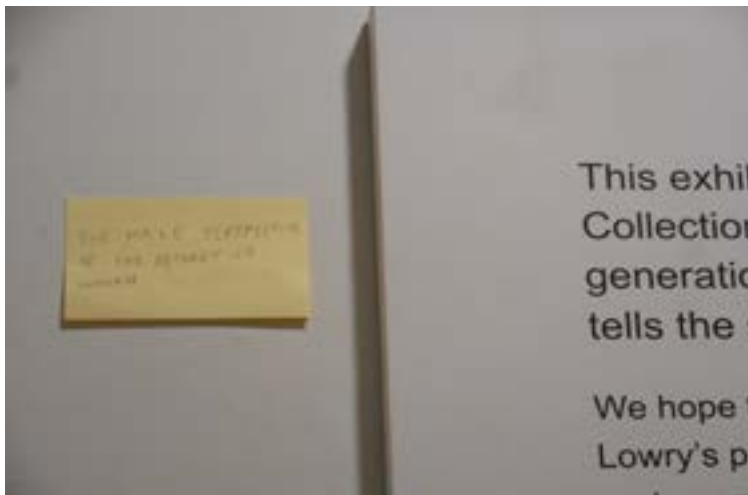


Figure 1: Post-it note beside explanatory statement.



Figure 2: Inequality quantified.

colonial outreach. Activities on historical figures will yield very similar results. “What is responsible for creating such limitations to our cultural, social, political, historical, and aesthetic imaginations”, we query? A number of answers will come forth such as the educational system and fine arts, but now we show them the role art galleries and museums play, what they do and how they do it.

A second activity is what we call “Before and After”. We ask participants or students to give us their impressions of a museum or art gallery they have visited, to share a memory or something they liked or disliked. Most comments are extremely positive, often rooted in childhood visits or a love of art. While there may be some critiques – a room was too dark, a display was too crowded – our experience is to hear no critical analysis. During the *Hack*, it is most satisfying to watch a participant stomp across a gallery floor, blustering with ‘just ire’ at what she has ‘actually’ seen now, but had not before. This is an example of comments from England:

Before: I come here a lot because I really love the artworks.

After: Why are so many of the women naked? There is not equitable treatment. The label basically states the only reason this woman’s painting is in the gallery is because her husband was famous.

The questions and the process

A: There are no women in this exhibition

B: I saw a woman

A: Really?

B: Well, there was a tea service and a lacy fan

A: You saw those as a woman?

Clover & Williamson, 2019, p. 10



Figure 3: Barbie drawing attention to exclusions.



Figure 4: The double standard is illustrated by a post-it note challenge to the language in a label that spoke admirably about a male artist's lustful ways.



Figure 5: All issues are feminist issues.

For every hack we provide participants with a list of questions compiled beforehand (example outlined below), a packet of post-it notes and a pen. We then allocate them into pairs or groups of three, and send them off into either the entire site if the institution is small or a few selected galleries or exhibitions if it is large. The more confined the space the better because they are engaging in deep looking, reading and compiling. Another reason for a more confined space is the limited time we always have for the activities. Students or participants move about the galleries, noting on to the post it notes their thoughts and observations. These are then placed beside an artwork, explanatory label or on a display case.

We have also used Barbie dolls. In Figure 3, a Barbie is strategically placed, drawing attention to the stinging indictment of exclusion on a post-it note. Barbie attracts everyone's attention, particularly children, which means their parents must read to them what is written and explain what it means (See [Module Three](#)).

As noted above, each institution or exhibition is different so although many of our questions will work for each one, others are re-designed or added. The questions, some examples are below, do not tell the students or participants what to see, but they do ask them 'to see', to look and to read, as noted earlier, more deeply. The guiding questions below are a few that came from an actual list from a *FMHack* in England in a small, local art gallery.

Guiding questions

1. How many of the artworks and/or exhibitions are by self-identified women and how many are by self-identified men? Count them.
2. Consider the language being used in the titles

and descriptions of the artworks or exhibitions. What does it tell you about the artist?

3. How many women feature in the artworks in this gallery? How many artworks include men? What are they doing in the work? How are they positioned in relation to one another?
4. What stories do the paintings, narratives, objects tell you about self-identified women? About self-identified men? About trans or non-binary people?
5. How represented do you feel as a self-identified or trans woman in this space? What does it say about you as a male? What does it say about you as non-binary?
6. How many of the permanent exhibits are by women and how many of the temporary exhibits are by women? Do permanence and temporality matter?
7. What stories/images do women artists draw and what do they say about society or women's place and role in society? Are there differences in content or form from the works by men?
8. Are there other issues of 'gender' represented in this gallery? What are they and how are they imagined, storied, placed or illustrated?

Once the gallery or exhibition is littered with post-it notes (see Figures 1, 3 and 4), we come together as a large group and each pair or group and walk around the gallery so they can speak to what they found and discuss its implications for them as educators, for women, for gender justice, for the status quo, and so forth. Conversations can be very lively and there often differing points of view. While some men have been open to learning, others have shrugged off findings as irrelevant and made sexist remarks.

We have also brought all the post-it notes back to a room and grouped them under themes, as illustrated in Figure 5. This figure also illustrates a variation of the *FMHack* - The Ecological Museum Hack. We sent groups into the 'natural history' gallery to look for how the environment was taken up, and in particular, in relation to gender. The number of gender issues that crossed over with those in another part of the museum engaging in the straight up *FMHack* were at best, alarming. Any subject or exhibition will raise problematic gender issues, even feminist exhibitions.

There are a number of other activities we have used to conclude our visit (including the 'after' of the before and after activity noted above). One is to compile a list of suggestions for museum in relation to our findings which the educator can then take to the curators and administrators, and I will return to this. A second is to choose an artwork, object, or diorama and write a poem (and ode), lyrics to a long or a short story from a 'feminist' perspective. An example of the type of story one can write accompanies this piece (*A Feminist Reading of the Exhibition: "The Story the Museum 'Tells'"*). A third is to create a 'revised' label. You use exactly the same wording but add new ideas and meanings that challenge, for example, the neutrality of the language the artists' gaze or inequalities of treatment.

We have also created collages that speak to what we had found using the imagery in an assortment of periodicals.

Challenges

It would be remiss to conclude without talking about some of the challenges we have encountered. Students have been accosted by visitors for 'defacing' the museum. There have been sexist and racist diatribes hurled at us (e.g. "Indigenous peoples were just not as smart"; "women didn't do anything"). While some of our suggestions for changes have been taken up, most have been ignored. One notable exception, however, is the change to an exhibition title that read *Men, animals and machines* whilst the exhibition itself only featured (migrant) women labouring in a field (with children). However, this took years and the tenacity of a wonderful adult educator with whom we worked who refused to give up. Curators also try to tell us that "there is nothing we can do, this is the collection that we have." This is true, it is what they have. But we argue that this does not have to prevent them from drawing attention to the limitations and problems with their collection. It takes a very courageous institution, however, to do this. A fabulous example is the now permanent statements entitled *Feminist Revisions* that accompany the otherwise understood as inclusive and neutral curatorial statements that introduced each exhibition.

Despite these challenges the *FMHack* is a powerful flexible pedagogical strategy. It encourages oppositional visual literacies, creative interventions, and it is anything but predictable in outcome. The *FMHack* is a means to really see at that which does not want to be seen. Try it.

THE STORY THE MUSEUM 'TELLS'

by Rana Battah and Thuy Nguyen

Context

The "Becoming BC" is a permanent exhibition at the Royal British Columbia Museum, that presents a version of BC's history. This is the story we, Rana and Thuy, wrote after conducting a Feminist Museum Hack of the "Becoming BC" gallery in November 2019. Using the Feminist Museum Hack we did a feminist analysis which highlighted the patriarchal, colonial and racist narratives of the exhibit. In our story we use satire to amplify the problematic nature of what is implied by the objects and information on display.

Our Story

The museum's story begins with the industrial revolution, and the expeditions to Vancouver Island. Strong, powerful and ambitious men built big ships and came across the sea to 'discover' the island and meet their ethical obligations of bringing 'civilization' to these lands. The queen's ships carried fancy sets of plates, tea cups, forks, spoons and knives to continue important dining etiquette and teach it to the people encountered on the island.

Due to the hard work of these strong men and their relentless efforts, big companies were established and railways were built to transfer 'interesting cargo', such as immigrants, we are told. In addition, they made sure to add their contribution to both World Wars I and II which resulted in strengthening the economy for them. Then there was a great idea to map the island, so the Spanish, British and Americans joined efforts to achieve this, with a slight 'contribution' of the original nations on the island, while also trying to stop the Russian intruders who thought they could have a piece for themselves! How dare they!

You might wonder what the women were doing meanwhile? Well, women all wore elegant dresses and hats and made sure to show support to their men by waving goodbye to them at sea shores, and taking care of the children at home. A lot of time was obviously taken up role modeling the most up-to-date fashion trends such as fancy dresses and silk gloves. Other women, who seemed to have darker skin and different facial features, took other roles reserved just for them. They worked in the fields with animals, or cleaned the fish and foods in factories before they were canned to be sold by the big factories founded by the brave strong white men.

All women played an important role in society by meeting the sexual desires of their strong men after their long work days; sometimes this happened in homes, but other times in places specially designed for this purpose! Finally, women were able to find their way to support the economy by using their sexy bodies and outfits as pictures on market products, which boosted the sales of the products and made man's companies rich.

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Clover, D. E. & Williamson, S. (2019). The *Feminist Museum Hack* as an aesthetic practice of possibility and dissent. *Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (RELA), 10(2), 143-160.

Variations on the Feminist Museum Hack: Feminist Antimilitarist

BY NANCY TABER

I have adapted the feminist museum hack to analyze war/military exhibits, museums, and heritage sites. My feminist antimilitarist learning hack is informed by Enloe's (2016) exploration of the gendered ways in which militarism and patriarchy intersect, in militaries and in society, propping up binary thinking in that men are viewed as military masculine protectors and women as civilian feminine protected (regardless of the multiplicity of ways in which gender is enacted), with life as a zero-sum game won by violence against enemy others. This hack connects to my argument that "war and violence affect the pedagogy of our daily life" (Taber, 2009, p. 196). As Luke (1996) explains, "learning and teaching...are the very intersubjective core relations of everyday life. They exist beyond the classroom, are always gendered and intercultural (p. 7, italics in original). My aim is therefore to help adult educators and museum visitors explore the varied ways they learn in museums, and to link their learning to other contexts and to a societal critique. The feminist antimilitarist learning hack explores how war, violence, and militarism in everyday life are connected to the context of museums and vice versa. It takes up gender by exploring the ways in which various forms of femininities and masculinities are performed, privileged, and marginalized (Butler, 1990/2006; Connell, 2005, 2012) as well as how they are positioned with respect to discourses and actualities of wars, militaries, and militarism. It is therefore not just about women, but also about how men, women, those who do not fit into that binary, and society intersect with notions and performances of femininity, masculinity, and militarism. These were some of the themes and questions that I considered:

Rethinking war. How is war represented? As a necessity? Is it glorified and/or problematized? Is it critical? Simplified? Complex? How/is it connected to the masculinization of nations?

Rethinking military. How is the military represented? As a heroic masculine sacred institution? As a complex institution with flaws? How/does it relate to everyday life?

Rethinking roles in military. How are military personnel represented? As heroes? As everyday people? As masculine? How are civilians represented? Are they men or women? What about in terms of race, gender, class, Indigeneity, and ability? Who are the protectors and who are the protected? Who is the enemy? Who is masculinized and who is feminized?



Figure 1: Positioning of women by play area. (All photographs taken by the author).



Figure 2: Weapons Display at the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History (Brussels, Belgium). Colleague Dr. Kathy Sanford is pictured with her permission.

Rethinking gender and other identities in military. How many of the exhibitions are about women and how many are about men? Which ones are permanent and which are temporary? What does this say? What women and men are represented (race, class, disability, sexuality)? What are they doing? How are they positioned? What story does this tell about women and men? About body politics and a gendered gaze?

Rethinking the language. What is the language being used in the titles and descriptions of the exhibitions? Is it gender sensitive? Patronising? Questioning and provocative vis-à-vis women/gender, Indigeneity, race, class, and ability? Inclusive? Critical? Militaristic? What historical narrative does it privilege?

Rethinking stories. Whose stories are told? How well known are the stories of the women who are featured? Better than the men featured or the same? What does it say about cultural knowledge?

Rethinking weapons. How are weapons represented? Are they connected to the damage they inflict? Are they presented as technical masculine marvels?

Rethinking the space. What is the architecture of the building? How does the space engage with the visitor? Are exhibits behind glass and ropes? Are there interactive exhibits? Can the visitor experience what it might have been like to inhabit that time and place? Are there opportunities for embodied learning? Is there a gift shop? What does it sell? How does it connect to the narratives of the museum and its exhibits?

Rethinking the context. How/does the museum/heritage site interact with its local context?

Rethinking the pedagogy. What is the museum's or heritage site's pedagogy with respect to war, militarism, and gender?

Tying it up. How can educators address the responses to the above questions to work for social justice?

In order to demonstrate how these questions work with respect to femininity, masculinity, and militarism, I have included a few examples from my ongoing research.

1. Positioning:

Where exhibits about women are positioned are important in that it shows how they are conceptually connected to certain people and ideals. For instance, at the Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt Naval and Military Museum (Victoria, Canada), one room dedicated to women is connected to the children's play area (See Fig. 1). Women's service in the Canadian military, although constrained by historical policies and contemporary practices with the majority of women serving in traditional roles, is complex, with women also breaking stereotypes in typically masculine occupations (Taber, in press). The positioning - or stagecrafting, as described by Bergsdottir (2016) - of these two rooms at CFB Esquimalt reduces the multifaceted nature of women's service, inextricably associating it with femininity, the home front, and motherhood.

2. Weapons:

At the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History (Brussels, Belgium), a massive room is dedicated to the display of weapons, which tends to glorify them as masculine violent technological marvels instead of



Figures 3 and 4:
The set of shackles are labeled, "You are welcome to try to shackles on."



Figure 5: Imperial War Museum North's small entrance under the sign. The explanation on the right is from a label inside the museum.

"I wanted to create a building that people will find interesting and wish to visit, yet reflects the serious nature of a war museum. I have imagined the globe broken into fragments and taken the pieces to form a building; three shards that together represent conflict on land, in the air and on the water."

Daniel Libeskind, Architect, 1997

demonstrating the horror they inflict on humans (See Fig. 2). As Rath (2012) explains, when weapons are decontextualized from their impact, they are viewed as "cool" (p. 180) with an "object fetishism" (p. 177); this is sometimes a welcome affect as it can attract paying visitors, but it also further privileges nationalist and militarist stories of (male) heroism (Loxham, 2015; Rath, 2012; Tythacott, 2015).

3. Interactivity:

At the Danish War Museum (Copenhagen, Denmark), there is a display of punishments that were used on sailors. The set of shackles are labeled, "You are welcome to try to shackles on" (See Figs. 3 and 4). Interactive opportunities are a component of feminist embodied learning, which recognizes connections between people's minds and bodies (hooks, 1984/2008; 1994). As Smith (2014) explores, however, affective engagement with museums does not equal a critical perspective, and it can often simply further cement problematic notions of national identity. The interactive activities pictured here position war, violence, and punishment as unproblematic fun, which promotes militarized masculinity.

4. Architecture:

The Imperial War Museum North (IWM North) uses architecture as a way to unsettle visitors and have them consider the 'serious nature of a war museum.' The entrance is tiny (See Fig. 5) in comparison to the building as a whole, making visitors feel small (See Loxham's (2015) discussion of the architecture of IWM North for a similar argument). Also, the Canadian War Museum (CWM) (Ottawa, Canada) has an architectural theme of regeneration in that "the Museum recognizes the harsh reality of war, yet offers hope that, like the regenerating landscape, Canadians will inherit a future free from conflict" (Canadian War Museum, n.d., para. 3). These examples of critical architecture

are in contrast to military and war museums that are unproblematically housed in armouries, many of which are still in use for military training and service. As the aim of armoury museums is often to recognize heroic masculine service and promote esprit de corps, critiquing them can be viewed as unpatriotic (Raths, 2012; Tythacott, 2015). By remembering war in buildings specifically built for that purpose, such as IWN North and CWM, a critical element as part of the architecture can assist with a feminist approach. In fact, the IWM North centred its stories not around men's service, but the ways in which war affects civilians and society, with much space devoted to differing gendered and raced experiences.

5. Local contexts:

At the Drummond Hill Cemetery and Lundy's Lane Battlefield (Niagara Falls, Ontario), the Battle of Lundy's Lane is used as a tourist draw (Fig. 6). In contrast, cemeteries in the Ypres Salient such as the Duhallow A.D.S. Cemetery (Ieper, Belgium) are understated with little signage (Fig. 7). The former uses the memory of war to leverage tourism, drawing people to spend their money on visiting sites (although the cemetery and battlefield is free), restaurants, and accommodations. As Enloe (2014) explains, tourism is a gendered industry, with women in the most underpaid and precarious positions. Furthermore, positioning war as tourism reifies it as a commodified good, rendering it neutral and beyond critique. Feminists such as Enloe (2014, 2016) trace the connections between transnational corporations, capitalist financialization, war, masculinity, and femininity, wherein, as I've argued elsewhere (Taber, forthcoming), "war is traded, literally and figuratively, for money, which generally benefits elite white men over women, particularly women of colour." The latter example demonstrates that the memory of war does not have to be commodified.



Figure 6: Drummond Hill Cemetery and Lundy's Lane Battlefield (Niagara Falls, Ontario).



Figure 7: Duhallow A.D.S. Cemetery (Ieper, Belgium).

Although there are tours of Ypres battlefields, one has to go looking for information on them; they are not advertised by the site.

FEMINIST ANTI-MILITARIST HACK QUESTIONS

The questions in the feminist antimilitarist hack help illuminate what may not be immediately obvious to the viewer. Although it may not be possible to change permanent collections and the architecture of museums, it is relatively straightforward to assist visitors in thinking differently, by adding curatorial statements and/or engaging visitors in discussion about questions such as:

Questions about women. Why are the women positioned next to children? How does this positioning affect how women are viewed? If they were positioned in another location, might they be viewed differently?

Questions about weapons. What are the affects of these weapons? If the casualties and deaths they enable were made clear here, would it change how visitors think about them? What about the humans that use these weapons? Why are they absent? When you think about who uses the weapons, who are they? What do they look like? Who are they used against?

Questions about punishments. What were the bodily affects of these punishments? Who had the power to inflict them? How might this affect the actions of the sailors? How does a child shackling themselves for fun intersect with the violence of the exhibit? What type of “fun” does this promote?

Questions about space. How does the architecture inform one’s visit to a museum? Does it put the visitor in a critical mind or one that accepts the status quo? How does a museum inside a working military environment (built to support the military) contrast with one that was built specifically to critique war?

Questions about intended audience. Do the heritage sites aim to attract tourists? What are the pros and cons of doing so? What affect might this have on how visitors interact with and learn from the site? How does it intersect with the tourism industry?

Adult educators and museum/heritage site visitors can use these questions and examples to understand how gendered militarism operates in often unacknowledged ways in order to problematize these representations.

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Hacking the Representation of Gender in the Museums

BY JENNIFER THIVIERGE

I have been actively engaged as an educator for approximately 15 years, teaching various subjects to students from elementary school age to university. I am interested in teaching history and the methodologies of learning history, particularly in non-educational settings. Because of this interest, in July of 2019 I attended a workshop on *Historical Thinking* in Canada's capital city, Ottawa, Ontario. The [Historical Thinking](#) framework centres on six main concepts that aim to teach students 'historical literacy' where they will learn about not just facts and dates but begin to comprehend events from the past. The Historical Thinking concepts are predominantly used in elementary and secondary schools in Canada, but I believe these concepts are useful in many different contexts with audiences of all ages. I had first learned of the concepts during the coursework for my PhD. They were introduced by Canadian scholars Peter Seixas and Tom Morton in 2013 and have become an integral part of history education. These concepts are complex to use and facilitate, thus enrolment in the course allowed me to become familiar with using the concepts.

Historical Thinking workshop

The five-day workshop took place in two of Canada's national museums, with the first three days in Canadian Museum of History and the last two at the Canadian War Museum. The sessions were guided by two professors well versed in the historical thinking concepts. The participants for the workshop were a diverse group of educators, historians and writers of history. The sessions were supplemented with guest speakers from the museums. One of the guest speakers was Britt Braaten, a learning specialist with the Canadian War Museum who facilitated a working session on the historical thinking concept of continuity and change. To discuss continuity and change in the museum, she led us through a version of the 'feminist hack' of the Canadian War Museum. Britt provided us with a worksheet to facilitate the hack. I will use this worksheet as a starting point to describe our process of the feminist hack in the museum as well as provide further discussion points and questions for a debrief session before and after the hack.

Women in the museum

As a starting point for museum visitors of all ages, it would be helpful as Britt did in her introduction to our class, to discuss the limitations of the collection and the provenance of the artefacts in the museum's collections. Britt discussed how the museum had a past of collecting and displaying objects and histories on men's historical and current involvement in war. The curation style and the object provenance in the Canadian War Museum were wholly geared to collecting men's memories and interpretations of war. This was a part of the historical thinking concept of continuity and change as she stated that museums have collected men's objects in the past and although awareness is growing and museums are beginning to collect items belonging to women, there are still issues of resistance and tension to create exhibitions about women and their stories. The few objects that were directly related to women were usually collected as part of a story connected to the men in their lives, and not their individual and unique experiences as women in war.

Clover et al. (2018) noted that women do not donate their items to war museums because the women believe their items are not worth donating. The objects associated with war museums are tanks and medals, and women's items such as letters and gloves are not considered by the women and the museum curators as important items to add to a museum's collection. As museum displays have been geared toward heroism and a narrative of male accomplishments, Brandon (2010) stated that a female-oriented narrative of history has not been reflected in collection practices. War Museums have had a past of presenting women minimally or within settings that are domestic such as on the home front or women at home. There are a few stories of war nurses and female military members, particularly 'doing their bit' during the First and Second World Wars but these stories are not always complete and provide a sideline to the male-centric portion of the overall exhibit space.

In creating exhibitions that represent women, Bergsdóttir and Hafsteinsson (2018) have argued that women's presence has been "built into the exclusionary practices" (p. 101) in the museum. Women have been excluded by processes of creating grand narratives that centre around the experiences and accomplishments of men (Cramer & Witcomb, 2018). By acknowledging this limitation of too few women in the museum, Butterwick (2016) said that we are giving voice to women's silence and empowering their message to further trouble the grand narrative. Using a version of the gender hack allowed our group to start to be able to really stop and look and see the number of women

and men represented in the Canadian War Museum.

My focus: Gender representation in the museum

Britt provided us with a sheet titled *Representing Gender in Museums* that we were to fill out while she guided us through specific sections of the war museum. She has graciously granted her permission to share the form we used during our workshop presentation (See on [p. 20](#)). The sheet can be used with classes and groups of different ages and in various spaces to begin the conversation about gender representation in the museum.

We worked in teams of two, one person focussed on finding the women to fill out the sheet and the other person focussed on the men. Britt guided us through the museum, stopping at specific spots so we had time to look and fill out the sheet. The spots she chose were based on a historical timeline, to consider if the portrayal and role of women had changed throughout the exhibit space, which connects to the topic of continuity and change. She told me as an aside that the specific exhibit on the homefront was added in 2015 which was much later than the other spaces where we stopped. This would have been a great discussion on continuity and change as well, to see whether the curatorial styles changed throughout time. She asked us to record when we found a man or woman, whether they were named, their role in the exhibit, the presentation method, their presence in the story (as hero/background, etc.) and record notes of anything we found interesting. It was not meant to be an extensive note-taking exercise as we were only allowed approximately five minutes at each stop. We had to quickly scan through photos, artefacts, and exhibit panels to locate information on either men or women.

I had chosen to look for men in the exhibits and I noticed the ways women's contribution to the war were presented in contrast to men's. Men were listed as heroically fighting on the front lines, while women were listed in their relationship to the men. Discussions of wives, mothers, sisters, girlfriends were always presented in relation to their male counterparts. The newer galleries that exhibit war in the 20th century still have many of the accomplishments of men. However, women were represented in conflict zones, shown as interpreters, translators and victims. They were rarely if ever shown in terms of their own agency in combat. The lack of women's presence was especially evident in the later exhibit on war wounds, where I found myself very busy trying to write down the representation of men, whereas my partner was leisurely walking around the exhibit as there were very few women.

Using the sheet to interact with the exhibits, I became starkly aware of the overwhelming presence of men and their stories, except for the homefront. Even then, the letters written to the men on the front lines were highlighted as opposed to the stories of the women and children. I would have liked more information on the mothers and whether they encouraged or helped the children write their letters.

We had an extensive discussion at the beginning of her presentation which did not allow time for a debrief session at the end. This was unfortunate because I had informal discussions with our group during our break and it seems many others including myself, saw the benefit of using this sheet in the museum, but had little time to discuss. The whole activity took about an hour and felt quite crunched for time, so more time would be needed to fill out the paperwork.

THE STEPS

In order to facilitate a gender hack, one that is complete and creates deep thinking and understanding, using the historical thinking concept continuity and change, there needs to be time for a pre- and post-session to debrief and discuss. The suggested steps are as follows:

Step 1: Discuss the collecting habits of the museum. Ask questions about the limitations of the collection and whether collection practices have changed or remained the same. Further questions can be discussed such as the following:

- What is the age/background of the building that houses the exhibits?
- What has been/is currently the mandate of the museum?
- What items has the museum collected in the past and today? How were these items chosen?
- How many exhibits have focused solely on women considering the age of the exhibit?
- In the particular museum, are you expecting more stories about women/men or parity? Why?

Step 2: Explain the handout and divide the group into partners. One person chooses to look for men in the exhibit and the other person looks for women.

Step 3: Lead the group through the museum space, and depending on the size

of the exhibit, stop at specific points. These stopping points can be chosen beforehand based on the facilitator's preference.

Step 4: Allow for some time to go through the exhibit to take photos and/or fill out the sheet. Depending on the size, 10 to 15 minutes is the recommended amount of time to remain at each stop. The sheet does not have to be filled out completely as it is not required to have detailed descriptions. The sheet is meant to remind the visitors about the men and women featured in each exhibit for the reflection portion.

Step 5: After all the stops have been completed, bring the group together for a discussion. Guiding questions for the discussion can be as follows:

- What were your overall impressions of the gender composition of the exhibit?
- Was it easy/difficult to find the gender you had chosen?
- Were you surprised by the results?
- Did you notice any limitations in the objects?
- How/should this exhibit be improved?
- Have you seen examples of exhibits that have equal gender representation?

These sheets would also be an effective way to create change. By developing graphs and charts for a statistical analysis, they could be submitted to the museum as evidence that women's contribution to efforts such as war are not being represented in ways that are comparable to men. They provide a tangible and concrete way to move through an exhibit and show the differences in gender representation. This activity can take place in many different spaces other than museums, such as in galleries, libraries, heritage sites and wherever there is a gendered juxtaposition in an exhibit space.

Modifications and suggestions

In this section, I take up modifications and remember the sheet can be modified for the needs of the activity. In order to facilitate a feminist hack in the museum, I would lead the visitors through fewer stops. Most visitors have cell phones or cameras and if photos are allowed in the exhibit, I would use a photo to document the actual item or piece of information written about a man or woman. It was difficult to remember which stop we had been to and what I had observed at each stop when we finished. The sheet does not

include information on race or cultural background which would provide a richness to the information. It does not include information on how the person is represented in the exhibit, such as civilian, military personnel, wife/mother, victim, etc. It does not discuss age or representation in terms of size/impact of the exhibit. Lastly, it does not discuss issues of sexuality and gender binary confines. Documenting LGBTQ+ is not as common in war museums, however, female spouses are often discussed in the war museum in relation to the men as war wives, mothers and war brides from the Second World War in particular.

Discussion was needed on the representation of gender in the museum space. Questions about how/why/when/where/who are represented in the exhibit spaces was a missing component to the sheet. In the informal discussion afterwards it was interesting to hear about how the men and women in the group interpreted the results. Our consensus was that women were often juxtaposed to the male soldier, creating the women's story from the men's. A debrief discussion would have enhanced the experience and further questioned the methods and sources we found in the museum. If you are interested in using the sheet, it has been included on the following page and can be printed out and/or photocopied.

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Gallery ____ Stop ____

MEN or WOMEN (circle one)

Named	Role	Presentation Method			Story Presence	Notes or Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Photograph <input type="checkbox"/> Artifact <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> AV/Interactive		<input type="checkbox"/> Protagonist <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting or secondary <input type="checkbox"/> Incidental or other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Photograph <input type="checkbox"/> Artifact <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> AV/Interactive		<input type="checkbox"/> Protagonist <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting or secondary <input type="checkbox"/> Incidental or other	
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Observer name/initials:

Presenter: Britt Braaten (britt.braaten@warmuseum.ca)

Learning To Read: Racialised Gendered Literacy In Museum Spaces

By Lisa R. Merriweather



(Far Left)
Figure 1: Ge'ez oldest living African script still in use. Image used throughout. AfricanHolocaust.net



(Left) *Figure 2:* Black African Woman Art Statue Bust Charles Henri-Joseph Cordier/ Wikimedia Commons

Are you maximizing the social justice potentiality of your museum experience?

This contribution highlights how Black female bodies are often absent or distorted in museum spaces, a gendered injustice. It details a strategic process for interrogating museum spaces in ways that promote social justice using racialised gendered literacy. This presentation invites you to “learn how to read”.

Reading
Erasure
Power
Black
Bodies
Female
Story

The Problem: AntiBlack Racism and Gendered Injustice

*"The most disrespected person in
America is the black woman.*

*The most unprotected person in
America is the black woman.*

*The most neglected person
in America is the black woman."*
-Malcom X



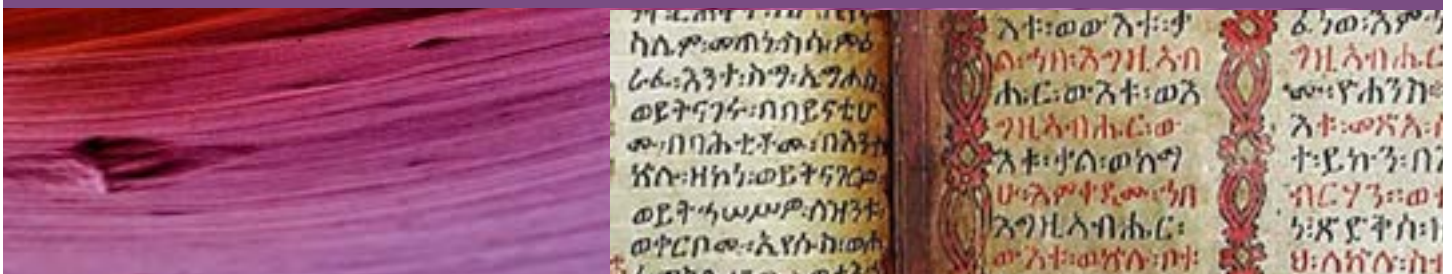
Figure 3: Beautiful Black Woman.
FreeSVG.org

Black Female Bodies: The Interstice of Race and Gender

Black bodies have historically been othered, both female and male.

The racialised gendered bodies of Black girls and women in particular are subject to being seen in ways that pit their self-defined ontological construction of personhood against other-defined ones. Moya Bailey created the term, *misogynoir* (Bailey, 2010; Bailey & Trudy, 2018) to describe the otheredness found at the intersection of antiblack racism and sexism.

This otheredness may take the form of tropes (stereotypes) of the Black female body which represent some of these other defined ontologies: Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, Matriarch. The results are unidimensional mischaracterizations that constrain the ontological being of Black women materially and psychologically. This ontological mythmaking is frequently facilitated through story and reinforced by uncritically reading space that is both raced and gendered.



There is Power in Story

Valuing stories is key in feminist theory and practice. Because the personal is political, feminists are positioned as activists and advocates when story is leveraged as a tool. Stories are made and told then retold everyday and when they are, messages are conveyed that have the power to influence how events, people, and places are interpreted. As such stories are not neutral or benign but charged with positive and negative currents, are politicized and are signifiers of what has value and often what matters most to the teller of the story (Merriweather, forthcoming).

Storytelling and storytellers assume many forms (Clark, 2010). The story could be told through song, pictures, dramatic representation, and storytellers among others can be people or cultural institutions. Stories connect with people because they are relatable and a familiar way of organizing memories of events, people, and places. They are tools for communicating that are both the product of and the process for meaning making. Stories are tools for shaping identity, justifying decisions, and creating understandings used to navigate ones present as well as future lifecourse (Smith et al., 2017).



Figure 4: Woman with short hair holding her head /Pexels





Figure 5: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie/ TEDGlobal 2009

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Stories are indeed powerful but Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian author, warned of the danger of a single story during a 2009 TED Talk. Adichie said “the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (Adichie, 2009). For instance, when persons representing the dominant group [read as White, male, heterosexual, Christian] in the U.S., as well as many other places in the Global North, like Canada, England, and Australia tell their stories of moving through the world, they are presumed to be universal and best and become the measure of what is true and what is false. These represent single stories.

Adichie highlights that stories are incomplete portraits and multiple stories from differing perspectives are needed to make them more complete. This is especially true when we are consuming stories about people who are othered told by people who are not.

Adichie suggests that hearers of stories (and I suggest storytellers) must intentionally seek out diverse stories because stories matter. “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and malign, but stories can also be used to empower and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of people, but stories can also repair the broken dignity” (Adichie, 2009). Single stories result in erasure, erasure of the uniqueness found in the mosaic of lived experiences.



Erasure: Museum as Story

Museums are one type of cultural institution known for telling stories and museum curators curate stories. Because curators are involved in documenting human experience, museums act as vehicles for telling cultural stories or as vehicles to erase them.

Through stories museum patrons learn more about themselves and others and are provided opportunities for making meaning (Merriweather, forthcoming). Since stories are social in nature, structured for purposes - consciously and unconsciously - by the storyteller (Clark, 2010), it is extremely important to the critical of how a story is told.

A museum's re-representation of stories of 'the othered' should be interrogated for explicit and implicit messages conveyed. Museum

curators who are sensitive to this reject the idea of a single story and seek to highlight the multiplicity of lived phenomena on display. Likewise, museum patrons should seek to understand them.



Figure 6:
Art Institute of
Chicago
Edward Kemeys
Lion Statue/
Wikimedia Commons

Learning to read, that is, developing a racialised, gendered, literacy is one strategy for building capacity to recognise and deconstruct single stories (Merriweather, forthcoming).

Racialized Gendered Literacy

Racialised gendered literacy is a tool for confronting single stories, using the philosophical framing of Womanism that recognizes and provides explanatory power regarding the racialised and gendered realities of Black women. Womanism offers Black women ontologies grounded in self which for Phillips (2006) "manifests five overarching characteristics: (1) it is antioppressionist, (2) it is vernacular, (3) it is nonideological, (4) it is communitarian, and (5) it is spiritualized" (p. xxiv). Racialised Gendered Literacy acknowledges the role of anti-Black racism and sexism (the misogynoir) along with accompanying demand to perform race and gender in stereotypical ways. A racialised gendered literacy requires individuals to understand the ways race when combined with gender move through society: socially, culturally, and politically, promoting a more authentic reading of racially minoritised females.

Learning to Read: Developing a Racialised Gendered Literacy in a Museum Space

What might this look like in practice?

1. Have an open mind when you enter the museum space
2. Mentally survey the scene
 - What stands out to you?
 - What is missing?
3. Consider what is literally being said through the curation (how is the piece labeled, what information is provided, what is not being said, what is foregrounded, what is misconstrued?)
4. Deconstruct the curation by asking questions
 - How is this exhibit raced? Who is represented and how? Who is not?
 - How is this exhibit gendered? Who is represented and how? Who is not?
 - How is this exhibit simultaneously raced and gendered?
5. Dialogue with others (those who look like you and those who do not)
6. Reflect on the racialised gendered discursive moment (i.e. the story) created
 - Does it honor, minimize, or erase the lived experience of Black women?
 - Who benefits from the story as told and who is harmed?



Figure 7:
Diva Lady/
Modernmemorysvg



An Example: A Racialized Gendered Reading

Setting: The National Women's History Museum
<https://www.womenshistory.org/>

1. Have an open mind when you enter the museum space

I entered the space with an open mind and not preconceived ideas of what would be there. This was an online museum so I felt I would get a good sense of the exhibits, presented in the manner it was intended.

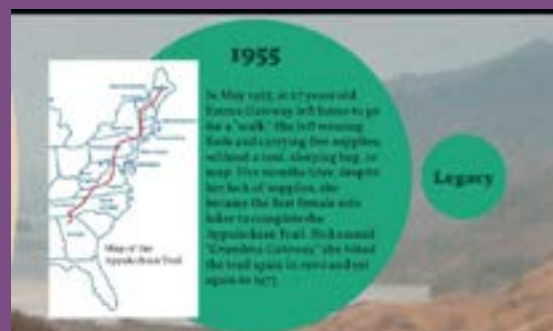
2. Mentally survey the scene

I surveyed the scene

- Noted the museum's mission: expanding understanding of American U.S. history by purposefully including women into the narrative.
- There were 29 online exhibits with captions ranging from *Outdoor Adventurers* to *Standing Up for Change* to *Breaking in: Women in STEM*. Though the formats varied somewhat, each prominently featured women.
- The exhibit overall was celebratory in nature with some critique of external social factors impacting women as a whole but little critique within 'women' as a grouping.
- A Black-White binary was evident, meaning few other racial groups were represented.
- There was no evidence of gender identity diversity, ie trans.

3. Consider what is literally being said through the curation

I considered what was literally being said by reading the captions which revealed the term women/woman was by default a reference to white women. White was the default modifier as signaled by the reference to non-white women typically being proceeded with their race or ethnicity. When Black women were featured, the term "women" was typically modified by the adjective "Black" or "African American". See Fig. ???



Figures 8-9: Images From *Outdoor Adventurers*
(<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/outdoor-adventurers>)

3. Consider what is literally being said through the curation (continued)

- In *Outdoor Adventurers*, Emma Gatewood, a White woman, was described as the *first female solo hiker* to hike the Appalachian Trail. She was never described as white (see Fig. 8-9).
- In *The Women of NASA*, Dorothy Vaughn was described as the *first African American manager* (see Fig. 11).
- In *Timeline: The Civil Rights Movement* neither Willa Brown nor Bessie Coleman were identified as Black women (see Fig. 10).

Given that the exhibits consistently failed to use the adjective 'white' in reference to White women, the assumption would be that when 'woman/women' is used, it references White women. Without prior knowledge, museum patrons would not know that Brown or Coleman was Black, especially given that the picture of Brown shows a woman who could pass for White.

A Racialised Gendered Literacy highlights this as problematic because the term 'women' unconsciously refers to White women unless otherwise noted. Doing so privileges Whiteness.



Figure 10: Image of Willa Brown from *Timeline: Civil Rights Movement* (<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/timeline-civil-rights-movement>)



Figure 11: Image From *The Women of NASA* (<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/women-nasa>)

4. Deconstruct the curation by asking questions

I begin to deconstruct the curation by asking questions.

- **How many exhibits feature Black women?**
 - Black women were not featured in every exhibit. *Outdoor Adventurers*, *New Beginnings (Immigrants)*, and *Female Political Culture* did not feature any Black women.
 - Most exhibits featured some Black women but in the majority, unless the exhibit itself was on the Black female experience such as *African American women and the Civil Rights Movement*, Black women occupied less than 10% of the visual space.

- **How do Black women show up in the exhibit?**

- Most exhibits were in the format of a slideshow. Black women were infrequently featured on the first slide and often did not appear in the slideshow until the middle or end.
- It was interesting to note when Black/African American was used as a modifier and when it was not. Former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, was not identified as the First African American First Lady in the *Timeline of the First Ladies*.
- Even within exhibits like *Standing Up for Change: African American women and the Civil Rights Movement* African American women did not remain the focal point. Their stories were partially eclipsed by images of men as seen in Fig. 12-14.
- Black women tended to have limited visual representation.
- They were either being represented by the famous, i.e. Coretta Scott King or repeatedly represented by the same person. Ida B. Wells was featured in *On the March, Pathways to Equality*, *Women's Suffrage*, and *Standing up for Change* (see Fig. 15-17). In each only two images were of Black women. While Ida B. Wells was undoubtedly a central and incredibly important figure, only featuring her flattens the broader rich story. Museum patrons would not know the extensiveness of Black women's involvement as a whole.
- Black women were not predominately featured in spaces where their participation was widely known. For instance the exhibit on fashion (*Fashioning Yourself: A Story of Home Sewing*) by and large muted the role of Black women who often were the seamstresses for White women as did the exhibits featuring sports, casting doubt about whether Black women had a meaningful presence in such spaces. See Fig. 18-27.



Figures 12-14: Images from *Standing Up for Change*
<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/standing-up-for-change>

- **How do Black women show up in the exhibit? (continued)**

- Not surprisingly given the mission of the museum, the exhibits did not seem to exploit and objectify female bodies, Black or White, but the stories within the primary story were circumscribed resulting in unidimensional depictions of Black women. Overtly negative tropes were not seen. Most consistently, the trope of the Matriarch was present. The Matriarch is the image of the strong Black woman. The two exhibits dedicated to Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth are reflective of this as well as images of Black women marching in protest and accomplishing great things such as Rosa Parks. Missing were the images of everyday Black women matriarchs whose ability helped their families and communities survive and thrive. The face of what being a strong Black women looked like was reduced.
- The invisibility of Black women's identities is also more apparent when compared to the range of White women's identities and experiences displayed across and within the exhibits:
- White women were adventurers as well as First Ladies, immigrants, scientists, military personnel and activists.
- A great example of invisibility is displayed in the *Fashioning Yourself: A Story of Home Sewing*. There were 40 images, only three with Black females. White women were featured among others as shopping for fashion, sewing fashion, in family, in classrooms, modeling fashion. Black females seen in the top row of images on the next page were only shown (Fig. 18-20). A greater range is noticeable in the remaining images of White people (Fig. 21-27).



(Above) Figure 15: Image of Ida. B Wells from *Standing up for Change*:
<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/standing-up-for-change>



(Above right) Figure 16: Image of Ida. B Wells from *Pathways to Equality*:
<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/pathways-equality>



(Right) Figure 17: Image of Ida. B Wells from *Timeline: Woman's Suffrage*:
<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/timeline-woman-suffrage>



Figures 18 – 20: The three images that featured or included Black females in *Fashioning Yourself: A Story of Home Sewing* (<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/fashioning-yourself>)



Figures 21 – 27: Some of the many images featuring white females in *Fashioning Yourself: A Story of Home Sewing* (<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/fashioning-yourself>)

Learning to Read

Racialised Gendered Literacy is the product of an intentional process of reading space through a raced and gendered lens. The process is iterative, not linear. The remaining steps in Learning to Read are dialogue, that is being in community with others and reflection, interrogating assumptions and personal biases, and resisting stereotypes found at the interstice of race and gender.

Museums can play a key role in educating for social justice if their curators flex a Racialised Gendered Literacy. Museum patrons, in turn, can maximize the potential of their experience to develop understandings and create heightened sensitivities of what it means to be socially just as well as feminist by utilizing this process. This process can be used across a variety of environs such as museums and classrooms, online and in person, as well as individually or in groups such as social justice clubs to expand single stories to multi-faceted ones.

Chimamanda Adichie warns of the danger of a single story. A Racialised Gendered Literacy equips readers with the sensitivities, resources, and ability to recognize single stories, especially those that promote the erasure of Black female bodies, identities, and experiences. Will you accept the challenge to look beyond the single story to promote social justice.

**Let's learn to read together
for social justice!**

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Eight Steps to Using Photo-elicitation and Rethinking the Field Trip

BY MICKI VOELKEL AND SHELLI HENEHAN

Heritage tourism sites, historic sites, or museums of history or culture offer rich opportunities for critical engagement and informal learning. Informal learning consists of those educational opportunities that occur outside of the structured classroom setting, such as videos, self-guided tours, social media networking and book clubs. As two researcher-educators, we are interested in how these informal learning opportunities can influence attitudes and encourage questioning of societal norms. One of our recent research projects was to explore how we could inspire deep, meaningful learning while visiting a cultural site. We used a practice called 'photo-elicitation' to inspire critical reflection and cognitive growth. Photo-elicitation invites research participants to choose images that are pertinent to the study or theme, that are meaningful to them and that elicit reflection.

In this piece we share our photo-elicitation approach that is based on critical feminist pedagogy, a theory that focuses on empowering learners through opportunities for questioning and reflection. While we have used this approach in a research context, our approach is also suitable for work with various adult groups in non-research contexts. The study we refer to in this contribution was with groups of pre-service educators or teachers who referred to our work at a local historic site as a 'field trip'. By providing a context and guiding questions for photo-elicitation, we have turned the common field trip into an opportunity for deeper learning that can be used as a research method or simply as an informal learning activity with any group of people.

The steps involved

So how does it work? Take the opportunity to revamp and enrich the experience of the field trip by using photo-elicitation in combination with the feminist museum "hack" (See other contributions in this module for details on the Feminist Museum Hack). Together, these techniques provide a tool that will elicit critical thought while touring heritage or historic sites using the following eight steps:

STEP 1: Choose a fun and interesting site.

If you want critical thinking and rich conversation, don't pick a boring place. The best sites for learning are those that have a unique history that is contested or controversial. Sites that we have chosen for past and future projects include a Victorian brothel that has been restored for use as a city Visitor's Center, a historic site that is part of the U.S. National Park Service that features a wide swathe of history from pre-Civil War through the population of the American West, and a former bath house in a city known for its history of gangsters and gambling. The right site will be interesting on its own merits and will offer a rich context for discussion of depictions of women and other underrepresented groups.

STEP 2: Take a practice run.

Before you take a group of participants, get to know your site. Visit the site with a mobile phone camera and snap photos of exhibits and spaces that speak to you. Depending on the focus of your study or the topic you want to explore with a group, for example gender, race, ethnicity, faith, etc. Pay close attention to spaces or exhibits that feature or that exclude those groups.

STEP 3: Customize a Hack tool.

The Hack tool will be composed of questions that will set the context for your participants ([See p. 3](#) for suggestions). Create a written guide in two sections. First, include guiding questions to provide a context for the experience. For example, if focusing on gender, ask questions about the numbers of men and women represented or about the differences



Figure 1: Bloomfield Music Academy.



Figure 2: True Grit Movie Poster.



Figure 3: Women Behind Bars.

in how the genders are represented. Second, provide clear instructions for your participants. If you want them to take photos, what subjects do you suggest, how many photos should they take, and how will they share them with you? If you would like them to provide written reflection, what procedures should they follow? If you are doing a study and are going to interview or survey them, what are your procedures? If they will present or debrief with the group, when will this take place?

STEP 4: Recruit participants.

Who do you want to participate? In our case, we focused on pre-service teachers enrolled in an educational technology class. Depending on the population you would like to investigate, choose a group of participants, gain their consent, and take them to the site. If you are already working with a group of learners or community members let them know about the activity and when you will invite them to participate.

STEP 5: Take the field trip.

Choose a designated meeting spot. Arrive at the site early to greet your participants and if necessary, ask them to sign an informed consent document that clarifies expectations for participating. Provide a printed handout with your guiding questions and instructions, along with a brief orientation to the site and explanation about the purpose of the trip. Go over the guiding questions. Set a time limit. Finally, allow the participants to explore the site.

STEP 6: Click, reflect and collect.

Ask participants to use their cell phones to photograph exhibits that have meaning to them. After the visit, request participants to choose three of their photos and create written reflections for each one. Create a mechanism for participants to share their photos and reflections with you via email, social media, blog, or printed material.

STEP 7: Scheme on themes.

Examine the participant photos and reflections. Which words and ideas are used by multiple participants? Those are the important themes that occur naturally in the data. Identify those themes. If you are continuing this process as

a group, perhaps at your next meeting time, invite participants to make these connections and share their reflections with each other.

STEP 8: Disrupt and display.

Do the themes you identified suggest there are voices that are not represented? Are there stories that are missing? Are there alternate points of view on display? Find a way to help tell an alternate story from what is depicted in the official exhibits and space. A quiet disruption worked for us: We created an online space containing the photographs, reflections, suggestions for change, alternate stories, and analysis. Other more aggressive disruptions may include creating alternate signage, creating a rival exhibit, and sharing findings with the organizers/curators of the site.

For an example of an alternate display, check out our blog: [*Infinately Obscure Lives*](https://innfinitelyobscure.blogspot.com/p/the-research-study.html) which includes a synopsis of the study we did, examples of the guiding questions in our tool, and posts showing the photographs and written reflections done by our participants. You may view our blog at <https://innfinitelyobscure.blogspot.com/p/the-research-study.html>. As we have shared, it is not too difficult at all to elevate a regular field trip into an opportunity for deeper learning and critical engagement, in this case using photo elicitation from a feminist perspective. We invite you to try this as well!

Questions or points to discuss? Contact Micki Voelkel at Micki.Voelkel@uafs.edu or Shelli Henehan at Shelli.Henehan@uafs.edu.

ArtActivistBarbie

BY SARAH WILLIAMSON

Barbie is internationally recognised, a cultural phenomenon and icon, and although she can be regarded as an instrument of female oppression with her plastic white beauty and impossible figure, she can also be mobilised as a political force to be a positive influence. The character of *ArtActivistBarbie* has been created by me, Sarah Williamson. I am a senior lecturer and feminist researcher in the School of Education and Professional Development, University of Huddersfield, UK. I created *ArtActivistBarbie* to explore the subversive potential of her popularity and iconic status to promote social and gender justice. Enacting the maxim of artist Jenny Holzer's textual artwork (2019) to "use the dominant culture to change it", the fame and celebrity of Barbie has been harnessed to recreate her as a feminist activist to challenge the gender stereotyping, exclusion and problematic representation which can be found in museums and art galleries.

The *ArtActivistBarbie* project has developed from my research and artistic practice to explore the potential of art galleries and museums to be spaces which can educate, raise awareness and develop feminist consciousness. The project is interventionist work which imaginatively interrupts and disrupts art galleries and museums. It is aesthetic activism which sees the playful staging



Follow
ArtActivistBarbie on
Twitter
@BarbieReports!

To see
ArtActivistBarbie
Flashmob Day
tweets from around
the world, look
for the hashtag
#AABFlashmob on
Twitter!

Figure 1: Barbie in front of a painting holding a sign that says 'Refuse to be the muse!'

of Barbies in art gallery and museum spaces with dolls being posed with miniature placards to point out feminist issues of representation, inequality and injustice with regard to gender. *ArtActivistBarbie* has reached and engaged a wide range of people, of all ages and gender, and not just those with an interest in feminism, feminist causes, gender politics and issues of equity and social justice. I have been invited to exhibit the work in art gallery spaces and to present *ArtActivistBarbie* at arts festivals, conferences, events and institutions such as London's Courtauld Institute of Art.

I use social media to showcase and share the feminist activism including a highly successful Twitter account (See @BarbieReports). This latter has attracted many followers in a short time, and the 'Pinned Tweet' (which points out the 2300 works by men and 21 works by women in London's National Gallery) reached over 110k impressions and 11k engagements and interactions with the tweet in the first 12 months. This shows the great interest in this work and the potential of social media to take feminist work forward.

My work also has a participatory aspect. For example, *International ArtActivistBarbie Flashmob Days* enable anyone, anywhere in the world to stage their own feminist art activism with a Barbie doll in an art gallery, art museum or museum. After flashmob days, participants are encouraged to document their activism through photography and to share it by posting on social media.

The following guides give advice on how to stage your own *ArtActivistBarbie* feminist activism, with some ideas to get you started and some practical hints and tips for success.

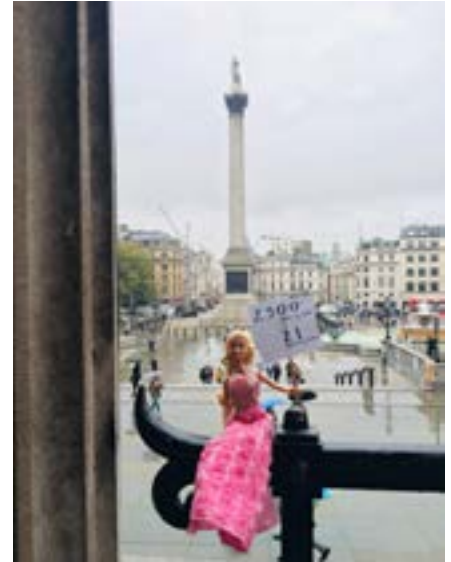


Figure 2: Barbie holding a sign at London's National Gallery that says '2300 works by men, 21 by women'.



Figure 3: ArtActivistBarbie twitter drawing attention to what is really happening in this Rubens painting.

BE AN ARTACTIVISTBARBIE ACTIVIST

To begin, walk around a chosen art gallery, museum or cultural space. What do you see, and what do you think you see?

Some thinking prompts, suggestions and ideas for your own activism:

1. Count the number of artworks by men and the number by women.

If the institution is large, you could just focus on one floor, exhibition or room.

2. Look at the representation.

A) How are men represented in artworks? How would you describe them?

What are they doing/wearing/where are they?

B) How are women represented in artworks? How would you describe them?

What are they doing/wearing/where are they?

3. Imagine a conversation.

For example, imagine a conversation between an artist and a patron or between an artist and muse, or the subjects in a painting.

4. Ask a question.

This could be a question to the artist, the subject of a painting, the art gallery, the visitors.

5. Look at labelling and curatorial statements.

How is the artist described? How is the work described?

6. Look at the titles of paintings.

What do they reveal?

7. Observe the inclusions and exclusions of people who are represented.

Who is and who is not represented in the gallery?

8. Look at statues and monuments.

Who or what is the subject and how are they portrayed? Any supporting figures?

9. Ask a gallery attendant about the collection.

Do they know how many women artists are in the collection? What can they tell you?

10. Look for gender roles in society.

What do some artworks tell us about society, and the roles of men and women? Who does what?

11. Create a visual echo in some way.

Can you mirror what is happening in an artwork to draw attention to it?

STAGING YOUR OWN **ARTACTIVISTBARBIE** ACTIVISM

Some practical hints and things to remember:

1. Never touch any artworks or frames. Sometimes statues or sculptures can be touched, but check to see if this is the case and ask if you are unsure.
2. Position your Activist Barbie on the floor or hold your Activist Barbie up in front of a painting, artwork or exhibit.
3. It's useful to work with a partner. One of you can then hold your Activist Barbie up while the other person takes the photograph.
4. Take more than one photograph. If you have made a placard, take a close-up of the placard as well as a photograph which shows your Activist Barbie in front of the whole artwork you have chosen.
5. Take a few photographs if you can, in case some are out of focus.
6. Try not to block the view of any other gallery visitors for too long. You can leave the Barbie and placard in front of the artwork for a while to see how other visitors interact with her.
7. Find a seat to write any placards. Can you find something to rest on? Your writing will be neater! Perhaps there is a café or foyer area you can go to.
8. Try to take your photographs with the light behind you. For example, from a window or the sun.
9. If posting your photo as a tweet, remember that if you are using a single photograph, it will crop to a landscape format, in which case use a photograph which is already in a landscape format. It can look effective two photographs side by side in one tweet. For example, a close-up, and a shot from further away.
10. Have fun!

Further reading

[The Guardian](#) - "'That's not art it's Victorian porn!' - how one small Barbie doll took on the art world"

[Ms. Magazine](#) - "We Heart: ArtActivistBarbie Taking on Patriarchy in the Art World"

[The Conversation](#) - "Meet ArtActivistBarbie, the fearless funny feminist taking on a white male art world"

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Connective Cards to Interrogate the Museum

BY LAURA FORMENTI, SILVIA LURASCHI AND GAIA DEL NEGRO

A bit about us

We are three women educators and academics of different ages and backgrounds, who are sometimes inside and at other times are on the fringes of a public university in Milan, North Italy. We have become increasingly dissatisfied with the overly rational and arguably more masculine approaches to research and adult education (See Belenky et al., 1986) that we have been surrounded by in our work and institution. This became clear two years ago when we started to tell each other stories of the work we were each doing in adult and higher education that leveraged other ways of knowing and working through the use of visual and poetic materials. What we came to realize is that we wanted to connect what we knew with our sensing bodies and emotions, to engage with women's silenced voices in educational settings and institutions such as universities and museums, and to invite others to do so as well. As a means to do this we have created a connective card game that can be used to interrogate the museum, which we share in this module of the Guide. Our cards are inspired by the *Operative Epistemology* cards developed by Donata Fabbri and Alberto Munari, which seek "to develop awareness (through active experimentation) of the processes for developing knowledge and of the relationships established with these processes" (Fabbri & Munari, 2010, p. 23). The activities of our Connective Cards are aimed to generate learning in the museum through self-narration and interaction with the artworks, exhibition space and visitors. The cards invite the players to be moved, both physically as they wander in the space, and emotionally as they become attentive to their moods and perceptions, which together can awaken a form of knowing more, being connected to emotions and experience. The cards are a format that invites freedom and experimentation. There is not one specific way to use the cards, rather there are many possible options. We first start by looking closer at the eco-systemic, cooperative, story-based and arts-based knowledge and learning theories that inform our card game and then we explain the card game structure and content.

How do we know? An eco-systemic account of learning

Our approach is rooted in an eco-systemic epistemology. In eco-systemic epistemology, the division between human and animal, world and environment doesn't exist. Learning in this context is based on the relation between people

and all of the planet. All learners are understood as a part of their context, interconnected and co-evolving with others and with the many life worlds and communities in which they live (Formenti et al., 2014). According to Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979), learning is a relational, compositional and an ongoing process. We use an eco-systemic epistemology because we want to revisit the traditional idea that in an educational context there is someone who teaches and someone who learns (Formenti & Luraschi, 2017). We believe instead that learning is based on relationships and all participants in any educational setting are interdependent and co-responsible, although the facilitator may have a specific responsibility.

Equally important, learning has to do with life. In life, play, playfulness, and creativity are means of communication. However, in some educational contexts, particularly more academic contexts such as universities and museums, the authentic, non-instructive forms of playfulness and creativity are neglected. By embracing a feminist eco-systemic based pedagogy, our purpose is to open new possibilities of movement, thinking with playfulness and creativity, in order to explore the complexity of the learning experience.

In addition to being relational, learning is also constructivist when different forms of knowledge are integrated either intentionally or unintentionally (Heron, 1996). Most learning happens at an unconscious, embodied level. This means that though we do not always need to be aware of all our learning, we can still facilitate this type of learning in educational settings as we invite people to share their lived experiences. Finally, an eco-systemic pedagogy understands learning as an ongoing process, a process of becoming that is open to the unpredictable. Learning, therefore, can only be invited.

The game of cards we outline below offers a possibility to learn through emotions and pragmatics, the conscious and the unconscious, the body and the mind. Through the activities we highlight you are invited, for example, to use your body to give a shape to your own words, or your mobile phone to take pictures that visually express your thinking or communicate your experience on social networks. In our game of cards, thinking, gestures and languages are used as a part of an embodied practice of collective learning.

How do we invite learning? A cooperative activating approach

A cooperative approach to learning aims to disrupt traditional academic and educational frames, as it engages our subjectivities, focuses on relationality,

and provides a creative-critical perspective. In cooperative pedagogy, learners are co-enquirers and the learning activities make them more capable of acting in a way that enhances personal and collective freedom. For example, in adult education, it is common that participants work in pairs or in small groups in order to strengthen individuals and communities' capacity to think and act with mutual responsibility. It is by interacting with each other that learners can discover things about their own lives, families and workplaces. This also invites people to engage across and through differences as they may learn alongside others from diverse backgrounds. This can challenge individual viewpoints, and expand self-awareness. Working with others also enables learners to offer each other support, and highlight what is shared in human experience (Heron, 1996). As people move back and forth between the individual and the collective dimensions in their cooperative learning, this can generate new observations and interactions in the social context, as well as in the museum context. They may start to interrogate the inequalities and injustices in the museum, identify what is missing, think about the different ways that stories could be told, and make links between cultural and biological aspects in the museum, and so on. This enables them to become actors of their own learning and agents of social change. Becoming agents of social change depends on the possibilities for freedom and human flourishing where freedom is relational, entirely social and largely collective (Finnegan, 2019). This is important as one of the aims of our card game is to empower players to take action, and to engage them in citizenship for emancipatory social change. We believe that by engaging subjects as learners in relationship, as we do through the cooperative adult education approach in this game of cards, we can challenge our positionalities and work towards emancipation from a predetermined, taken-for-granted position in society.

Connecting the self: On telling stories to become critical

In our Connective Cards, we use storytelling as a critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy (a group of approaches to pedagogy and education interested in the emancipatory potential of education) seeks to transform the relationships, actions, and discourses we live by, for us to become more enquiring. Reflective feminist thinkers suggest to draw on other ways of knowing – sensation, emotion, imagination, more or less conscious aspects – as a part of critical thinking, which we do through storytelling. When we hear the voices of those who have been ignored such as women (and others whose voices have not been privileged) we are invited to look at the margins of rational knowledge, which may be rich in other options of knowing. Telling stories allows learners to

engage with themselves, others, and the world, critically. Telling personal and imagined stories in relation to the artworks triggers new and wider perspectives that connect the self with the wider social and eco-systems.

The game we designed also aims to provoke *reflexivity* (Hunt, 2013) or rather the capability of ‘abandoning’ oneself to the experience of learning. As psychoanalyst and novelist Celia Hunt indicates, reflexivity is often understood as self-reflection, self-examination in process and practice, however this can be a limiting use of other ways of knowing. Critical reflection also needs a broad, intuitive and bodily-based learning mechanism (Hunt, 2013, pp. 75-78) that allows much more of our everyday lived experience to be processed. When feelings and emotions inform our *reflexivity* we are rooted in the complexities and ambiguities of actual lives. Emotions and the senses become sources of knowledge, material and ground for a more aware sense of self – that means able to position as social actor – and can enhance our “ability to think creatively and independently” (Hunt, 2013, p. 78). A card game to critically interrogate our relationship with the museum allows us to give up control – specific to rational reflection – in order for some new insight and interaction to emerge, beyond what we think we know.

A focus on language and art

As we’ve explained this game is rooted in the tradition of epistemological workshops (Fabbri & Munari, 2010), collaborative and cooperative inquiry (Heron 1996; Yorks & Kasl 2006, Lawrence, 2012), and storytelling which all use the power of language and art to evoke the ambiguous, unconscious and embodied dimensions of the participants. Similarly, the card game draws on arts-based research practices and the power of written language, oral narrative, conversation, and other creative languages.

There is a language beyond words in music, dance, image and artfulness. The language we use can identify our ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, or political leanings. Language can also fall short and fail to embrace the complexity and elusive quality of lived experience, including its spiritual dimensions. Languages can be sung, shouted and expressed through the body. There is also the language of silence, of being still, of being meditative which can allow new language to emerge. It is also through language that we can explore narratives of content and discontent. We are also often having to learn new languages, which may be the language of social media and ‘likeable’ friends and distant dismissive tweets. This variety of languages has to be attended to – in our

facilitating – and learned or taught, if necessary.

In our cards we offer writing, drawing, movement, and conversation strategies that invite participants to become attentive, aware, thoughtful, and critical, and to develop their position and proposals in relation to radical gender justice and change. Art is a fundamental human experience and a powerful trigger of learning beyond the limits of words. We use it extensively in our work in university, with professionals, and in the community. We also use it to explore our own theories, practices, and epistemologies. In fact, art illuminates our mind frames and relationships to knowing, by drawing on the evocative power of perception (Del Negro, 2019). Through the cards, participants can explore many artful modes of critical engagement. Different forms of narrative are concretely practiced with cards, both individually and in a group setting, by different means and languages such as personal writing, auto/biography, and also by images, colours, metaphors, objects, sounds and gestures. In particular, the ‘embodiment’ cards invite this, but also in all other clusters of cards where we have carefully included explorative instructions that invite the player to engage with their emotions, draw, write, strike up a conversation, walk between the artworks, and so on.

How to facilitate the Connective Cards

Now that we have reviewed the theories that inform the Connective Cards, we offer a few suggestions on how and where you can facilitate the game. To start playing, take these few steps:

Before going to the museum, cut out the cards at the end of this contribution. The cards are already designed in a ready-to-use format. Print the cards and cut them out.

Read the rules of the game below in the ‘how-to’ section of this module. Bring the cards to the museum and if you want to have it on hand, this Guide with the rules of the game. Remember to bring some supplies on your visit such as a notebook or sketchbook, a pen, some pencils, a mobile phone with a camera.

The game is best played in a group, so visit the exhibition preferably with a small company of friends, relatives, classmates, colleagues, etc. Follow the rules below... or break them!

If you are facilitating the game (perhaps as an educator, a parent, a schoolteacher, a social worker, a friend) it is *up to you* to decide how to invite participants to use the cards, make connections, ask questions, take notes, or invent other cards. If you are alone on your visit, we recommend that you chat with other people (visitors or workers) in the museum, as well as connect with the museum material and physical structure by moving your body in it, watching, listening, free-associating, looking for hidden sides etc. This multimodal exploration of one's own experience in the museum opens up new and divergent possibilities for learning and change. Playing the game is a process of learning about yourself, about other people (to find out how similar or different underneath we are), about the interaction with others, about the social institutions we are involved in, about individuals and collectives. This game of cards helps participants approach the museum space and collections with inquiry, by playfully activating ways to interrogate the social order and its misrepresentations (for example, issues of gender justice, violence, access to resources, gender gap, LGBTQ+). Participants are invited to explore the deep connections between themselves (biography, identity, and questions they hold dear) and the museum: the artworks which are displayed, the artists who are presented, and the curators' choices.

About the game

Contents

There are 38 cards divided into seven themes. Each theme is a different colour, which will be explained below. The colours are green, yellow, orange, light blue, purple, red and pink.

Aim of the game

The aim of the game is to use the cards to generate learning in the museum, interact with the space and exhibits and to invite reflection and critique. All the players cooperate with each other. You can also play by yourself, but if you play with friends you may discover different meaning, challenge each others' perspectives. Conversations with different others uncover prejudices and reveal the complexity of life.

Setup

Before you enter the museum or exhibition decide what your topic of enquiry is. For example, 'I want to think about the representation of women in this museum', or 'the representation of genius', or 'the representation of the

audience', or 'the idea of family', and so on. If you are facilitating the game then you might suggest a topic that corresponds to the group or class. When you enter a room in the exhibition, pick a card and read the question.

Playing the game

Divide in small groups (three or four participants). The youngest player starts by choosing the top card. There are at least two options. All of the participants can do the same activity card, on their own, in pairs or as a group, and then when everyone has completed the first card everyone moves to the next card. The second option is each person picks different activity cards. In the latter option, debriefing at the end of the game will provide a variety of approaches in the inquiry, and a more diversified overview of the topic. However, sticking to the same activity card in a group has the advantage of deepening the exploration of a particular action. The two approaches can be combined.

Game over

This is a time-based game. As a facilitator, or as a group, decide how long you will play for. When the time is up, the game is over. It is helpful to provide the group with a reminder when they are halfway through the session, and again closer to the end, so they have time to wrap up their current cards.

Debrief

After the game is over, take time for a debrief or conversation. Talking and sharing notes and pictures can be done at the cafeteria or outside the museum, and helps process, reflect, and share learning. It is important to quickly debrief just after the visit, when impressions are still fresh. If you aim to draw further learning from the experience, you can construct a dedicated setting in class, in the workplace, in the community and so on, to share and reflect after the experience has been digested. This further step can also generate proposals for deliberate actions in context, that have to do with the museum but also with the group, and their organization.

Variations

You can do the activity by yourself, with a friend or with a group, and with or without a facilitator. When you pick out the cards, you can choose to stick to one colour/theme or choose different colours to change the kinds of activities. Follow your inspiration.

The cards

The cards are divided into seven different categories of activities. The categories

are topic related (6 green cards), connection (6 yellow cards), embodiment (6 orange cards), conversations (6 light blue cards), emotions (6 purple cards), invisible stories (6 pink cards), and action cards (6 red cards). There are specific cards for embodiment and emotion because we want to encourage people in education settings to express their whole selves – body and mind, not only mind as explained above. Action cards can be picked by each group after the game is over, since they indicate actions to take after visiting the exhibition to continue the cycle of learning. Other actions can be invented too!

Some of the cards say ‘Look’ – this could involve taking notes of what you find. Some of the cards say ‘Capture’ - this could be to sketch, discuss or take a photo. Some cards say ‘Share’ - this could be to write, discuss or draw. It depends on your group. As a facilitator or as a group, decide what capture, look or share should be for the day or let the participants decide themselves.

Supplies needed

- Cards
- Paper or notebook/sketchbook
- Pencil or pen
- Mobile phone with camera
- App Photo Collage Editor (This is only for one card so if you don’t have this you can skip the collage card).

Conclusion

Playing together is a way to create a space for learning. Learning is a way to engage with complexity and ambivalences of your community. Discussing with your group provides new perspectives to illuminate relations between museums and multiple cultural frameworks. We hope that you can play this game in different contexts, and engage others, other institutions, schools, communities, perhaps museums and museum operators. Often, we forget that the process of learning can be playful, that means fun, imaginative, challenging, deeply personal and interactive, as conceived within an aesthetic, cooperative and eco-systemic approach. This card game was created for this publication after years of activities on creative and reflective workshops in museums, schools and open spaces. Our project now is to play with the Connective Cards with diverse audiences during *Creative2020: The women’s talents*, a public, inclusive and multidisciplinary initiative widely distributed in the metropolitan city of Milan. Playing together reminds people about their fundamental values and helps to understand where we are coming from. Essentially, this means including a critically reflective attitude to all practices, especially when the game is over and you come back to your daily life.

TOPIC CARD



TOPIC CARD



TOPIC CARD



TOPIC CARD



TOPIC CARD



TOPIC CARD



Share a
personal
memory
about the
exhibition
topic.

Take a
picture and
write a new
title for this
exhibition.

Think of a
cultural object
(film, book,
song...) related to the
exhibition
topic.

Draw a
symbol
for the
exhibition
topic.

Share
what the
exhibition
topic means
to you.

Share a
family
memory
about the
exhibition
topic.

CONNECTIONS CARD



CONNECTIONS CARD



CONNECTIONS CARD



CONNECTIONS CARD



CONNECTIONS CARD



CONNECTIONS CARD



Take the
map of the
museum and
draw your
personal
path.

Make a
collage with
images
collected
during this
visit.

Make a
connection
between two
artworks on
display and
walk between
them.

Take a
picture of
what you see
outside the
museum.

Share what
connects the
exhibition
topic
with you.

Search on
the internet
for more
information
about the
exhibition
topic.

EMBODIMENT CARD



EMBODIMENT CARD



EMBODIMENT CARD



EMBODIMENT CARD



EMBODIMENT CARD



EMBODIMENT CARD



Sound

Close your
eyes and
catch a
sound.
Describe it.

Movement

Try a new
position to
change your
point of view.
Share what
happened.

Smell

Share how
you think the
space smells.

Touch

What or who
can you touch
in this room
and what
can't you?
Take a risk.

Sight

Share what
colors and
shapes you
see.

Taste

Bring your
attention to
your lips...
share what
you taste in
this moment

CONVERSATION CARD



CONVERSATION CARD



CONVERSATION CARD



CONVERSATION CARD



CONVERSATION CARD



CONVERSATION CARD



Write an
imaginative
dialogue with
a family
member.

Post on
social media
about an
insight you
had.

Tell someone
about the
experience
you are
having.

Write a short
email from
your phone
to the exhibit
curators.

Strike up a
conversation
with a
stranger.

Write an
imaginative
dialogue with
a teacher.

**EMOTIONS
CARD**



**EMOTIONS
CARD**



**EMOTIONS
CARD**



**EMOTIONS
CARD**



**EMOTIONS
CARD**



**EMOTIONS
CARD**



Capture a
detail that
expresses
anxiety (pain,
threat, fear).

Capture a
detail that
expresses
playfulness
(joy, freedom,
laughter).

Capture a
detail that
expresses
frustration
(discomfort,
irritation,
impatience).

Capture a
detail that
expresses
sadness
(loneliness,
separation,
grief).

Capture a
detail that
expresses
enthusiasm
(anticipation,
desire,
curiosity).

Capture a
detail that
expresses
tenderness
(care, love,
nurturance).

**ACTION
CARD**



**ACTION
CARD**



**ACTION
CARD**



**ACTION
CARD**



**ACTION
CARD**



**ACTION
CARD**



Collect the
cards you
used and
make a
composition.

Write what
you will
remember
most from
this
experience.

Bring
someone
else to the
exhibition
and repeat
the game.

Write what
you have
learned
from this
experience.

Plan a visit to
another
exhibition.

Organize
a dialogic
coffee.

INVISIBLE STORIES CARD



INVISIBLE STORIES CARD



INVISIBLE STORIES CARD



INVISIBLE STORIES CARD



INVISIBLE STORIES CARD



INVISIBLE STORIES CARD



Look for the unexpected objects in this exhibition.
Why are they unexpected to you?

Look for how women are present in this exhibition (numbers, rules, positions...).

Look for the people who work in this exhibition.

Look for missing people in this exhibit (whose stories are not being told?).

Look for the unexpected spaces in this exhibition (stairs, halls, elevators...).

Look for what is missing from this exhibition (spaces, objects, stories).

Design Note

The Connective Cards were illustrated and designed by Hannah Gelderman with the content provided by Laura Formenti, Silvia Luraschi and Gaia Del Negro.

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M O D U L E T W O

**VISUAL
METHODOLOGIES
AND PRACTICES**

The Aesthetic *How* and Propagandistic *Why* of Zine Creation

BY KIMBERLY CROSWELL

What are 'zines' and what makes their production so appealing? Zines are a type of pamphlet, named as such as a shorthand reference to magazines. The practice of zine-making is inherently anti-authoritarian in practice, which for me, as a self-identified anarchist, appeals to both my aesthetic and ideological motivations for creativity. Anarchist and activist new media theorist Jeppesen (2010) contends zines are 'guerrilla texts,' part of a larger mode of anarchist cultural production that engages in a struggle against inherited forms of cultural and social oppression. For her zine-making encompasses more than debates on subject matter and aesthetics, or an anti-authoritarian refutation of the economics of cultural production. Jeppesen (2010) positions zines as non-didactic texts that open people's minds to new possibilities, to develop a sense of individual and collective autonomy and self-determination, and to produce cultural producers who experience liberation, joy overflowing, love without end, and other sustained outbursts towards transformative social relationships (p. 473).

Jeppesen's studies of zine culture have certainly informed my views as a zine-producer, however, as much as I agree with her assessment of the cultural purposes informing most zine production, I must acknowledge my pursuits can only partially fulfill Jeppesen's lofty aspirations. This is because I am more than willing to draw upon semi-propagandistic practices to create more explicitly didactic (educational) zines than Jeppesen might appreciate. 'Propaganda,' from my perspective, establishes an argument for or against social or ideological positions, whilst confirming social values/identities in arenas of cultural and ideological contestations. Works in my personal zine-oeuvre explicitly draw upon feminist values to express a sense of social-personal awareness as a 're-presentation' of cultural experiences, yet differences are established, depending upon what purpose to which the zines are utilized. Thus, following Jeppesen's (2010) argument that zines are situationally produced according to specific social-sites of being, I will position my zine-practice accordingly. I have created zines as an individualistic process of critical thinking through text and imagery, which offers a more 'freely interpretative' response in the reader that is exemplified in the zine entitled "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?" (Fig. 1). Additionally, I created zines to disseminate feminist educational information in

support of others' artistic/curatorial work, as can be seen in the representationally didactic "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine" (Fig. 2). In both instances, what serves as 'propaganda' is the underlying political or ideological context in these approaches to zine-production, the feminist values that inform not only the content, but also its 're-presentation,' which, in turn, the reader may identify and engage within her/his own terms. As I will demonstrate, both approaches I developed emphasize visuals, however, their aesthetics and purposes for their production couldn't be more different.

What makes creating a zine different from producing any other piece of writing? What inspires this process of invention? Images! In both examples, I was most interested in the possibilities to aesthetically integrate intellectual ideas with correlating imagery. For me, the greatest pleasure of producing a zine lies in selecting the images and composing the stylistic elements first, then adding text as 'intervening' conceptual/metaphorical/questioning nodes of linguistic communication. As a result, the narrative structure of my approach to zine creation is dependent upon the sequential viewing of visuals – visuals as a form of text – with the words performing a contextualizing, supporting role in furthering the narrative.

Before delving too deeply in an analysis of visuals, the first production element to acknowledge the creation of both the "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine" and "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?" was the collective exercise of their aesthetic development and content that depended upon a shared engagement in a process. In the construction of the "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine," I was part of a collaborative team of three. Darlene Clover, Alex Poshyvanyk, and I selected the initial visuals to



Figure 1: Cover of "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?"

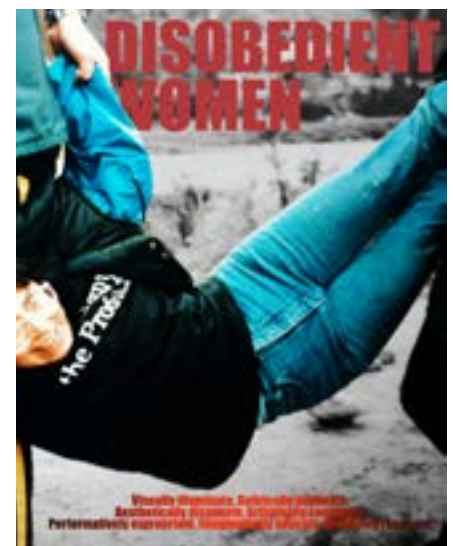


Figure 2: Cover of "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine"



Figure 3: Page from "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine"



Figure 4: Iconic punk image - the artwork for the Sex Pistols' single God Save The Queen, designed by Jamie Reid.

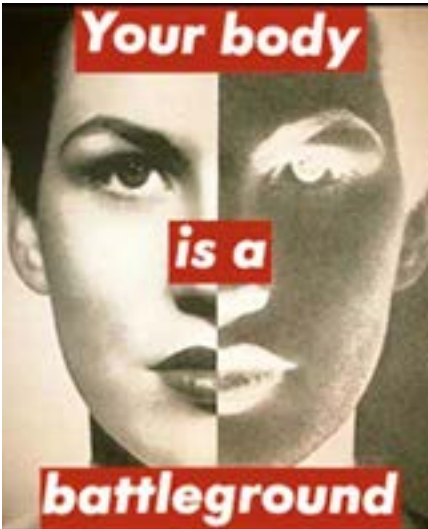


Figure 5: Your body is a battleground by Barbara Kruger.



Figure 6: Page from "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?"

define the content and the design process, which included determining the narrative sequence, layouts, and editorial oversights, was completed by Alex and I. With this zine, it was our imperative to select a variety of strong images, representative of the exhibit that were also capable of standing on their own (Fig. 3). Their visual strength was important to ensure the artists and organizations represented would be given their fullest appreciation. The accompanying text was intended to contextualize the images, but also acted as much as a 'found object' as the photographs, given that most of the descriptions were prefabricated for the original exhibition, either by the curatorial team or by the artists themselves. Finally, the collaborative nature of the process allowed each of us to assume specific roles according to our skill-sets as they relate to the zine's production, and as a result, the work appears extremely polished, with clear spaces between the texts and images, wrapped up in a consistent, cohesive whole.

In comparison with the "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine," the collaboration process that was involved the production of "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?" was rather loose and free flowing. As the zine producer, I was offered a selection of inspirational and engaging 'found' images of an exhibition experience photographed by Darlene Clover and she positioned it for me in the contextual history of England at that time. The selection of images was limited in number – many of the visuals were photographed at sharp angles and distorted by a glare on occasion (this was clearly the result of the curatorial decision to reproduce images on the didactic paneling upon a reflective, mildly brushed steel material). Far from a critique, this limitation liberated my responses as I engaged with Darlene's photographic spontaneity that captured the fleeting



Figure 7: Pages from "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?"



Figure 8: Page from "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine"

quality of a roving eye, eager to take in all the exhibition had to offer. In my response to these photographs, which I arrange compositionally within a design space calculated to create associations of a 'retro' art-deco femininity, I injected text onto some of the images in a more 'punk' style (Fig. 4) that also pays homage to the 1980s feminist artist Barbara Kruger (Fig. 5). Additional text containing a series of historical anecdotes, as well as critical questions/ comments/observations are composed within the spaces between the images on each page (Fig. 6).

Marshall McLuhan's oft-quoted phrase, "the medium is the message" rings true in the cultural production of zines. Understanding the core quality defining the aesthetic range of possibilities that lie in the heart of zine creativity can only be analysed through the understanding of *how* zines are produced in order to clarify *why* (what message) they should be created. Finally, considering what connection the 'zinester' wants to evoke in the reader through his/her/their combination of aesthetic choices and underlying propagandistic communication provides the overall context through which a zine, as Jeppesen (2010) argues, produces a culture of its own.

The first aesthetic factor underlying the appeal of zine production is its informality, as marked by a capacity to be easily reproduced, which extends the art of zine making into a realm of freedom to create just about anything (Jeppesen, 2010). Print-on-demand technology and the emphasis on creating with a 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) attitude are two essential components that facilitate much personal fulfillment through zine production. For me, the differences in the two approaches to zine creation that I participated in were defined through the collaborative roles I assumed in their differing artistic mediums, modes of

production, and purposes. In producing “Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?”, I took a more ‘analog,’ constructivist-collage approach to the work, focusing on using physical practices of printing, cutting, pasting, and photocopying, before applying a layer of digital finishing (Fig. 7). On the other hand, the “Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine” was overwhelmingly a digital design/editorial collaboration, where my role concentrated on the words, with Alex responsible for the layout (Fig. 8). In both instances, aesthetics influenced the nature of communication these zines offer to readers and is the deciding factor as to whether the messages they contain are more or less ‘didactic,’ by which I mean educationally-oriented, as in the exhibition zine, or ‘loosely interpretive,’ as exemplified in the zine engaged with the Leeds Museum’s Queens of Industry exhibit

How exactly then, do aesthetics influence communication? Ultimately, the primary difference in the relationship between words and images when comparing these two approaches (didactic/educationally informative vs. loosely interpretive) to zine production is what I would describe as the ‘distance’ between the visuals and the text. In the “Reign of a working-Class Feminist?” I approached the design as a personal response outlet, and the zine images and text are more integrated as a combined expressive unit. The words ‘invade’ the space of some images in this zine, just as the questions are designed to ‘interject’ upon the narrative of the original exhibit (Fig. 9).

Comparatively speaking, in the “Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine” the professional, didactic quality of the zine’s orientation clearly delineates the text

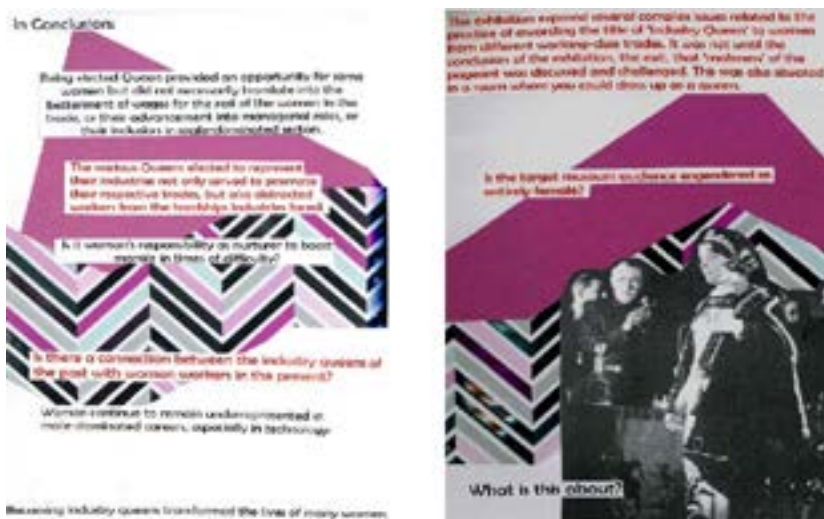


Figure 9: Pages from “Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?”



Figure 10: Page from “Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine”

apart from the photographs as separate, yet contextualizing fields, much akin to an illustrated book. The results create a zine as an 'artefact' of the original exhibit, providing a memory of this particular feminist cultural production for the organisers, artists, and audience alike; its dissemination offers the opportunity to create new audiences to engage with the works (Fig. 10).

In both approaches to zine construction, didactic and freely interpretative, I traversed an image-oriented creative process, prioritising the photos and/or found images as the foundational objects informing my story. Whether in collaboration with others or alone, images were selected first, and later the texts were compiled as a supporting, reinforcing narrative structure. Words, however, were not rated secondary in importance, but were seen as complementary, whether I engaged with them through the editorial work I performed in the "Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine" or as 'found objects' in and of themselves in "Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?," where their integration into both the imagery and stylistic elements was created through sizing, colours, and compositional placements. In both instances, the zines' aesthetics were determined by the mediums utilized to produce them, which were chosen within a context of collaboration and production roles, while also considering the purpose (i.e. creating propagandistic connections) to which the zines were to function. Finally, asking critical questions of visual content is a challenging experience – not only did I discover the need to 're-present' text and image in such a way so as to express my own engagement with the subject matter, but to also inspire further questioning in the mind of the reader. The construction of zines for community educational purposes must keep the aesthetic imperative in mind, and carefully consider the simultaneous integration of the visual communication elements with the textual discourse in a way that not only confirms the lens through which critical analysis is perceived, but also, (ideally) opens a new space of discourse for the engaged reader.

Both of the *Disobedient Women Exhibition Zine* and *Reign of a Working-Class Feminist?* zines are available for download at the University of Victoria [Gender Justice, Creative Pedagogies and Arts-Based Research](#) website.

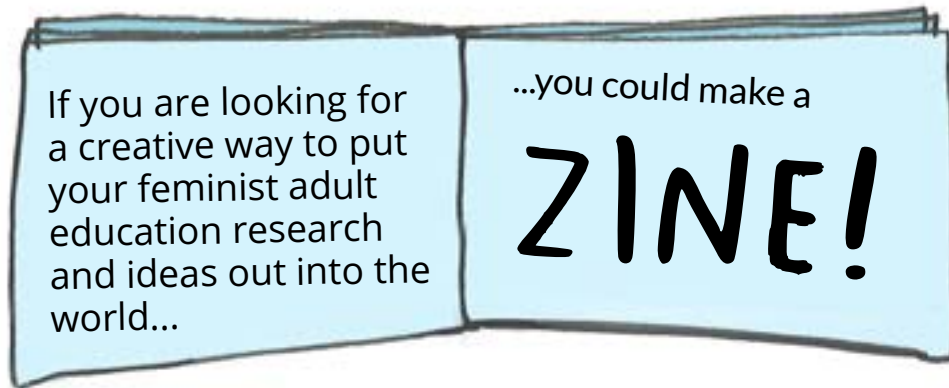
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ZINES & FEMINIST ZINES

What are they and how to make them?

BY SURIANI DZULKIFLI AND HANNAH GELDERMAN



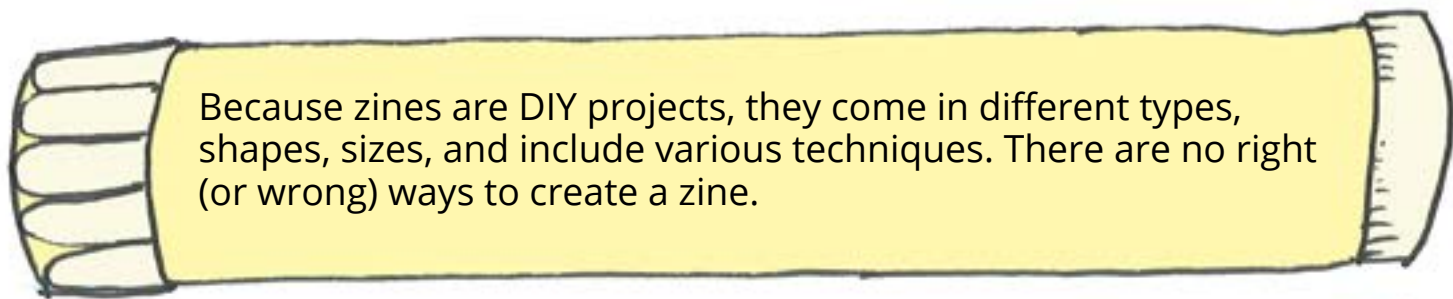
To assist you with this, we outline what zines are, and more specifically what feminist zines are. We then share some things for you to consider while creating your own zine and provide an example of a zine made by Hannah. As zines are diverse, this is not a comprehensive or authoritative guide but rather, an introduction.

FIRST OFF, A BRIEF HISTORY OF ZINES

Zines emerged out of early and mid-20th century do-it-yourself (DIY) productions including the mail art movement in New York (Anderson, 2011), as well as the British underground press and counter-culture scene (Nelson, 1989). Zines gained popularity in the 1970's and 1980's due in part to the rise of photocopying technology which made production easier (Anderson, 2011). With the proliferation of digital technologies, zines now have a strong presence online alongside their still standing print tradition (Anderson, 2011). From their origins through to today, zines have continuously been a mode of production that is easily accessible and they have provided a space for people to express views that differ from the mainstream.

WHAT ARE ZINES?

In the simplest of words, zines can be described as a "non-commercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines" that are created, published and distributed by 'zinesters', a term used for those who create zines (Duncombe, 1997, p. 10). In today's world, anyone and everyone, including people who do not identify as zinesters (e.g. educators, activists, professors, students, artists and others) create zines and use them in different contexts such as community settings, university classrooms, and nonformal education spaces such as workshops, seminars, and teach-ins, to name a few.



Before getting into the 'how-to's', we will explore briefly what we mean by feminist zines. In general, feminist zines arose as a form of expression to discuss women, gender and other issues in creative and alternative ways. We also recognize we can't simply say what a feminist zine is and what it should be about. As Kempson (2015) explains it, "feminist zines are a product of particular lifestyle choices that are influenced by specific geopolitical and sociocultural contexts" (p. 461). In other words the reasons why someone would create feminist zine is based on their on experiences, views, critiques, hopes, etc. that form from their own location, socialization and realities.

This is also to recognise the subjectivity of feminism as different people may understand or relate to feminism differently based on how they have interacted with discourses on feminism. However, in this context, we offer you an understanding of feminism from Ahmed (2017) that resonates with us,

What do you hear when you hear the word feminism? It is a word that fills me with hope, with energy. It brings to mind loud acts of refusal and rebellion as well as the quiet ways we might have of not holding on to things that diminish us. It brings to mind women who have stood up, spoken back, risked lives, homes, relationships in the struggle for more bearable worlds. It brings to mind books written, tattered and worn, books that gave words to something, a feeling, a sense of an injustice, books that, in giving us words, gave us the strength to go on. Feminism: how we pick each other up. So much history in a word; so much it too has picked up (p.1).

Echoing this we might say feminist zines give 'words to something, a feeling, a sense of an injustice', zines 'that, in giving us words' and images, can give us 'the strength to go on.'



See the following page for three reasons....

1. FEMINIST ZINES PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE SPACE FOR DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, feminist zines provide a space to discuss social issues through a feminist lens. Zines are used by feminists as pedagogical tools to promote alternative modes of thinking and learning (Desyllas & Sinclair, 2013; Holma, 2016; Kempson, 2015). Additionally, zines are able to reach new and different audiences, such as women and other communities who have been excluded, marginalised, and oppressed who may not have had the capacity to be engaged before.

2. FEMINIST ZINES ARE A TOOL FOR ALTERNATIVE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION

The creation of zines have given space and validation to alternative knowledges presented in this format, and in this case feminist perspectives, knowledges, and contributions to society that are often left out in mainstream media. As zines are an alternative tool and outlet of communication, there is a wealth of diverse voices that can speak to a wide variety of topics through zines, ranging from violence against women to ecological issues and their effects on frontline Indigenous communities.

For example, Etengoff (2016) use zines as a medium to teach about gender minority experiences in her undergraduate course. In contrast, Taber, Clover and Sanford (2019) use zines to communicate the results of their study on Barbie Expo, discussing gender identity, roles and representation. This latter example will be discussed more in depth in the following pages. In such a way, zines provide a space for alternative knowledge that is not always otherwise talked about. This alternative knowledge is valuable as it is formed by lived experiences, but often the dominant media refuse to explore them (Brouwer & Licona, 2016; Holma, 2016). Moreover, zines are creative, artistic and visually engaging, which is another way to present knowledge.

3. FEMINIST ZINES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO BOTH CREATORS AND READERS

The nature of zines that they can be self-published and easily distributed make them accessible for anyone to start creating their own zines. Furthermore, zine makers usually create zines out of passion and not for profit, and they do not require expensive materials, so most often zines are very affordable to readers (Holma, 2016; Jeppeson, 2012; Kempson, 2015). In today's world, zines can also be accessed online or published as an 'e-zine' (Brouwer & Licona, 2016) which is easily accessible.

SIX ASPECTS TO CONSIDER WHILE CREATING A ZINE

The following examples and questions invite you to consider the content, purpose, layout, medium, tone and distribution of your zine. These are intended to help develop the conceptual elements of your zine.

☐ We provide a few examples and possibilities here.

And key questions to ask while making these decisions in this box.



1

CONTENT

What is in the zine?

- ☐ A feminist perspective, analysis or critique on an issue or subject.
- ☐ Personal or collective stories or sharing of experiences.
- ☐ An adaptation of an academic article.
- ☐ Results of feminist research or study.
- ☐ Gender and/or social issue analysis.
- ☐ Synopsis or compilation of an exhibition, show or event.
- ☐ A how-to guide, or instructions.

- ☐ How is the content arranged and organized?
- ☐ What are the key themes and ideas?

2

PURPOSE

Why is this content being shared?

- ☐ To educate or inform.
- ☐ To represent information creatively and/or accessibly.
- ☐ To invite participation in change initiatives.
- ☐ To inspire new ideas or actions.
- ☐ To share stories or experiences.

- ☐ Who is the audience?
- ☐ How the content and purpose inform each other?

3

LAYOUT

What does the zine look like? (Part 1)

- ☐ Mostly (or all) text.
(Text could be story, poetry, data, etc.)
- ☐ Mostly (or all) images or visuals.
- ☐ A combination of text, images and/or graphics.
- ☐ Consider graphics, colours and design.

- ☐ How are different elements connected?
 - ☐ How many pages is the zine?
- (Tip: Multiples of four work best for booklets)**



What does the zine look like? (Part 2)

- ? Digital.
- ? Hand drawn or illustrated.
- ? Includes photographs.
- ? Painted, collage, mixed media or other art mediums.

- ? What best serves the content and purpose?
- ? What are your skills?
- ? What resources or collaborators do you have access to?
- ? What role does copyright and creative commons place in the reproduction of your images?



How is the content being presented?

- ? Serious.
- ? Satirical.
- ? 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person perspective.
- ? Didactic/Instructional
- ? Conversational.

- ? What are you trying to communicate (purpose and content) and what will do that most effectively?
- ? What might resonate best with your audience?



How and where will the zine be shared?

- ? Online (e-zines).
- ? Print.
- ? Both print and online.
- ? Hosted on a permanent website.
- ? Promoted through networks and social media.
- ? On-site on location somewhere (e.g. an organization's office, in a zine library, as part of an exhibition).

- ? Who is your audience?
- ? What is your budget?
- ? Do you already have an online platform where you can share the zine or do you need to create one?
- ? What best suits your purpose?



As you consider and make decisions on these aspects for your zine, make drafts, do edits, get feedback and test out your options.

For a how-to on the physical construction of zines check out the following resources:

- ? [The Public - An Introduction to Zines](#)
- ? [Zine Making/Putting Pages Together](#)
- ? [Booklyn Education Manual](#)

NOW, FOR
AN EXAMPLE!



Hi, I'm Hannah. I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria where I am also a research assistant. In this capacity, I created a zine titled

A Critical-Creative exploration of how gender is performed in Barbie Expo

from a feminist study by Nancy Taber, Darlene Clover & Kathy Sanford (2019).



Above is the cover and on the left are spreads from the zine!

The study analysed a public exposition of Barbie dolls on display in a mall in downtown Montreal, Canada. The zine captured the findings of the study and made them concise, visual, and accessible.

Below I go over the six aspects we just outlined in relation to the Barbie Expo zine.

CONTENT

In 2019, Darlene, Nancy and Kathy wrote an academic article based on their feminist museum hack of Barbie Expo (See [Module One](#) for the Feminist Museum Hack). This article found that Barbie Expo, despite having potential to do otherwise, reinforced dominant narratives of white superiority, exotic otherness, traditional gender roles and global capitalism. These findings and key ideas from the article, alongside illustrations of the barbies provided the content for the zine.

PURPOSE

As noted above, the purpose of the Barbie Expo zine was to creatively and visually represent the research and to invite readers to critically reflect on the issues raised in the zine.

LAYOUT

As the content included text (study findings and background information) and hand drawn images (illustrations of the Barbies), the zine was a combination of the text, illustrations of the Barbies and Barbie Expo, and hand drawn graphic elements to link and hold the text. The zine was 24 pages including the front and back covers.

MEDIUM

Legally we couldn't reproduce or publish any photographs of the Barbies or the Expo, so this is why I drew pictures of the Barbies. I first did pencil sketches on cardstock, and then went over with black drawing pens. To visually match the hand drawn aesthetic all the text and graphics were also hand drawn. Everything was scanned and coloured digitally in photoshop.

TOPE

The zine has a mix of serious and satirical elements. In many cases, the Barbies are explaining concepts through speech bubbles. The mix of tones served to illuminate and educate through a variety of ways.

DISTRIBUTION

We printed copies to distribute at conferences and onsite at Barbie Expo. We posted a digital copy at the University of Victoria [Gender Justice, Creative Pedagogies and Arts-Based Research](#) website. This site hosts other research and projects done by feminist academic researchers who are interrogating the role exhibitions play in the social construction of gender.

As feminist adult educators, we can undoubtedly leverage the potential of zines to be an aesthetic, disruptive and creative way to engage and educate, as we work within our institutions and communities.

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Waste Land: a Climate Anxiety Haunted House

BY KAY GALLIVAN AND KATE BROOKS-HEINIMANN

The following instructional guide was inspired by *Waste Land*, an experimental pop-up art exhibition about climate anxiety curated inside of a pre-demolition house. The project happened just after the Climate Strike, an international wave of youth-led climate change protests that gained momentum in late 2019. I, Kay Gallivan, had been part of similar activist movements in my younger years and I was excited to see this new generation of activists emerge. At the same time, I also remembered my own burn-out: how a vacant feeling crept in once the big marches of my youth were over and the crowd dissipated. I pondered if there was another way, if an inclusive space could be created to keep the fire burning, but I never imagined that I would have a role in that. I was busy working on another project: creating a pre-demolition art space inspired by Calgary's [Wreck City](#). I had made a great start by speaking about the idea at a City Hall meeting, where City Councillor Jeremy Loveday connected me with a local development company called Aryze Development.

The Waste Land's co-curator Kate Brooks-Heinimann and I met around this time while studying to become high school teachers in Lekwungen Territory (Victoria, BC). Our professors talked a lot about 'free inquiry projects', an increasingly popular educational technique in which students are motivated to learn by having more ownership in the creation of the coursework. Teachers act as facilitators to help students devise projects that are meaningful to them and the end result is presented to an authentic audience rather than simply submitted to a teacher for a grade. Our class of future teachers was paired with a class of high school students to try this kind of project in small groups, and most of the high school students chose climate change as the issue they wanted to talk about. Kate and I had both previously worked on community art installations, and we thought that creating a public venue and an opportunity for intergenerational collaboration with established artists would take the free inquiry project to another level. I had successfully convinced Aryze development to let me convert a pre-demolition house into an art space by this point, and Kate and I agreed this would make a great venue for the project. With a spooky old house on our hands, Halloween fast approaching, and a bunch of students who wanted to send a message about climate change, *Waste Land: A Climate Anxiety Haunted House* was born.

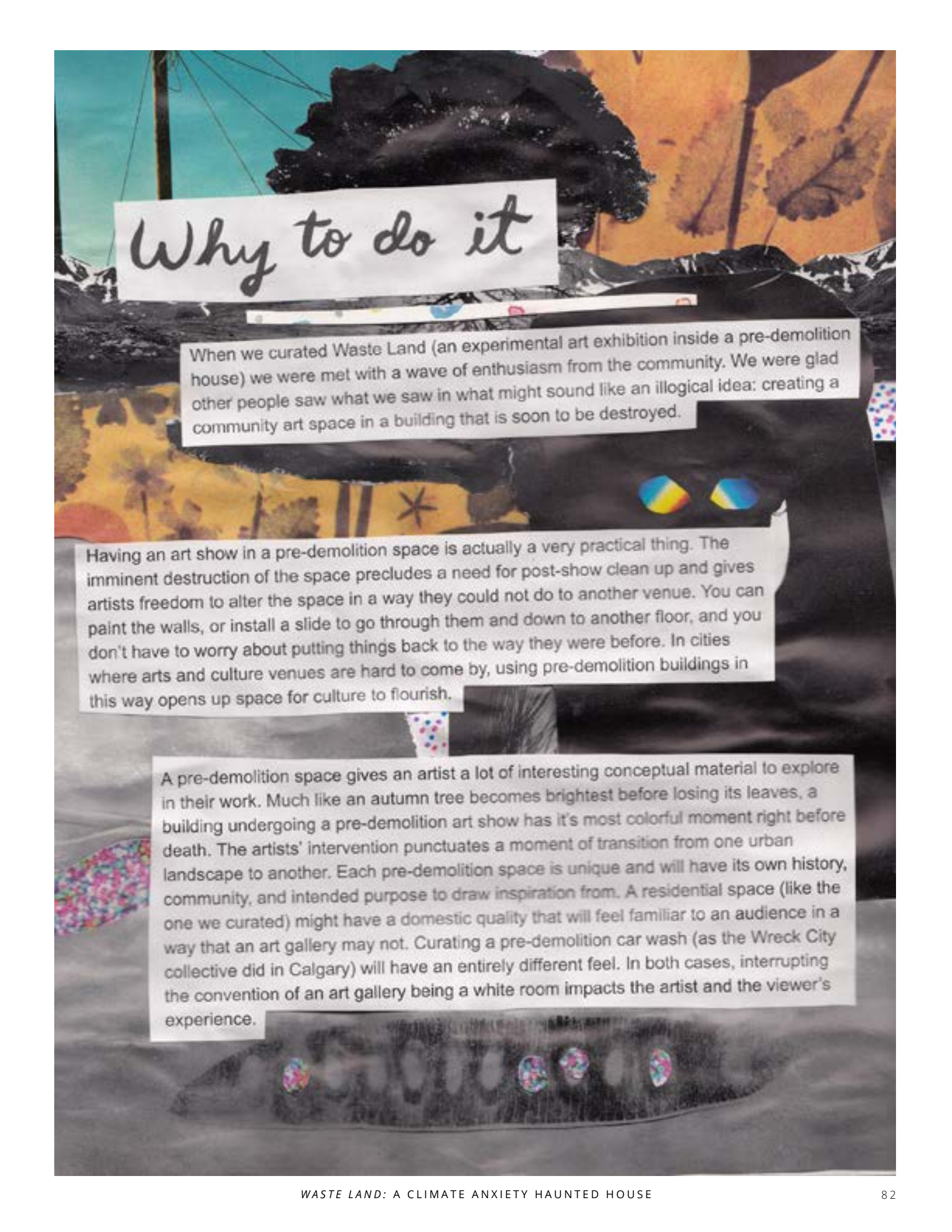
Waste Land was a temporary home for the energy of the Climate Strike to nest in. Our approach to creating that space was informed by intersectional feminism in the sense that we valued centering those at the margins of society and respecting that social justice movements should be for everyone as bell hooks famously said about feminism (hooks, 2015). It was important to us for participation to be low-barrier and we found a lot of different ways to facilitate that, from making the artist application process simple to creating a virtual version of the house so people with mobility issues could still walk through. We aspired to have a roster of artists and workshop facilitators that would represent a multiplicity of voices and paid special attention to giving Indigenous people space in the house. Compensating artists and educators fairly was a high priority for us. Overall, *Waste Land* was a place where we could experiment with creating the 'public education system' we wanted to see. It was also a way to creatively and collectively process grief about the state of the planet, which was an embodiment of the feminist idea that the personal is political. We found healing in how our fear and mourning were shared.

All of that being said, we wrote this contribution to the Guide to empower you to make a pre-demolition art space of your own. It will look different for you than it did for us. As with any site-specific art piece, the unique circumstances you find yourself in will shape your artistic intervention. One key to success in this kind of project is allowing the context to inspire you, going with the flow of things and observing your project's one-of-a-kind thumb print emerge. A project of this scale is an audacious undertaking, a lot of work and a lot of excitement. What we hope you take away from our contribution is that it is possible to reclaim abandoned spaces in your community and turn them into something creative. You have the power! Read on to learn more...

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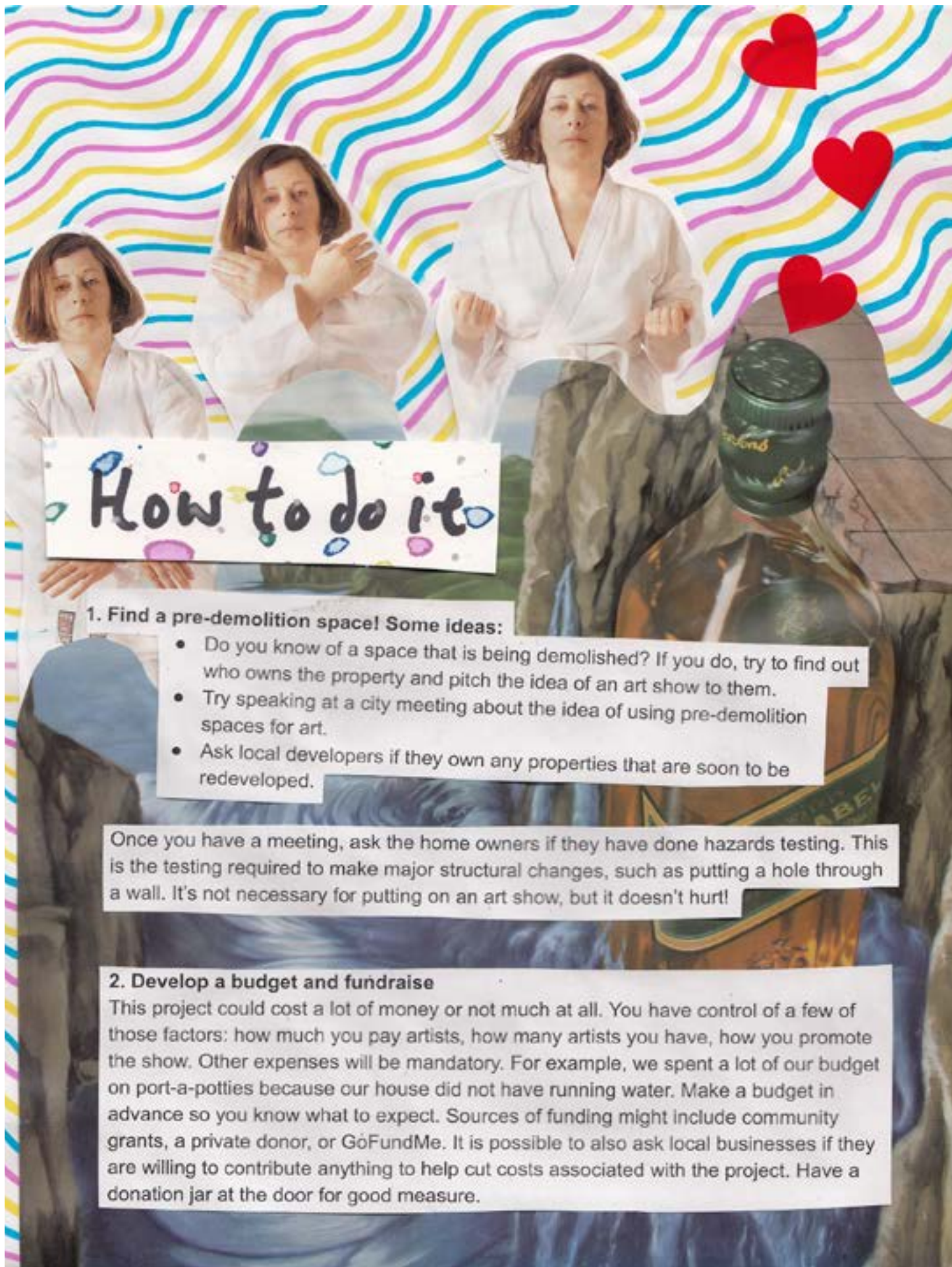


Why to do it

When we curated Waste Land (an experimental art exhibition inside a pre-demolition house) we were met with a wave of enthusiasm from the community. We were glad other people saw what we saw in what might sound like an illogical idea: creating a community art space in a building that is soon to be destroyed.

Having an art show in a pre-demolition space is actually a very practical thing. The imminent destruction of the space precludes a need for post-show clean up and gives artists freedom to alter the space in a way they could not do to another venue. You can paint the walls, or install a slide to go through them and down to another floor, and you don't have to worry about putting things back to the way they were before. In cities where arts and culture venues are hard to come by, using pre-demolition buildings in this way opens up space for culture to flourish.

A pre-demolition space gives an artist a lot of interesting conceptual material to explore in their work. Much like an autumn tree becomes brightest before losing its leaves, a building undergoing a pre-demolition art show has its most colorful moment right before death. The artists' intervention punctuates a moment of transition from one urban landscape to another. Each pre-demolition space is unique and will have its own history, community, and intended purpose to draw inspiration from. A residential space (like the one we curated) might have a domestic quality that will feel familiar to an audience in a way that an art gallery may not. Curating a pre-demolition car wash (as the Wreck City collective did in Calgary) will have an entirely different feel. In both cases, interrupting the convention of an art gallery being a white room impacts the artist and the viewer's experience.



1. Find a pre-demolition space! Some ideas:

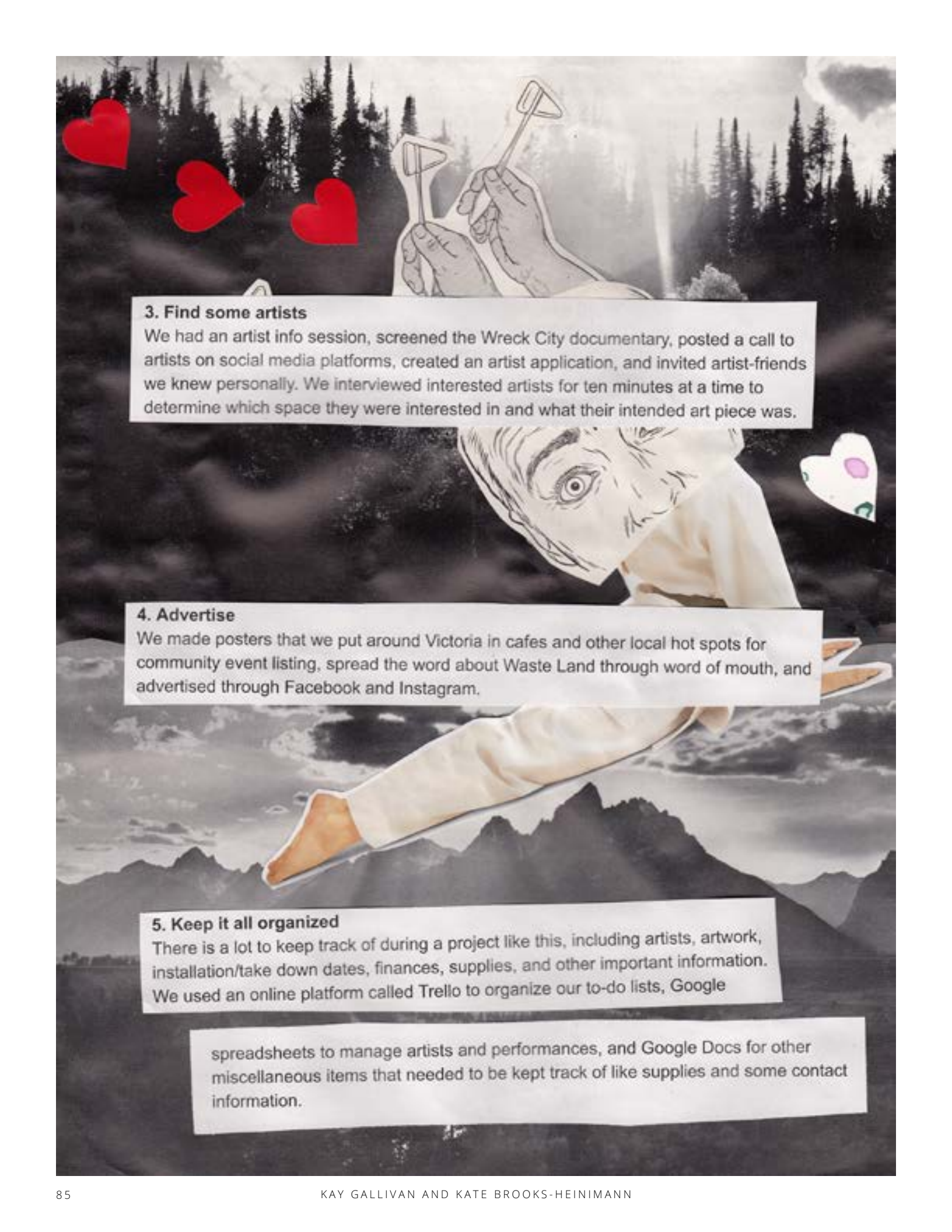
- Do you know of a space that is being demolished? If you do, try to find out who owns the property and pitch the idea of an art show to them.
- Try speaking at a city meeting about the idea of using pre-demolition spaces for art.
- Ask local developers if they own any properties that are soon to be redeveloped.

Once you have a meeting, ask the home owners if they have done hazards testing. This is the testing required to make major structural changes, such as putting a hole through a wall. It's not necessary for putting on an art show, but it doesn't hurt!

2. Develop a budget and fundraise

This project could cost a lot of money or not much at all. You have control of a few of those factors: how much you pay artists, how many artists you have, how you promote the show. Other expenses will be mandatory. For example, we spent a lot of our budget on port-a-potties because our house did not have running water. Make a budget in advance so you know what to expect. Sources of funding might include community grants, a private donor, or GoFundMe. It is possible to also ask local businesses if they are willing to contribute anything to help cut costs associated with the project. Have a donation jar at the door for good measure.





3. Find some artists

We had an artist info session, screened the Wreck City documentary, posted a call to artists on social media platforms, created an artist application, and invited artist-friends we knew personally. We interviewed interested artists for ten minutes at a time to determine which space they were interested in and what their intended art piece was.

4. Advertise

We made posters that we put around Victoria in cafes and other local hot spots for community event listing, spread the word about Waste Land through word of mouth, and advertised through Facebook and Instagram.

5. Keep it all organized

There is a lot to keep track of during a project like this, including artists, artwork, installation/take down dates, finances, supplies, and other important information. We used an online platform called Trello to organize our to-do lists, Google

spreadsheets to manage artists and performances, and Google Docs for other miscellaneous items that needed to be kept track of like supplies and some contact information.



Collages as Feminist Action

BY SARAH WILLIAMSON

A collage can be an effective and visual form of expression and communication, and it can be a powerful and empowering experience to create a collage as a feminist action in an art museum or gallery setting. It is an inclusive technique as it does not require any particular skill or ability in drawing or painting. Collage is also seen to be a non-threatening medium where polished artistic ability and experience is not necessary. To collage is to select, cut or tear and rearrange ‘found’ and ready-made images and texts from a variety of sources to create something new. As a form of art-making, it has history as a practice of challenge, subversion and criticism through its “provocative spirit” (Frances, 2009, p. 15). As such, it is particularly suited to feminist inquiry, which motivated by the quest for gender justice, explores, provokes and challenges through a feminist lens. Collage is a liberating medium, a feminist action says Bell (2017, p. 440), as it “sets the image free from its original context and enables a reimagining of the narrative”. It can be a “galvanising” critical practice, “a powerful way of jarring people into thinking and seeing” (Leavy, 2015, p. 235). The collaging process can allow thinking and realisations to emerge, offering a visual and alternative form of cognitive and emotional expression. The physical ‘making’ and ‘handcrafting’ should be seen as part of the experience: “the direct use of the hand creates an authentic experience of the world” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 214).



Figure 1: Collage example.



Figure 2: Collage example.

Getting started, finding a focus, and creating a feminist collage

Consider creating a collage when visiting an art museum with a friend, partner, colleague, students, or with a small group, as it can be an enjoyable shared experience. Many public institutions provide a learning space or studio area for creative work and exploration where a collage could be created *in situ*, and such provision can be researched and any necessary arrangements made in advance. If there isn't space available in the public institution, try to arrange a nearby space to collage after your visit.

Set yourself a fixed time to look around your chosen institution or exhibition. Some institutions can be overwhelmingly large, and if this is the case, select one or two rooms as a focus. Drawing upon the principles of the 'feminist museum hack' (See [Module One](#)), look at the artwork on display (and also how works are displayed) and consider what you see through a 'feminist gaze'. After this, go to the working area you have selected and start to create your collage. Although you may have some ideas forming, there is no need to start with a fixed idea of what your finished collage is going to look like. Allow it to emerge, let the making and the thinking coax each other into being.

During the process of creating and making, a voice can start to emerge from a work says Eisner (2002), and he reminds us that "opportunities in the process of working are encountered that were not envisioned when work began, but that speak so eloquently about the promise of emerging possibilities that new options are pursued. Put succinctly, surprise, a fundamental reward of all creative work, is bestowed by the work on its maker" (p. 7).

Set a fixed timescale for the making of your collage, for example an hour. If you are working with a partner or a group, factor in enough time for each of you to share your finished collage and for discussion too. There is no right or wrong way to create an effective collage.

Some hints and tips

Here is some helpful advice. Have all your materials ready. You will need source material to collage with, a piece of thick paper or card for a background base, paste or glue stick, and scissors or scalpel. Have some scrap paper to protect your working surface from glue marks. It can be useful to have two pairs of scissors – a large pair for cutting big areas and a much smaller pair for more delicate and detailed cutting if required. You may also want some paint, paintbrushes, pens and glazes. Old and new magazines, newspapers,



Figure 3: Collage example.



Figure 4: Collage example.



Figure 5: Capturing all the collages!

flyers, photographs and books can be used as source material. Images and text can either be cut, torn or ripped and then arranged with simplicity or complexity before being glued into position. Although paper is traditionally used, anything can be collaged if it can be stuck down! All manner of ephemera can be used for effective collage components.

Use a coloured background, rather than white, to collage onto. Black or another dark colour can be effective, as can something textured or printed such as a map or wallpaper. Having a ready-made background is a technique used by many artists – painters often paint onto ready-prepared backgrounds so their work has some depth to start with. If you choose to only place a few collage pieces onto your base, having a ready-made background will prevent your work looking unfinished or incomplete.

To help create an effectively visual piece of work, be consistent in some way. For example, consider collaging with pieces from matching sources, such as from the same era or source type, or with the same type of paper or print colours. This can help any separate elements in your work blend together and help to create a cohesive look which can prevent a piece of work from looking disjointed and simply a collection of bits.

Many artists prepare pre-cut material which they collect and assemble over a period of time which is then 'ready to use' and arrange. Others prefer to have constraints imposed – what can be achieved with using only one magazine or one newspaper?

Don't feel you have to 'use everything' that you have found to work with. Sometimes 'less can be

more'. Consider what is known as 'negative space', in other words, look at the background area as something which can have relevance too. Does the background make a positive contribution to your collage? Remember, every bit of background does not need to have something on it. Gaps and spaces can say and reveal something in their own right.

Collage material can be placed in solitary positions or grouped together in chosen juxtapositions. It can be looked effective if things are placed and joined together to make a new hybrid shape or form.

Ideas and thoughts do not have to be presented visually in a literal manner. Think of metaphorical and symbolic representations of the points you wish to make and the thoughts you wish to express. For example, an image of a closed door could represent exclusion.

A collage can be a feminist 'revision' of a chosen artwork – a re-presentation through a re-creation. Create your own version of an artwork, changing and subverting elements to draw attention. You could add text and voice in speech or thought bubbles.

Creating some easy, visual effects

It can look striking to use multiples of one thing such as a collection of 'eyes' or 'legs'. Hybrid combinations and fantastical, surreal creatures and beings can be created in this way, and visual emphasis added through the repeated use of certain types of imagery.

Join completely different things in novel juxtapositions to make a new hybrid shape or form. Replace an element with something unexpected such as to replace the head on a woman's body with an iron.

Try sandpapering collage elements to give a distressed, more aged look and feel. This can help recently printed material sit cohesively with vintage material.

You can 'tone down' areas of your collage either by layering tissue on top, or by painting over sections with a glaze or wash (of diluted paint), or even by 'splattering' paint. If you blot wet paint with a paper towel before it is dry it can give an attractive layered and glazed look, as some paint will be left while still revealing what is beneath.

Splattering a whole collage with paint can give an attractive effect, drawing together and unifying all the separate collage elements together. 'Flick' to splatter using a loaded paintbrush or toothbrush, and protect surrounding areas.

Reflective sharing and conversation

After you have finished your collage, take turns to share, listen and talk about your work. This is a dynamic way to close the activity, always fascinating, often critical, and you may wish to record the conversation too. It can be empowering to do this in the spaces of an art museum, turning such spaces from passive sites into dynamic sites of feminist enquiry.

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Community Mapping and Women-Led Participatory Safety Audit

BY NANDITA BHATT

The Martha Farrell Foundation, based in New Delhi, India, supports practical interventions which are committed to achieving a gender-just society and promoting lifelong learning which includes supporting women and young people to develop new knowledge and initiate evidence based campaigns with the purpose of promoting gender equality, leadership of women and girls, prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace and in communities. The Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) has been set up to carry forward Martha's spirit and legacy by advancing her pioneering work on gender mainstreaming and adult education, with the overall goal of achieving gender equality in India and around the world. This is where I work, and where we use community mapping as a part of our women led participatory safety auditing, which I share in this module.

The tool for Participatory Safety Audit that is described in this chapter was adapted by the MFF along with the women and girls engaged in the Right to Safe Spaces projects in several locations (both urban and rural) across the country. A central component of the Participatory Safety Audit is community mapping. Community mapping is a popular tool that is used to capture stories from the communities through storytelling which can be done through a collection of drawings, photographs and narratives or a map. But in our experience, while observing community mapping practice, we have found that the contribution of women and girls in the exercise was often limited or absent, frequently leaving them feeling confused, bewildered, marginalised, hurt and angry in their inability to give voice to their experiences in a large group.

The [UN Women website](#) states that

“It is estimated that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) at some point in their lives. However, some national studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime” (UN Women, 2019).

Our experience found that the assessments of spaces differed to a great extent



Figure 1: School students conducting PSA in school.



Figure 2: Domestic workers doing PSA.

between genders, as the assessment of women and girls of certain spaces is almost always associated with the experiences of having felt safe or unsafe in that particular space and men's relations to the spaces were based on their experience of having 'done' something or 'experienced' a certain activity there. For instance, while this exercise was being conducted in an urban settlement in India, girls remained silent while boys spoke about the experience of winning a cricket match in the park and enjoying sleeping under the shade of the trees in the park. When asked separately, girls shared experiences of being stared at, jeered and followed if they happened to be in the park or walking across it at any time.

As a result of constantly living with the threats of violence and the feeling of being watched, women have naturally been conditioned to be more observant and aware of their surroundings and girls learn very quickly to condition themselves in this manner too. Temples were marked unsafe only by women and girls in safety maps of several such audits conducted in rural India. There was a backlash in the beginning when the findings were shared in the community but there was no denying the fact when the evidence was backed by such a large collective of women and girls including the boys who were also part of this exercise. Participatory Safety Audits recognise that violence against women and girls is deeply rooted in the unequal relationships of power between men and women, boys and girls. It is built on the principle that violence against women and girls is not an individual or a private issue but rather a community one. Therefore, it is imperative that social action and policy advocacy around issues that concern the safety of women and girls are built on the lived experiences and collective narratives of women and girls themselves. The key role for the facilitator is to create a safe space for women and girls to be able to do so and facilitate safe ways for the sharing to happen.

Staring, lewd remarks, jeering, cat calls, wolf whistles. These are all a part and parcel of every woman's life. Be it in public transport, be it on the street, be it in a movie hall, such behaviour is so pervasive and happens so often that most women tend to dismiss and ignore such behaviour even though they constitute sexual harassment. Working women are no exception to the rule (Farrell, 2013).

Such events, noted by Martha Farrell, trigger conversations – in the park where neighbours take their morning walk, on the bus or Metro with young girls travelling to college, in an office or on television debates. The tone is always anger tinged with fear. What are we angriest about? What are we most fearful of? Whom or what do we blame? Women are able to identify with the fear when it comes to incidences of harassment, rape, even teasing. The frustration that nothing will change, because sexual harassment and sexual assault is such a deep-rooted part of our culture. It is woven so intricately into the fabric of our lives that those of us who are victimized feel we are at fault. And anger at those who perpetrate this violence, because they feel justified by the strong societal messaging which say rape, battering, sexual harassment, stalking and other forms of violence are acceptable and women must accept it (Martha Farrell Foundation, 2016).

To assume that women are unable to recognize the harassments they encounter is incorrect. However, the fact that these women choose to remain silent about harassment for a variety of reasons has been affirmed by numerous women. For instance, informal workers such as female domestic workers as a result of the exacerbated levels of vulnerabilities and challenges related to their migration status, informal status of employment and the invisibility of their workplace, not only choose to remain silent but also alarmingly tend to undermine or feign ignorance of such incidents, even if experienced, taking comfort in their invisibility to ignore the discomfort of losing one's job. This is of particular significance because domestic workers are sometimes the sole earning members in their families, so they are forced into silence to necessarily maintain their employment.

Unsafe public spaces restrict the freedom of movement of women and girls to participate in school, work and recreational activities including access to essential services such as access to water and health services. Yet we also always ask when things will change, when women will be safe? This consciousness that change is possible individually and collectively is at the heart of this women-led participatory safety audit of community spaces. This form

of assessment allows women to reinterpret the idea of violence and safety in the context of their environment and decide as a collective the ways in which to bring in the much needed change that will guarantee the safety of women and girls.

What is a Participatory Safety Audit (PSA)

A women- and girls-led Participatory Safety Audit (PSA) is a spatial self-assessment of their environs including areas where they live. This may be done through a dialogue, poetry, visual art, photographs and/or community maps. We have found it to be a very powerful method that amplifies the voices of women and girls who have been thus far marginalised and unheard. What makes this method of safety audit distinct from others is that i) It is led by members of the community themselves; ii) It includes both men and boys as stakeholders; iii) It not only focuses on inadequate facilities such as poor lighting to be triggers for violence; iv) but it very clearly focuses on changing the attitudes and behaviours of their own family members and communities members. v) It has elements of criticality, regularity and actionable follow through, communities produce Action Taken Reports of audits. While it is a deeply emotional exercise of experiential sharing between individuals, we have also known it to be a very powerful one to bring community attention to the issue of violence against women and girls and its inclusion in community development plans.

The core objective of conducting a PSA is to develop an appropriate strategy to reduce incidences of violence, with the support of the community. The process of PSA not only helps in bringing focus to the reasons for women and girls feeling unsafe, but it is also a very useful tool for:

- Promoting public discussions on issues of violence against women and girls.
- Increasing awareness and understanding of the community, local governments and others on the concerns of women and girls.
- Including the community (including men and boys) in decision making processes around issues of violence against women and girls
- Encouraging partnerships in communities to jointly identify local and context-specific solutions to address issues of insecurity felt by women and girls.

Additionally, a PSA exercise also presents a clear picture about the safety issues for women and girls and the attitudes and mind-sets of individuals residing within these spaces, and the key factors that impact women's safety. It also

aids in translating unsafe spaces into safe spaces. Other objectives include an understanding of the attitudes of the community around issues of gender and violence against women and girls.

Guiding principles for conducting a PSA

Unequal gender systems are systematically perpetuated and reinforced all around us, at home, in society, at work, in organisations, and across nations throughout the world. Power and control rests in the hands of a few (mostly men), who use their powers to advance their own economic and political interests, usually at the cost of the interest of others who are less powerful (usually women). The powerless that are mostly women ultimately come to believe in and accept the systems of inequality and injustice, as the natural order of things, without question or analysis. Socialisation from infancy further instils values and attitudes which make all of society; both men and women take these systems for granted as those aspects of reality which cannot be changed (PRIA & ILO, 2013).

Such a social order gives rise to various forms of discrimination, of which the most prevalent is violence. Violence against women is globally one of the most tolerated forms of human rights violation. No communities are immune to its impact. Socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a woman, man, girl, or boy are based on dominant one-dimensional ideas of femininity and masculinity and intersect with age, class, caste, race, ability, and geographic location. All of these factors influence a woman's experience with violence. This violence both reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women, and compromises the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its victims. The effects of violence against women on communities and societies are not just devastating, but they also result in reduced productivity, and in perpetuation of cultures of silence and impunity in respect of violence against women (Tandon & Priesler, 2014).

In the absence of systems of mutual support, these women tend to stay submissive and voiceless. Their aspirations are bound by a feeling of subjugation, low self-concept and feelings of dependency and vulnerability. Participatory research is an educational intervention in this direction. It gives inspiration to do something about this helplessness, submissiveness and feeling of inferiority that has made women accept control and injustice. It serves the interests of the oppressed, those who are dispossessed, unorganised and powerless. It seeks to prove that girls and women are capable of bringing about change.

Thus, the importance of participatory research is based on the fact that it:

- is aimed at creating an experience of personal and collective change, thus strengthening people's understanding that change is possible, within one's self and at the level of the group.
- encourages participants to question what they have always accepted, to critically examine their own experiences and to derive insights through analysis. This process enables them to discover and exert their latent powers for constructive action.

It recognises and validates authentic and accurate knowledge of girls and women, boys and men, which is based on real experiences, and synthesises it with fresh insights and restructured concepts based on the analysis of experience. The new body of knowledge thus created and leads to a powerful sense of ownership and a willingness to transform the reality.

As an approach to social change, it was envisaged that while this methodology would enable youth to learn appropriate methods to conduct research for social transformation; at the same time it would also foster ownership of the data, generated with the view of ensuring sustainability to the work so begun. It was envisaged that the participation of youth, especially the young girls in such a study, in which they own the process and the data so generated would be an empowering experience for them (Farrell & Bhatt, 2014).

Who conducts a PSA?

PSAs are conducted by facilitators. Facilitators are people who work in the community for the organisation or they could be identified leaders among women and girls of the community. We have also found that this exercise is quite successful when young boys are involved in facilitating the same discussions (safety of women and girls) with other boys their age. The major aim of the facilitators is to create a conducive and safe environment for the participants.

Facilitators should:

- Be open to answering questions.
- Act responsibly.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Build trust.
- Enhance participation of all members.
- Plan and manage time, take prior permission.

- Maintain and respect people's time.
- Summarize information and present in a language that people understand.
- Provide a forum for dialogue and discussions.

Facilitators should avoid:

- Prejudicing or possessing a negative attitude towards people.
- Using complex terms or language – It is important to speak in a language that is understood. It is better if facilitators can speak the local dialects.
- Projecting only one's own ideas all the time.

HOW TO CONDUCT A PARTICIPATORY SAFETY AUDIT

The following eight steps are to be applied for the effective implementation of a PSA.

Step 1 | Mapping of existing youth/women's groups in the community

In almost every community, there exist aggregations of young people and adults who undertake activities together. Such groups could be a local sports club, a neighbourhood association for cultural events, or a group that undertakes welfare activities. The longer you have been working in a community, the easier it will be for you to identify such existing groups. Where tight social norms exist, you may find it easier to build rapport with young girls if they accompany their mothers to group meetings, or for health camps. You can also take the help of collaborators and social leaders from the community.

It is also possible no such groups exist in the community you are going to work in. Don't worry. You can start by talking to small groups of two or three women and girls, and later widen the circle to include more. In communities where such groups do exist, the next step is to engage them to begin to reflect and understand their own individual thinking, biases, strengths and weaknesses.

Step 2 | Engaging women and girls through participatory workshops to break barriers

Women and girls need to be engaged to develop a sense of self-worth, build

confidence and take control over their actions. The process of empowerment is set in motion when they learn their situation is not unique and there are others who face the same difficulties. Awareness that they are not to be blamed, and understanding the causes of socialization and unequal power relations allows them to visualize ways to do something about it (Martha Farrell Foundation, 2016).

It might be a good idea to engage boys and men, girls and women separately as it might be that the social order of the families and communities that these groups belong to do not allow intermingling between these groups.

You should plan to meet with them at least once before the mapping exercise to discuss issues of gender inequality, types of violence perpetrated at home and in public spaces, socialization and patriarchy. Discuss and debate on how families, schools, universities, panchayats, police, legal bodies and so forth, can help or hinder actions to end violence against women. Being part of a group will give them an opportunity to reflect on their own roles in the process of violence, share their own experiences of peer pressure, social conditioning, and caste conflict (Martha Farrell Foundation, 2016).

For the meetings, choose a place that is central, convenient and safe for the women and girls to access. Hold the meetings at a reasonable time. It is advisable that the same is fixed at a mutually agreed time.

While working with girls remember to make sure that you have had a conversation with their parents/guardians and they are aware of the timings of the meetings. You might want to invite them to observe the initial meeting.

Step 3 | Team Formation

Create a team consisting of members of existing women and youth groups in the community. The team may also include stakeholders from the community. When MFF conducted a PSA in Haryana, a state in northern India, frontline workers and school teachers were also included in the team; in Maharashtra, a state situated in the Western peninsular part of the subcontinent, elected representatives of the local communities also formed part of the team. Additionally, MFF also conducted workshops for young adults (girls and boys) on the methodology of PSA so that they could independently lead the exercise.

Give each member of the team a well-defined role and they should be expected to perform the role and the responsibility that has been assigned to them. It is okay if the composition of the team varies between locations.

The team can comprise broadly of:

- A team leader. Possibly someone with prior experience of having conducted PSA. This individual can also play the dual role of being an interviewer;
- One or two documenters. One may be given the responsibility of taking notes of the process and the second may be asked to record the exercise through photographs;
- One observer who will note all the reflections of the participants during the process.

Step 4 | Preliminary field visit

Once a general location for the PSA has been chosen, a preliminary field visit to this location should be conducted beforehand to:

- Seek permission from and provide information to relevant authorities/ parents or guardians of the girls and boys participating.
- Ensure full participation by the community.

Step 5 | Observation Walk

In this step, women and girls and any other stakeholders walk around the location chosen for the PSA. This 'walk' is also called an observation walk and as the name suggests is useful for the participants of the PSA to familiarise themselves with their neighborhood, and for building a rapport with the community. In a PSA exercise conducted by MFF with domestic workers in an urban settlement, domestic workers were unaware of the spaces in their neighbourhood; they were only familiar with the route that led from their home to their place of work. Their earlier reluctance to explore the neighborhood was based on the fear of the unknown and of being harassed. This walk (usually) done in a group gave them confidence and provided an opportunity for them to get to know their neighbourhood and dispel the fear that they earlier possessed.

The observation walk can also be conducted after the PSA by the facilitators to add on to what has been discussed in the group meetings. During this walk, the facilitators (who are also community members) interview people in the

neighborhood while on their walk.

Guidelines for the Observation Walk:

- Develop an observation guideline. Take a volunteer group from the community for a walk across the neighbourhood.
- Ask each member of the team to observe the area for specific issues related to the PSA during the walk.
- Ask each person in the team to take notes or share observations with a person who can record them.
- Get additional information by asking questions of the people that you come across during the walk.

Step 6 | Mapping

The actual community mapping exercise is conducted in the following manner:

Part 1: Prepare Map of the Selected Space

Materials required: Use material that is readily available such as colored paper, pens, chalk, coloured powder, rice/wheat flour and others. Material should be prepared before the exercise begins.

Participants: Women and girls in the community. It is also important to involve the men and boys from the community. This can be done in a mixed gender group or as discussed earlier, in separate groups.

Method 1: Facilitators provide a readily available map

- The facilitator can get a copy of the map from sources such as the city planning office or the elected community leaders.



Figure 3: PSA on ground.



Figure 4: Boys conducting PSA.

- Participants can be asked to look at the map and verify if it is authentic.
- Ensure that everyone's homes and familiar landmarks are marked on the map, allow participants to add their homes, schools, health centres, water source, and other facilities to the map.
- Ask questions about spaces you are familiar with and ask them to add it. For instance, when such an exercise was being conducted with university students, specific questions asked by the facilitator ensured that even spaces such as the pond or a large tree where people 'hang out' were included in map.

Method 2: Participants draw their own maps

- Such a map can be drawn on the ground (using the chalk or powder) or on a sheet of paper. A larger number of people can see the map if it is big, so if drawn on the ground/floor, do remember to also copy it onto a sheet of paper.
- You may use available materials such as pebbles, sand, and twigs as indicators on the map if it is drawn on the ground, and use coloured pens and stickers if working on paper.
- The responsibility for making the map is the participants. They may begin by drawing the main road from their homes and marking their own homes and fields and the services they use.

If you want more information about a specific group, you may ask specific questions. For example, if we are talking about the school, ask how many boys and girls go to school, how many finish school and how many are drop-outs and place this information where the school is on the map.

Sometimes when participants are drawing the neighbourhood maps themselves, it presents more nuanced points for discussion. For instance, a group of girls and a group of boys in an urban settlement were asked to draw a map of their neighborhood. The map drawn by the girls was a small square in the middle of the chart paper, and the boys on the other hand had asked for extra paper and drawn a map that included their own settlement and the other neighborhood as well. It was when the two groups sat together to discuss their maps and the boys had the opportunity to question the girls on their map that they learned about the unsafe situations of the neighbourhood. The girls had drawn only what they saw when they opened the front door of their one-bedroom house. It was discovered that due to the very high levels of unsafety, the girls were forbidden from leaving their homes on their own, and

if they did do so, they would be accompanied by their parents. Following social norms in India, the girls were forbidden from making eye contact with anyone, which prompted them to walk with their heads bent and eyes on the road. They also shared that parents were known to lock their daughters inside the houses when they left their home to ensure safety of their daughters.

Organising the group in the both methods above

- Ask the group to sit in a circle facing each other.
- Chart paper, marker and stickers should be placed in the middle.
- One or two volunteers from the group will explain and verify the map of the neighbourhood while the participants of PSA will observe and contribute (unless they are drawing their own).
- Make sure that the participants mark out clearly their homes and all the other spaces related to their daily lives.
- Ask each group to begin by numbering each of the locations.
- Make sure these numbers are documented along with the names of these spaces.

Part 2: Prepare Safety Map

Now that a general map of the safety map is ready and everyone's homes and other landmarks such as friend's house, teacher's house, salon, shops are recorded on the earlier map, the group is ready to conduct the PSA.

Check the time, if too much time has passed making the earlier map, you can pause the exercise here after taking consensus from the group. Sometimes groups ask for the exercise to be continued on another day, some prefer to continue on the same day. This should be done at the convenience of the group.

Remember the realities of men and boys are different from that of women and girls, and this is more evident when safety mapping exercises are conducted separately with each gender.

The focus of this activity should be to create safe spaces for conversation. During this stage, it is advisable to do the exercise in two same gender groups in order to ensure anonymity and safety to the more vulnerable.

Method:

- If possible, the PSA exercise with boys and girls, women and men should be conducted in separate groups in order to capture each of their unique

experiences.

- Organising the group:
 - Ask the group to study the neighbourhood map carefully and discuss, debate and mark on the map if the spaces marked on it is safe, unsafe and/or moderately safe for women and girls from threats of sexual violence.
 - Proper documentation of each response during the discussion is very important. The following questions can be asked to the group (both men and women, boys and girls):
 - What are the places that you think are safe/unsafe for girls and women?
 - Why do you/they feel safe/unsafe?
 - When do you/they feel safe/unsafe?
 - Do you/they feel safe/unsafe in a particular area when you are alone or in a group?
 - Do you have any personal experience that you wish to share about these places?
 - The mark on the map must not be based on the majority responses, but rather on all responses. If there is a difference of opinion, ensure that all the different responses are recorded.
 - The reason for any particular space being deemed as safe/unsafe or moderately safe should be well documented alongside the assigned number.
 - When the map is complete, the facilitator should initiate a discussion on the steps that should be taken to make sure these unsafe and moderately safe spaces are turned into safe spaces. The facilitator should participate in this discussion to reason against any impractical suggestion or by supporting the group in coming up with steps. The suggestions put forward by the group should be written down as 'recommendations' on a board/chart, whichever is available.
 - These focused group discussions should be solution orientated, focusing on the question, 'How can a place be made safe for girls and women?' Keep a record of the essential perspectives and viewpoints of community participants. The major rationales for focused group discussion are:
 - Clarification of the issues and different positions on it;
 - Opinion-building in a collective context;
 - Expression of experiences and opinions;
 - Can be used to initiate and sustain involvement.

Note: The content of the safety map will likely be very different depending on whether it is done during the day or during the night, as many spaces tend to be much more dangerous at nighttime. Therefore, if time permits, it may be useful to generate separate safety maps, one for the day and one for the night, then both can be shared.

Step 7 | Inter-group sharing: Review and analysis of data

Both the groups of women and men; boys and girls who have engaged in the same mapping processes should come together to share their respective maps. The recommendations of both the groups should also be shared with each other.

Once the sharing of data is complete, a common list of recommendations should be prepared through intensive discussion between the groups. It has been observed in the past that maps drawn and assessed by men and boys will be different from those prepared by women and girls in terms of safe and unsafe spaces for women and girls. Spaces that are considered moderately safe by girls might be seen as a safe space by boys. It is important to initiate a discussion in order to create a bridge of understanding as to why a particular space is felt as 'unsafe' by women and girls but safe for men and boys and vice-versa.

Figures 5 and 6 below show the maps prepared by boys and girls of their village in North India. The map prepared by the girls have only sad faced stickers signifying that the entire village is unsafe for them. The map made by the boys



Figure 5: Rehmana village PSA by girls. The green faces are frowning (unsafe).



Figure 6: Rehmana village PSA by boys. The red faces are smiling (safe).



Figure 7: Dometic workers shared their PSA through art.



Figure 8: Sharing of PSA findings in the form of a street theatre.

felt that the village was very safe for the girls – they marked their map with smiley faces. When the two groups were brought together with their maps, they saw how different their maps were. The boys questioned the map made by the girls, they felt that harassment of women can only be done by outsiders and they (the boys) patrol the village at all times to ensure that no outside boys enter. The girls when their turn came, said that the space was unsafe because they were outside. Shocked, the boys learned from the girls that day how their language, body language and their presence created a hostile environment for the girls.

This is a crucial stage in the formulation of the change strategy that results from the PSA process. The information gathered through the mapping processes is collated in this stage for the purpose of analysis. All the maps and diagrams that have been recorded, whether in the form of replications on paper/charts or photographs, should be displayed for the analysis. Two team members should be given the responsibility of documenting the responses from each group discussion resulting from the analysis.

Outside help such as researchers or university students can be sought during this data analysis stage. When a similar exercise was conducted in one location, help was sought from university students who helped to analyse the data, translated them in local language and prepared policy advocacy tools based on the findings.

Below is an example of one such advocacy document.

Step 8 | Sharing of PSA data

The final step of the PSA process, and an important part of participatory research, is the sharing of findings of the study with the community.

Influencing institutions is an integral part of this tool. The sharing exercise is used as a forum to deepen the understanding of issues that have emerged from the safety mapping exercise. It is also an opportunity to form an understanding of the inherent attitudes and behaviours that exist within the men, women, boys and girls in the community.

The sharing can be done through street plays, manifestos, presentations, music or poetry (See Figs. 7-8).

Charter of demands put forward by women and girls in Haryana after PSA was conducted in 22 villages, 2 universities and 23 schools

- Formulation of a safety policy for women and girls in the State
- Constitution of a Youth Violence Watch Group at panchayat level
- Safety audits to be institutionalized in the State
- Deployment of women constables in educational institutions and villages
- Installation of street lights in the whole village
- Banning of alcohol shops in and around residential areas and educational institutions
- Inclusion of gender in the curriculum of schools
- Ensure that the Internal Complaints Committee and Local Complaints
- Committees for prevention, prohibition and redressal of sexual harassment at workplace are constituted at the institutional and district levels
- Strict restrictions on the release of obscene songs
- Institution of a one stop rape crisis centre in all districts

Author's note

Some of the content in this contribution to the Guide has been previously published or adapted from earlier Martha Farrell Foundation internal reports and documents, as well as publications such as the [*How safe are we? Report of Youth led Safety Audit conducted in Sonapat, Haryana*](#) and the [*IPEC Converging against Child Labour: A training manual on Participatory Appraisal*](#).

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'Finding' Your (Photo)voice to Create Positive Change

BY SURIANI DZULKIFLI

How it all started: My involvement in photography

I have always been fascinated and interested in cameras and photography for as long as I can remember. This fascination and interest were nurtured informally with the family camera and my own reading of numerous magazines on cameras and photography. I then expanded my learning through a more non-formal practise and training (by this I mean the somewhat structured and intentional type of learning that occurs outside of the classroom) in secondary school in Penang, Malaysia (where I am from), when I was a part of the photography club and the school yearbook editorial board. The photos that I took were primarily of the outdoors as we would go on field trips for the sole purpose of practising taking photos. The photography club was also placed in charge of taking photos of the school events to be documented in the yearbook. Once I started my undergraduate at a university in Ottawa, Canada, my involvement in photography once again reverted to more limited life events. I never gave photography much thought but I never stopped taking photographs either. Reflecting back, I now see that it was a way of expressing myself but it was not until my graduate studies at the University of Victoria (UVic), Canada that my outlook on photography changed substantively.

At UVic I had the opportunity to take the course *Cultural Leadership and Social Learning through the Arts*. Through this course, we explored the different ways of using the arts as a tool to uncover and discuss social and gender justice issues both creatively and critically. One of the arts-based methods we could choose from for a group project was photography. An invited educator-photographer was hired to teach, guide and assist us while we ventured out on the grounds of the university campus to take photos of things that symbolised a social justice issue to us (images could be of objects on campus, the nature, posters on the walls or anything that we could make meaning of based on our lived experiences or understandings of the issue). This course was my first introduction to using arts-based methods in general, and in particular, thinking about photography in a more meaningful, critical and methodological way. It also returned me to using photography for educational and research purposes, rekindled my interest in photography and reminded me that I had wanted to do more with this particular art practice.

As this Guide shows, there are many types of photography projects including photo elicitation (See [p. 33](#)), photo novella (See Burke & Evans, 2011) but I chose photovoice for my doctoral research.

Photovoice in a nutshell

Photovoice is an arts-based (using art) or better said image-based (using visuals) method that falls in the category of qualitative research (Carlson et al., 2006). Qualitative research explores and collects data on human subjective experiences. Photovoice is a participatory (research) method because it requires participants to be involved together in the task of taking photos based on a chosen theme or topic. Although it is not without its challenges, researchers such as Carlson et al. (2006), Goodman et al. (2018) and Liebenberg (2018) see photovoice as an empowering means for individuals (participants) who are often silenced, such as women, Indigenous peoples, children, and other marginalised groups, to explore the issues that they face in their daily lives through the creative representation and metaphors photography allows. Photovoice, as the term suggested, also allows participants to narrate their own story through photos in their own voices.

According to Liebenberg (2018) and Sutton-Brown (2014), photovoice derived from a combination of several theories such as empowerment education for critical consciousness, feminist theory and documentary photography. In photovoice, the act of taking/documenting a series of photos of a person's lived experience encourages individuals to make meaning of the photographs they take, which enables them to reflect critically regarding those photos. This creates a space for them to introspect their lived experience or issue they depict in the photographs, and to have critical dialogues sparked by the photos including to discuss potential solutions and informed actions to make change. Photovoice opens up opportunities for individuals to develop a more critical consciousness about social issues, to gain a more in-depth understanding and awareness in a world where so many social and political contradiction occur. Further, feminist theory signifies the belief that women are knowers and that knowledge is experiential, and comes from the everyday. Critical feminist knowledge is an awareness of how society is made up of unequal and inequitable gendered relations and interactions. Through this gendered lens, photovoice provides another critical lens for the individuals to view the world. Sharing lived experiences and stories through photos allows for the visual narration of a group of people's experiences through an alternative, impactful way that can help convey the issue to anyone.

Some researchers or project initiators use photovoice to bring an awareness of an issue to the participants; others use photovoice to highlight a situation in their community. Yet other researchers use photovoice to encourage policy makers to see why a particular issue needs to be addressed while others employ it as an innovative research tool. Whatever the situation, photovoice can be a valuable way to narrate and visualise stories and issues.

Situating photovoice in my doctoral research

In my doctoral research, and as an international student, I was interested in exploring how international students came to a new or expanded consciousness about social and gender justice issues through their formal and non-formal adult education and informal learning, and what actions they might take to better the situation in their home countries or simply later in their lives. This critical part of their experience regarding their critical social justice consciousness is often overlooked. One part of my research as I said, I focussed on informal learning. This is defined as unstructured, unintentional learning through our everyday observations and the exposure to our surroundings (Werquin, 2010). I wanted to know how the informal daily life of campus influenced or contributed to more critical social understandings of the international students in my study. I explored this by using photovoice. Since my participants were all international students from very diverse backgrounds, photovoice was an important alternative for them to express themselves without being limited to language and/or texts. In other words, for the majority of them, English was not their first language, but photovoice offered a means to express themselves creatively and critically without the pressure and the concern of having to be fluent in a language to express themselves. As they made clear to me, this allowed them to explore and speak to social issues more deeply, and without feeling self-conscious in terms of how they speak language-wise.

Steps and processes: How to use photovoice

Based on my doctoral experience, I outline below the steps and processes I took to conduct a photovoice study. I would like to emphasise that this is not the only way to structure a photovoice research/project and in fact, photovoice can be used to work with communities in processes that are not necessarily research-orientated. As the facilitator, researcher, community organiser of your own photovoice project, it is useful if you have access to a laptop as some of the steps below would require the use of one. This is of course a limitation of

this type of arts-based method as it assumes we all have access to technology equally, which is not the case.

Build community with your participants

Before getting into the nitty gritty of your photovoice project, I find that it is imperative for the participants to get to know each other and to build community amongst themselves first. This is because in some cases participants may have only met each other for the first time and an initial trust needs to be built in order for them to feel at ease and included to participate.

In advance of my research workshop, I dedicated a separate afternoon of about two hours and invited the participants to get to know each other through a low-risk icebreaker activity. Facilitating an icebreaker activity is a good way to get the participants engaged and be comfortable to speak up and share their thoughts in a new group setting. Then, together, we co-created a set of community guidelines for the workshop and discussed our expectations of each other as participants to ensure that everyone felt safe, heard and respected in the space and throughout the whole process of participating in the photovoice research. I encourage you to do the same in your photovoice project.

Introduce photovoice as a methodology

Because photovoice is in my case a highly participatory method, it is important for participants involved in the research or a community project to understand the fundamentals of photovoice. Understanding the method and what they can expect from the photovoice process will enable them to participate more fully.

In my research, I facilitated a 3-day research workshop whereby one of the days was focussed on photovoice. During the workshop, I defined photovoice, the processes involved as well as its place in my doctoral study for a better idea of the overall picture. We discussed how photovoice could contribute to the study as a whole, and not just as a method. For example, we recognised that photovoice is an alternative way for us to express ourselves. Photovoice also helped to co-create knowledge in terms of making meaning of the photographs that we took. Photovoice allowed us, as international students, to build community and discuss freely regarding social justice issues that may or may have not impacted us. We reflected on the issues that we encountered or witnessed in our home countries as well as the new issues that we became

aware of as students living and studying in Canada. Photovoice also allowed us to have critical dialogues regarding issues that were known to us as well as new issues that we became aware of since coming to Canada (i.e. Indigenous issues), and for some of these issues, we saw similarities in Canada and other parts of the world where some of us were from (i.e. racism, poverty, gender-based violence).

In your photovoice project, you can have similar discussions where you discuss photovoice not only as a method, but also as a bigger picture to your project. For example, you can discuss how photovoice fits in your project, how it is contributing to the project and the issue(s) that you will be exploring, what positive impact does photovoice make to you personally and collectively, and what changes you would like to see in your community.

Access to a photographic device

An important step before conducting a photovoice activity is to ensure that the participants in your workshop have access to a photographic device of some kind. The photographic device can be a camera or some type of a mobile or smartphone or other gadgets with decent camera capabilities. For the purpose of my research, I required that participants had their own device and had some familiarity with taking photographs. However, in certain situations, you may not want to make this a requirement. It is also essential not to assume everyone will have access to a camera or a smartphone. In this case, there are several economical ways to obtain these devices such as borrowing them from a library. Acknowledging that in some places there may not be facilities as such, it is optional to pair up participants so they can share a camera, a smartphone or other photographic devices. In addition, you may have friends or colleagues who could lend you a device. Insourcing your resources can alleviate your financial constraints so you can focus on the main purpose of the photovoice project.

Identify a theme or an issue to explore

Once you have established access to photographic devices, it is time to identify a theme or an issue that your group would like to explore. Depending on the objective of the photovoice project, you may already have an idea on the topic or themes you want to explore as was my case. It was an institutional requirement for me as a doctoral student to have a research focus.

For my research, I set social justice as the broad theme for participants to explore as they wished. In other words, I did not specify one social justice issue because in the international student community, people come from different parts of the world with different backgrounds and prior experiences. I wanted the participants to have the freedom to choose the issue based on their authentic experiences and to be able to reflect on their awareness and engagement in social justice through their informal learning on campus. Thus, they were asked to capture photos that represent an existing issue that had affected them in their home country and continued to affect them in Canada, or a new issue that they came across or experienced as part of their international student journey in Canada. Further, as mentioned, I was equally interested to investigate 'how' learning occurred through their informal observations and unintended engagements with the objects and other representations that were on the university campus.

However, in a more participatory process in a community, you would work closely with the participants and identify together the theme or topic for the photovoice project. Find a theme common to the group, something that affects them all or pertains to their daily experience to explore. You can do this by preparing some guiding questions to get them to think and reflect on their lived experiences and what has negatively affected them the most as a community. You can also facilitate a brainstorming session to help with this process.

Discuss the theme or issue extensively

When you have identified the theme of your project, organise a discussion session with the participants in the group regarding the theme. This will start the process of the collective critical thinking and reflecting. Oftentimes, when people living in the same community or in the same circumstances discuss a theme, similar stories will come up. This helps participants to realise that their experience is not isolated. It moves the experience from the personal to the political, as feminists say. In other words, the patriarchal system that is in place perpetuates the oppression of a vulnerable group such as women having to face gender-based violence time after time that we see evident in the eye-opening worldwide #MeToo movement that started on social media. Having these discussions help to further establish trust and build solidarity in the community. However, this is not necessarily always the case. In some communities, especially when it comes to the issue of gender, men and women may have different experiences because of the patriarchal society that we live

in as noted above. It is important to acknowledge these differences in order to raise awareness in gender consciousness, and based on the many women's personal experiences in a patriarchal society, that makes them the more 'inferior', vulnerable group.

This can be seen in my research. While discussing several social justice themes, the discussion of women and gender roles were prompted by some of the participants. One participant who was a student and a mother of two reflected on her experience critically regarding her multiple roles as a mother, a wife, a student. She reflected that as a student who was also a mother and a wife, she had to put on different hats. She had to clean the house, cook for her family, take care of her kids and yet somehow find time to fulfill her responsibility as a student. She described how she never had time for herself. When she dropped her kids off at the on-campus daycare, she saw only women who were taking their kids to the daycare. She emphasized that while she was expected to do these different societal roles as a mother and a wife, at least she was able to pursue her education. She mentioned that some of the mothers that she met at the daycare were not as 'lucky' as she was since they followed their husbands to Canada for the husbands to pursue their education. The dialogue had allowed her to reflect on the biased expectations that were put on women which also limit their access to other opportunities.

Listening to this particular participant's experience, a male participant said that he had never thought critically about the impact of societal gender roles that way. He was married and his wife followed him to Canada so he could pursue his graduate studies. As the discussion evolved, his perspective began to shift



Figure 1: The meaning attached to this Interfaith Chapel for a participant sparked critical awareness on gender roles and their biases. Photo taken by participant.

and felt he would want to help his wife with the house work more so she could have time to herself to pursue whatever she desired. Of course 'helping' her still assumes that the housework is mainly her responsibility but the discussions had also challenged him to rethink the privileges of his masculinity and place in society. What I am illustrating here is the participants' heightened awareness through applying a gendered lens to the photovoice activity and how photovoice can bring its ability, in this case, to offer a new perspective on gendered roles.

The discussion did not only provide the participants with space to explore deeply and critically the relationship between the chosen theme and their experiences, it also gave participants a means to frame their ideas and then capture these in photographs.

Provide time and place to take photos

If you are dealing with difficult social or gender issues, photovoice can be a creative and fun way to shift the focus away from the more difficult nature of a discussion to the actual creative capturing through imagery. This is also where the fun really begins. Once you have explored the theme through in-depth discussions and you have exposed gender injustices or other issues, it is time to wander around together and take photographs.

For this step, clear communication and guidelines are also important. Establish where and when the group will meet. Remind your participants a day or two before to have their photography devices fully charged and to have adequate memory space to store the photographs they will be taking. I would suggest providing 1.0 to 1.5 hours to take the photographs but establish this beforehand so others are not waiting around. I advise not giving more time than this because you want maximum creativity rather than overthinking. For the purpose of my research, I found that an hour was the ideal time for my participants.

The place to take the photographs really depends on the theme of your project or where you are located. If the theme of your project is related to your community, then it would make sense to take photographs in the area of the community. Since my research looked at international students' learning on campus, the participants were free to take pictures anywhere on campus to depict their learning experiences regarding social justice. They were also required to solely take photographs of abstract interpretation of their experiences. This does not only expand their imagination and critical

thinking, but it also prevents them from taking pictures of other human beings due to privacy reasons. It is worth discussing with your participants regarding respecting people's privacy by not taking pictures of them without the person's explicit permission.

Take lots of photos and discuss them

Participants are encouraged to take as many photos as possible, however, in the interest of time, it may be wise to limit the number of photos that each participant can share with the group. For example, together as a group my research participants decided that each person would contribute five photographs. The participants would then send me their five photographs via email, bluetooth or transfer them from their memory cards to my laptop so that I could project them from my laptop on to a screen for everyone to see. We then discussed everyone's photos in the larger group. This allowed participants to discuss both about what they themselves saw in their own photographs and what others saw in the photographs in response to the chosen theme. Something important to know about photovoice is that the interpretation of the photographs carries more weight than the photographs themselves, which is why discussing the photos as a group is extremely important. One photograph may have many different interpretations based on the background, experiences, class, race or gender, as noted above, of the participants. This is the time where participants can share their different interpretations of the photographs as well as ask questions about other photographs and interpretations. Collective discussion and interpretation contribute to a richer, more meaningful discussion about the photovoice process itself, its power and potential as well as its challenges.

In the example of the gender role discussion that I gave above, the participant took a photograph of the university's Interfaith Chapel (See Fig. 1 on [p. 115](#)) where she had participated in a meditation circle, which in turn had made her realise that as much as she valued alone time, she could never have enough due to her other gendered roles as a mother and a wife. This building that she attached such meaning to her daily experience on campus acted as a catalyst for a deeper awareness or thought process regarding the gender-biased social expectations of her and many other women. Others may have viewed the Interfaith Chapel as just another building, but to her, it was something that made her question why she had to do what she had to do as a woman, and why couldn't this expectation to cook and clean be shared with her male counterpart. This speaks to the power of images, of representations and the meaning that we can make from them when we bring them into the conversation through

photovoice. But it can also spark action. Following this session, the participant vowed to work out a plan with her husband for her to schedule in more time for herself. She also spoke as a parent of two boys arguing that she would make sure to bring up her sons to view and act more equitably towards other genders.

Plan together a way to share photographs and stories

The great thing about using photovoice is that you end up with powerful, relatable images and personal stories. As such, these images and stories should be shared with others such as making a zine or a video as a way to bring more awareness to the issue. For myself, my research will be documented as part of my thesis. I also plan to write articles, chapters and pieces like this, doing podcasts, webinars, presentations, and using social media and other platforms to share my work more broadly. As mentioned earlier, some use photovoice with the intention to tackle an issue in their community. If that's the case, plan together how you will present your photovoice project to your community, city councils or other similar governing bodies, via social media and so forth. You may even want to create an exhibition and invite the policy makers in your community. If creating an exhibition is something that you are interested in doing, check out other modules in the Guide that talk about creating an exhibition. Galleries are often open to submissions, and libraries, cafes and community organisations also often have space.

Conclusion

Photovoice is an activity that works well as a research method as well as a community project. I have laid out the steps I took, as well as provided some suggestions if your context is different than mine. I invite you to create your own photovoice project. It requires a lot of preparation and organisation, but it is doable, valuable, and not to mention a lot of fun.

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Cellphilming as a Feminist Tool

BY LISA STARR AND CLAUDIA MITCHELL

We want to talk about the critical role of visual production through cellphilming (cellphone + video) in deepening an understanding of the experiences of women (including girls and young women), and simultaneously supporting the project of women's voices and experiences shaping the political project of social change. At the centre of this work is one critical question: How can women 'see for themselves' the issues (and as such take on agency), and at the same, make visible to the community, policy-makers and others the issues that need changing? This 'shifting the boundaries of knowledge' (Mitchell, 2006) approach refers to transforming what is typically a top down process of research and knowledge production into what might be described as a grass roots 'from the ground up' approach. Our work is located within what Patricia Maguire (1987) refers to as 'feminist participatory research', an approach to research that acknowledges women's agency and in so doing recognizes the perspectives of women in identifying both the issues and the possible solutions at the community level. Central to the feminist visual project is Caroline Wang's innovative photovoice work with rural Chinese women in the 1990s (See Wang et al., 1996), alongside the work of Jo Spence and Jo Solomon (1995): What can a woman do with a camera?

Our focus here is more specifically on the use of cellphones to produce cellphilms (cellphone + video), short videos (typically one to three minutes), produced with a cellphone or other device. This work also draws on participatory visual methodologies (PVM), particularly in the context of participatory video (See Milne et al., 2012). We are also inspired by Dockney and Tomaselli (2009), two South African researchers working in the area of media and communication who coined the term 'cellphilm' to refer to the idea of videos produced with cellphones and made for distribution of films through cellphones. Based on the idea of insider technology (accessible), as opposed to importing camcorders, tripods and projectors from outside (e.g. urban areas or university researchers), we realized that with very little training and support many marginalized groups, but in our case women, could have a tool 'in their own hands' (cellphones, tablets, iPads) for making films through their own eyes, for speaking back to dominant discourses, and at the same time, potentially controlling the distribution of these visual productions through phone-to-phone circulation. Some of the early work with feminist cellphilm production was with

rural teachers in South Africa (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2014; Mitchell & De Lange, 2013) and in relation to how their productions could deepen an understanding of how schools and communities might address high rates of HIV and AIDS.

A process approach to Cellphilm production: No Editing Required (NER)

In this section, we map out the main steps involved in cellphilm production, highlighting the No-Editing-Required (NER) process which was developed to circumvent the challenges in rural communities of participants having to edit video footage, something that may be time consuming and often technically demanding. This process is also designed to be carried out in short (less than one day) workshops. This of course does not preclude participants from editing their production through various editing suites, adding music, subtitles and so on. The steps in producing participatory cellphilms would remain. We present the process as steps in a linear way although of course there is flexibility, depending on whether the work is being done by a facilitated group or by individuals. A key feature of cellphilm as a feminist tool is the idea of being able to engage in group work at some point in the process, but especially during the reflecting step. Groups can include both males and females, through we typically work with single-sex small groups for the actual productions and most of our work is with girls and women.

Step 1: Lead in time. This is necessary to prepare the women to reflect on their own context and the issues which affect their lives. In the projects noted above participants worked with broad themes such as ‘feeling safe and feeling not so safe’. It may involve a short presentation by the facilitators or an open-ended discussion about the overall issue to be explored.

Step 2: Brainstorming. Begin with a discussion. Working in groups of four to six the participants write down their ideas in relation to the broad theme on a flipchart.



Figure 1: From Mitchell et al., (2019).

Step 3: Choosing a theme. Once the participants have exhausted possible issues about the theme, they 'vote' either by using three self-adhesive dots to individually address their top three issues on the list or through a checking off process. Through this democratic process each individual gets the opportunity to voice her priority issues. Typically, the topic with the most dots or checks reveals the issue which the group should be making a video/cellphilm about. The facilitator could assist in discussing whether the issue could be turned into a video helping participants to decide on concerns such as location, sound (filming by a busy road), and safety.

Step 4: Visual ethics. Here the facilitator should also discuss visual ethics ensuring that the participants understand the rights of others, the need for consent, and recognition that the video/cellphilm, if shown publicly, should not harm anyone.

Step 5: Storyboarding. Small groups create a simple hand drawn storyboard consisting of six to eight shots, on which they plan out each shot: what would happen in the shot, who the actors would be or what they want to shoot, what they would be doing and saying, as well as where they will shoot the scene. This is also the time to create a title for the film, to write it down on a sheet of paper, and to film it before they begin filming their story. They should also conclude with credits that include the names of the participants who created the video/cellphilm.

Step 6: Reviewing filming techniques. It is usually necessary to review the basics of using the device (cellphone, tablet, video camera): how to record, how to stop recording, how to ensure good sound quality by not filming too far from the person speaking, how to ensure good lighting, and so on.

Step 7: Filming. The participants, in groups, then set off to shoot/film their story, keeping in mind that they will not be able to edit their films, and therefore have to contemplate each shot, practice it, then film it and stop the recording, and then move on to the next shot, film it and stop the recording, until they have completed their shoot. If they make a mistake they have to start from the beginning of the storyboard.

Step 8: Viewing. The next step is to screen the complete video/cellphilm, with the producers introducing their video/cellphilm to the larger group and then screening it ideally using a data projector. In community settings where there

might not be a data projector, the team organizing the session might bring one. Many times we have also screened the cellphilm on a laptop where the group gathered around. Given the cellphilms are also meant to be viewed on a cellphone, it is also possible to simply pass around the cellphone or iPad.

Step 9: Reflecting. After the screening, it is important to reflect on the video/cellphilm and ask the producers and audience (the other participants) to consider a number of questions. Some are very broad, and others are very specific to the theme:

Broad questions

- What did you like about the video/cellphilm?
- What are some of the images that stay in your mind?
- Who should see this video and why? (This is typically very linked to the themes, particularly linking to issues such as gender based violence).
- How do you think it could help address the issue?
- What would help you in the community to address the main issue in this video/cellphilm?
- What would you like to change?

Added to the questions above we might include questions specific to themes related to gender equality (and often gender based violence):

In groups that include both males and females we might ask participants to consider how their cellphilms take up the issues differently:

- Is there a female gaze?
- How is the treatment of the issue here different or similar to what you might see in popular culture?
- How does producing and viewing these cellphilms help to promote an agenda of gender equality?

If the participants want to change anything in the video/cellphilm, especially upon reflection of the issues, they may decide to produce a new cellphilm which 'speaks back' to their problematic knowledge in a new version.

Step 10: Selecting audiences. The videos/cellphilms could be used to spark dialogue with various local audiences. Questions of storage of the cellphilms and sharing are key issues: how to access and screen the cellphilms with these audiences should be discussed with the participants.

We include these steps as an idea of the overall process. As noted above, they have been designed to facilitate one-day participatory workshops. Not all of these steps are necessarily completed in one session of three to four hours, and some of them, such as the issues of visual ethics, storage and sharing may be concerns that are taken up in much greater detail because of the sensitivity of the theme and the experiences of the participants throughout the process (See also Burkholder, 2016). These concerns may be raised before participants begin filming, but also in the whole process of sharing and distribution of cellphilms.

Some examples of Cellphilming projects

In one study in sub-Saharan Africa, we worked with beginning teachers from four teachers' colleges in Mozambique to explore the ways in which cellphilming production could contribute to supporting the agenda of their Gender Clubs. The participants started out producing cellphilms about the situation of gender-based violence on campus and in their communities. Later we went on to set up a workshop on producing media message cellphilms as a specific genre. These are very short (30 to 60 seconds) productions aimed at targeting audiences with a specific message, and designed to raise awareness about a particular issue related to sexual and gender-based violence. As part of that project, we have developed a guide to cellphilming production, [*Cellphilming: A Tool for Addressing Gender Equality*](#) (Thompson et al., 2019a) as well as a video production, [*What is Cellphilming?*](#) on the steps involved in cellphilming making and with special attention to media messaging (Thompson et al., 2019b).

In another study in Ethiopia as documented in Sadati et al., (2019) and carried out in four agricultural colleges, participants produced cellphilms focusing on gender-based violence. The titles and short descriptions of the cellphilms produced in small single-sex groups gives an idea of themes and issues explored (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adapted from Sadati et al., 2019.

Title of Cellphilming	Brief Description of the Cellphilming
Sexual violence /sexual harassment	Highlights the issues of unsafety, which female students face in their everyday experience in the college. The producers try to show that even in the libraries female students are not safe from acts of sexual violence.

Stop abduction	Addresses the abduction of female students on the way between home and the college. Abduction is a common practice as students say. In the video, a female student is suddenly approached by several male students for the purpose of abduction, but she survived since some other people were around and they could help her. They arrested the attackers, called the police and the attackers were punished by the police.
Less participation of female students	Touches on one of the important gender-based issues at all colleges, which is that there is typically much less participation of female students in the class/college activities. The video shows that although the instructor frequently asks questions in the class, only male students raise their hands to participate/respond.
Impact of the absence of beauty salons in the college on the female students	One of the issues that female students have is the long distance between town and the college and unsafe conditions on the route. Students who live in the college residences need to go to the town to use the beauty salons and it puts them in danger.
Stop emotional violence against females	Address the types of sexual violence in the colleges that target females' emotional feelings. In the video, two of the women in the class volunteer to present in front of the board. The instructor selects one of them and while she is presenting, other students, specifically male students, start to laugh. She stops presenting and sits down. This video shows how the social structure can negatively affect female students' self-confidence.
Female life in the college	Explore how a female student's life in the college is full of pressure, caused by male students. A female student tries to be a pioneer in answering the questions, but other male students are not happy with that. Their pressure causes her to sit in the back line of the chairs next time and stay quiet though the teacher tries to support and even gives her a present at the end.

Gender violence	Raises awareness on physical sexual violence against female students and also the importance of supports that can be provided by instructors or other college staff. A female student is kicked by a male student. The female student reports the incident to the instructor and the instructor tries to talk with both students, individually as well as together. The video ends by showing that students are happy and they have the perception of mutual respect among both genders.
Behind the female	Addresses gender inequality in everyday life of the college students. It highlights the high workload of female students and its negative effect on their studying. A female student, who is also a mother of two kids, has to start the housework from early morning and not only is she not able to study properly, but also she can't go to her classes on time. The instructor blames her because of the delay, without considering her difficult situation. Also as a punishment, she has to clean the class after the session is done. The video ends, asking the question: "Until when am I going to face this problem?"
Give me my mobile	This video highlights the patriarchal hegemony of the males on the college campus. This hegemony can be the extension of males control on females in the broader society, although the film has a happy end with the intervention of the college instructor. Two female and male students are friends but during a conversation male student grabs the female student's cellphone (mobile). The female student reports the incident to the instructor and with the instructor's intervention, the problem is solved. The film shows that the instructor acts as a consultant, who can solve the problem and brings the friendship back to the students.
Job Classification	Addresses gender inequality in a college in terms of assigning the responsibilities. It shows that females are doing cleaning jobs, which are more physically demanding and males are doing the jobs that are less physically demanding and more prestigious such as being an instructor or administrator.

College sanitation	This video shows gender inequity in the college campus, when it comes to the college sanitation. Both males and females are in classes but when it is time to clean the toilets, males leave and go to the classes, but the females are left to do the cleaning.
Gender based violence	Addresses the sexual harassment that female students face in their daily life. It can happen on the campus or on their way to the campus. In the film, a female student gets harassed several times by different males. One of the few videos depicting the legal consequences, it shows perpetrators being arrested by the authorities. This is one of the few videos where there is any legal consequence.
Impact on female students outside the college	Highlights the physical violence that a female student might face outside of the college campus. Although a female student walks with her male friend outside of the campus, they are attacked by some males, aiming to harass the female students. The film ends showing that the perpetrators are arrested and punished.
Gender violence	Addresses unsafe college campus for females by showing a rape incident. A female student is raped and she has to go to the counsellor for healing.

Reflecting Forward

As with participatory visual methodologies more broadly (e.g. digital storytelling, photovoice), the idea of reaching audiences is key. Visual theorist, Gillian Rose (2012) uses the term ‘audiencing’, and throughout our work we continue to devise questions which help to support reflexivity in relation to audiencing:

- Who decides on the audience and what are the related issues of ownership?
- Who is viewing the cellphilm and why?
- What is the context for viewing the cellphilm?
- How are different audiences responding?
- What difference does the ‘female gaze’ make?

These are questions that align well with feminist research more broadly in that they are framed within a critical perspective that questions positionality and power imbalances.

Work with cellphilm is not without challenges. For example, in the cellphilm productions participants create, they do not always challenge the status quo in terms of gender inequality and gender-based violence. Instead, there is sometimes “an uncritical acceptance (on the part of both researchers and participants) of the words or images produced” (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 40). As noted in Step 9 of the process, the screening of cellphilms in small groups and through a reflexive approach, makes it possible to extend the idea of challenging the status quo through the process of ‘speaking back’ process (Mitchell et al., 2017; Mitchell & Moletsane, 2018). Building on the idea of ‘talking back’ hooks (1989), ‘speaking back’ supports the idea of a feminist media collective in which community-based filmmakers in a workshop context can come together to reflect critically on their cellphilms through questions such as the following:

- Whose experiences are missing?
- How does this cellphilm reinforce inequalities?
- How does this cellphilm challenge the status quo?
- What would be needed to ‘change the picture?’

Conclusion

We have used this cellphilm method in a variety of contexts to address critical issues related to gender equality and gender based violence. Cellphilm as a feminist and participant-led tool supports the broad agenda of feminist activism and social change. This method complements well other collective approaches to feminist research such as memory-work, especially approaches that draw on the use of the visual through drawing, feminist screenings, photovoice and working with family photos (See Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan, 2015). As we have highlighted throughout, the tools of production align well with community-based feminist approaches that place at the centre the question of whose voices are typically left out. We know that mainstream media continues to be dominated by male producers, male directors, and male actors. Alongside providing women with a creative outlet for representing the local and global concerns, cellphilm ‘changes that picture’ by circumventing conventional modes of distribution. We think of the potential of WhatsApp and other accessible platforms that are available to support participant-led work, as well as the potential of local (and online) cellphilm festivals, such as the annual [McGill International Cellphilm Festival](#) and its social justice/social change focus. Recent themes have included ‘Picturing Change’ and ‘Making Community’ and ‘Well-being in a time of Distancing.’ These support the voices of those most marginalized. What can a woman do with a cellphilm? A lot!

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Make a Photo-romance



PRECARIOUS
WORKERS
BRIGADE

Precarious Workers Brigade and Carrotworkers have been using the photo romance for several years as a collective tool to identify and understand the moments and narratives through which our often romantic and utopian desires are played out.

Photo-romance (noun); a romantic story illustrated with sequential photographs in the style of a comic strip, published in magazines etc. Sometimes called photo-novel...



What are the scenes and stories that tell us the most about how we experience power and how our desires are pimped? How can we understand and find moments of agency in the institutions we work in and in the jobs we take on? Dressing up, inventing characters, composing scenes and plots in various workshops, is one way to try to imagine these scenes with different endings.

These might resolve around the desire to work in the arts; problems around free labour and internships; or the dilemmas arts activists face as they try to navigate the problem of producing radical cultural capital for the art world, to name but a few....

1. Start your workshop by collecting stories and experiences to share together and any illustrative props or costumes that might spark the imagination.
2. Devise characters and storyboard your ideas for plots and scenes.
3. Construct scenes and take some photos
4. Add titles and speech and thought bubbles.
5. Publish or post on Instagram or other social media.



For more information, tools and tactics, check out *Training for Exploitation* by Precarious Workers Brigade, [<https://www.joaap.org/press/trainingforexploitation.htm>] and the Carrotworkers' counter guide to free labour in the arts [https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw_web.pdf].

Participatory Visual Art Practices as a Response to Climate Change

BY HANNAH GELDERMAN

I believe that the arts and creative practices are essential to maintain, or even better, to expand as we navigate this climate crisis as feminist artists, activists and organizers. In this piece I advocate specifically for the use of participatory visual art practices in seeking climate justice. In this contribution to the Guide, I share some things to consider for those facilitating these types of creative projects, and I provide an example of a project that I co-facilitated called *People on the Path*.

Locating myself and the arts

Before I begin I want to locate myself in this work. I am a settler of Dutch descent currently living and working on unceded Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ territories. As I enter into educational and community settings I aim to be conscious of the privilege I hold, and alongside others I seek to dismantle oppressive structures and to leverage this opportunity for transformation to rebuild systems based on justice, equity and dignity for all. I believe participatory visual art practices can contribute to this transformation and to climate justice.

Currently, we are in the midst of a movement that is pushing for action on climate change and a just transition. Whether or not we are successful in keeping below 1.5 degrees of warming, the disproportionate impacts of climate change are being felt and will continue to increase. Engagement around climate solutions and participation in addressing this crisis from all avenues and sectors is critical, including from the arts.

As an artist and a climate justice organizer, I am enthusiastic about bringing together art and activism. In my experience, I have found the arts to be a very effective tool that has the power and potential to contribute to change, and in this change work as feminists we can leverage the power of the arts through processes that are imaginative, democratic and anti-oppressive. The realm of participatory art practices is broad and I focus on visual arts because that is the medium of my own training and practice. I use the term participatory arts as defined by Matarasso (2019) who broadly defines participatory art as “the whole river of collaborative practice in which artists work with others to make art” (p.

48). This encompasses most practices outside of an artist working in solitude, and there is a range of specific practices (e.g. community arts, art for social change) that are all encompassed within participatory arts.

Participatory visual arts and climate justice

Participatory visual arts projects can play a valuable role as we attempt to mitigate and navigate climate change impacts (Galafassi et al., 2018; Roosen et al., 2018). Through participatory visual arts we can build power through collective work, envision a different future, strengthen individual and collective resiliency, and invite emotional connection and engagement that can lead to both reflection and action. Below I expand on these four aspects that participatory visual art projects do particularly well.

First, participatory visual art projects can build power through the collective. Working collaboratively can build connections and reciprocity (Berman, 2017). This can strengthen relationships and make it evident that there is a collective desire for change. The process of working together allows for people of “different skills, imaginations and interests...[to] create something together that they could not have made alone” (Matarasso, 2019, p. 49). This can be empowering and motivating. The time spent working alongside others is an informal opportunity to have conversation and get to know others. As we respond to climate change we need system change, and the collective can address change at this level. Instead of a focus on individual change “the collective, through social action, is the more powerful position to take” (Clover et al., 2013, p. 3).

Secondly, participatory visual arts can provide a means to work together to envision the future we want (Duncombe & Lambert, 2018). For a new world to exist we first need to collectively dream it, paint it, present it, and then invite others to see themselves within it. Milkoreit (2017) believes it is necessary for “individuals and groups to envision possible, likely, and desirable futures... [to] guide decision-making and direct social change” (p. 1). Importantly, this future visioning should be centred on the demands of those who have been most marginalized and harmed under our current systems and structures. For myself as a settler, it is not up to me to determine what the future should look like on the territories I occupy, that is up to those who have lived here for millennia and whose land this is. There is still a role of course for everyone in imagining and creating the future, but be aware of what that role is, and in facilitating opportunities to envision the future ensure this is central to the conversation.

Thirdly, participatory visual arts can strengthen resilience in response to crisis. Art can increase individual and collective capacity to navigate crises as it builds human connections, invites creative problem solving and provides a means for a revisioning of the community post-disaster. LeBaron and Cohen (2013) explain that “art is directly relevant to resilience because it is participatory and inclusive: it emerges from the deepest layers of human beings [and] involves an implicit recognition of shared humanity and creativity (p. 2). Huss et al., (2016) looked at post-disaster contexts and found the arts to be “a natural way of creating resilience in that they recreate a connection between cognition, emotion and the senses that enables new perspectives and effective problem solving” (p. 284). Fazey et al., (2018), in one of their ten essentials for community resilience in response to climate change, state that it is necessary to “engage directly with futures to release creativity, imagination and change” (p. 31). This speaks to the fact that being creative when engaging with climate change can increase capacity to deal with the stress and disruption caused by climate change. Arts have the capacity to be a catalyst for this creativity, as well as a means to re-envision and build community post disaster.

Fourth, participatory visual arts can invite emotional connection and engagement which can move people to take action. Simply knowing the facts around climate change isn't usually enough to move people to action (Chandler et al., 2014; Roosen, et al., 2018). Chandler et al., (2014) explain that “people need ‘to care about’ such issues in order to be motivated to take action” (p. 506). Facts and science may feel distant or abstract, and don't invite emotional engagement or reflection. Fortunately arts-based communications and projects can address some of these barriers as they can invite the emotional engagement and prolonged reflection that can lead to greater care and investment in the issue. Roosen et al. (2018) assert that art invites contemplation, which in turn can give a space for “breaking out of routines and entering a mode of active thought” (p. 90) which can then pave the way for engagement in activism and change. Additionally, communications that are locally relevant and align with people's values are even more effective (Chandler et al., 2014). These are four areas where the arts, and specifically locally produced, participatory visual art projects, are valuable to people and communities as they navigate climate change and seek to build a just and sustainable world. Next, I share some things to consider for those engaging in participatory visual art projects from their own communities and standpoints. In my experience I have only facilitated participatory art projects from a position within organisations I was embedded in as a volunteer or an employee. This

is different than reaching out and building new relationships, as would be the case for many participatory art projects that involve professional and non-professional artist collaborations. This quality relationship building ought to precede any work, to ensure all parties involved are accountable to one another and have a shared understanding of the project.

If you want to facilitate, or invite an artist to facilitate a participatory art project consider the following points and questions. This of course is an introductory list with a few questions to consider as you get started. Many additional things will surely come up.

TO GET STARTED ON A PARTICIPATORY ART PROJECT MAKE SURE YOU HAVE:

- Participants or co-creators
 - Who will be invited to participate? (e.g. a specific group such as an activist or organizing group, a class, a community group or the public).
 - How will this group participate or co-create the project?
 - How will outreach and communication happen with this group?
 - How will the process be made equitable and accessible for participants?
 - What is the decision making process for those facilitating or co-creating?
- Artist collaborators
 - Folks knowledgeable in mediums and art process.
 - Funding or resources to pay the artist(s).
- Time and space
 - To create the project and store supplies, both while the project is in process and finished. Find a space that is accessible.
- A project concept or theme
 - A main message or story to tell around local climate change challenges, impacts and solutions.
 - Who is the audience and what is the goal of the project?
- An artistic medium
 - Decide what artistic medium will you work in and figure out what supplies are needed and where you can source them.
- A plan for the creation process
 - Determine the steps to create and complete the project.
 - What does collaboration look like?
 - What is pre-determined and by whom, and what is left open for participants?

- Exhibition opportunities or a mode to share and disseminate
 - Where will the project be shared and/or exhibited? (e.g. a pop up exhibit, at a gallery or festival, as street art, at demonstrations or events, or through a publication such as a zine. What suits the medium?
 - Where can it be stored in between or until then, or when it is not being exhibited?
 - What happens to the work after it is exhibited?
 - How will the story of the project be told? Whose curatorial voice?

These are some of the major aspects to consider while planning and facilitating a participatory arts project. Participatory art projects can be large scale and long term such as a mural or installation, or they can be short term and/or temporary such as an afternoon art build or an activity at an event. Plan in accordance with the needs of those you are working with, as well the available time and resources!

People on the Path

People on the Path is a visual art installation that I co-lead as a member of the volunteer run group Climate Justice Edmonton while I was living in Edmonton, Alberta. *People on the Path* featured eight foot tall painted portraits of people that call Treaty 6, 7 and 8 (Alberta) home. At the time of the project, which took place from March – August 2018, the dominant political and cultural atmosphere in Alberta was (and still is) resistant to climate action. There are of course hubs of dedicated folks fighting for climate justice, but the overall narrative in Alberta is one that remains committed to fossil fuel extraction and expansion. Conversations and rhetoric around climate, jobs, and the economy can be divisive. It is in this context that Climate Justice Edmonton was seeking a creative way to engage people around climate solutions that take climate action, Indigenous rights, jobs guarantee for workers and a just transition all seriously. We wanted to do climate justice organizing in a way that centred justice, shared a positive vision, and invited conversation in a constructive way.

The process

The project concept emerged during a strategizing session, as we brainstormed and made plans for the coming year. The idea emerged out of conversations on how we could creatively resist fossil fuel expansion (specifically the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion) while at the same time

presenting a positive vision for the future. For the project the core organizers of Climate Justice Edmonton made decisions collectively, with my input as a lead artist weighing heavily on the artistic process. We consulted outside of the group for things like construction and installation. Initial tasks included applying for funding, creating samples and sketches, and putting out a call for submissions. We applied for and were successful in receiving funding from [LUSH Charity Pot](#). The funding covered materials such as wood, paint and brushes, as well as snacks for volunteers and printing costs for promotional materials and postcards. It did not cover any wages or compensation for artists or participants. As an active volunteer with Climate Justice Edmonton I wanted to offer my skills as an artist to the project, but in other instances if we had asked external artists to volunteer we would have to be aware that is a huge ask and preferably find funding to pay them for their work. In our grant from LUSH we budgeted for a videographer so we were able to pay a colleague to put together a video of the project.

In our call for submissions we asked people to send in a photo of themselves, with a short bio and few sentences on their vision for the future which we would use to create the portraits. We shared the call within our networks and sent out many personal asks to people to submit. In the end almost everyone who submitted knew at least one of the Climate Justice Edmonton organizers. Once we had submissions coming in, we started to paint the portraits. We digitally projected the provided photo onto 4 x 8 foot primed plywood. We painted about 3/4 of the person. This was for stability, it was better to have a wider base when displaying the portraits. Once we traced the outline and main details from the



Figure 1: Regan Boychuk and Wendy and Ember on display at the launch party. Photo by Abdul Malik.



Figure 2: Luna on display at the launch party. Photo by Abdul Malik.

projected photo we painted our linework black. This outline made the painting step simpler, as it was painting in the sections like a colouring book. This also created visual unity amongst all the portraits. The portraits were painted in with acrylic paint, using the photographs for reference. In some cases clothing colours were changed for aesthetic purposes, such as brightening up or changing a background colour that would increase contrast to the text. People with more experience painting generally painted the faces and more complex details and folks newer to painting could paint the clothing. Once the portraits were finished we painted a phrase on the body of the portrait. The phrases were taken from the written blurb and either chosen by the person who submitted, and if they didn't indicate a phrase it was chosen by Climate Justice Edmonton. Lastly the portraits were cut out to the shape of the silhouette.

Painting was open and advertised to Climate Justice Edmonton volunteers and in some painting sessions to the public. Over 50 volunteers contributed, many painted while others helped construct backing, transport the portraits, plan a launch event, design postcards and info pages, and do media promotion. The initial goal was 25 portraits and about 12 were painted by the date we had set for a launch party. Twenty five was a bit too ambitious for us as a volunteer group. The launch party was held in a park in Edmonton and at the launch party we talked about the project, had speakers, some of whom were painted as portraits and shared food. We had Climate Justice Edmonton supporters come out, friends and family of those who were featured as portraits, as well the general public. We received media attention through the launch and were able to amplify the media and the event through our social media. The response to the portraits from the media, from participants and from event attendees was overall positive.

Since the launch the portraits have been on display as part of several events and actions hosted or supported by Climate Justice Edmonton. We also successfully applied to exhibit the portraits at *Found Festival* in Edmonton, so the portraits were up as a part of this 4-day art festival. This provided a great opportunity for organizers with Climate Justice to connect with festival patrons and talk about the portraits and the organizing work of the group. Overall, the project was a success for the group. Some of the most significant short term outcomes were increased awareness and strengthened relationships. As this was one of the first larger projects undertaken by Climate Justice Edmonton it galvanized the group and brought in new volunteers who were excited about the project. It raised awareness about climate justice and Climate

Justice Edmonton which has led to increased media attention and increase in donations. *People on the Path* gave Climate Justice Edmonton and supporters a visionary project to gather around that also invited participation in ways that we hadn't experienced with previous projects. The painting sessions were a time to chat and connect while meaningfully and creatively contributing to *People on the Path*. The process of bringing *People on the Path* to life engaged many people and supported the growth of the climate justice organizing community in Edmonton and in Alberta.

As *People on the Path* did, participatory visual arts have the potential to challenge dominant narratives, engage people to take action, and increase community resiliency in this era of climate crisis. From sharing this I hope you may consider ways, small or significant, that you can incorporate collective art processes into your own responses to climate change.

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A Community of Imaginations: an Account of an Ecological Arts-Based Practice

BY VICTORIA FOSTER

I recently carried out a year-long arts-based research project with my colleague, Dr. Barnaby King, at a local community farm in West Lancashire, UK. We were volunteers ourselves at the 18 acre not-for-profit farm that relies on local people to help grow its organic fruit, vegetables and flowers using permaculture principles. We also shared a commitment to artistic creativity and social activism. The project was conceived as we deepened our relationships with the land, its nonhuman life and its other human volunteers (including retired local people, home-schooling families, the long-term unemployed and general practitioner health and wellbeing referrals). The overarching aim of the research was to explore how arts-based processes might foster new forms of communication and collaboration within and beyond the community farm. We designed a series of 16 artist-led workshops in four blocks: Creative Writing, Mindful Movement, Photography and Natural Sculpture. Each block consisted of four workshops and these were roughly aligned with the four seasons.

The power of feminist arts-based approaches

I focus here on the Natural Sculpture workshops which would work well as a standalone means of engaging local communities to think about the land and perhaps to deepen their relationship with it. We found that the Natural Sculpture workshops enabled participants in our project to see the unremarkable flat lowlands of West Lancashire in new ways, some even sensing the magic that imbued the community farm's humble plot. It is argued that the arts can help us to shift our ways of thinking about our relationships with the more-than-human, raising awareness of environmental issues and producing knowledge of and empathy for the wider natural world (Curtis, 2009). What I have found in my work is that the arts fuel the imagination and allow us to see things differently (Foster, 2016). If, as Rebecca Solnit (2014) believes, "the destruction of the earth is due in part...to a failure of the imagination or to its eclipse by systems of accounting that can't count what matters," then engaging the imagination is essential, and never more timely given the mounting ecological crises that are threatening the future of the planet.

Ecofeminists understand there to be a relationship between the domination of women and the domination of nature. Cudworth (2005) writes about the

multiplicities of domination involved and how they might limit potential or flourishing, whether of individual organisms or wider landscapes. The arts-based approach that underpins our work at the community farm is guided by feminist methodology which aims to acknowledge and mitigate some of these dominations. Feminist methodology and arts-based methods are an ideal fit given that the arts have long been used as a way for women “to uncover or create new knowledge, highlight experience, pose questions, or tackle problems” (Clover, 2011, p.13) and can be more accessible and more equalizing than methods that privilege the written or spoken word. It is feminist methodology that has highlighted the importance of acknowledging power differences in the research process. Here, though, we might extend such power differences to include those that exist between the human and the more-than-human, not solely between researcher and researched.

Planning the Natural Sculpture workshops

The Natural Sculpture workshops took place over four autumnal weekends led by two artists from the renowned outdoor theatre company, *Walk the Plank*. The sessions culminated in a lantern-lit sculpture trail at the end of October, celebrating the pagan festival of Samhain which marks the end of the harvest and looks forward to the new year ahead. The participants in the project included volunteers from the farm as well as several families and individuals who had seen the publicity we had sent out through Facebook. There were around 20 of us in total, ranging in age from a four-year-old girl to a man in his 70s. We were also joined by a group of Performing Arts students from the university who took on the role of willing helpers during the construction of the creations, and who led groups of visitors around the lantern lit sculpture trail at the end of the project. Although it would have been possible to carry out the project without the students’ input, their presence was greatly welcomed by the participants, particularly some of the older individuals who were buoyed by the students’ youthful energy and enthusiasm.

Creating the natural sculptures and ecological arts installations

We met in the barn on the first day of the project. The artists spoke of the elementals that we might imagine to exist on the farm; they described the importance of Samhain and the power of storytelling. Each participant or family was to create a sculpture or installation that would capture some aspect of the land and tell a story to its viewers. The barn was filled with tumbling piles of small, glowing orange and deep green pumpkins that had been freshly harvested. Each participant was invited to choose one and to let it guide them to



Figure 1: 'Hope the Fairy'.



Figure 2: Spiral path around a sundial.

a place on the farm that felt special to them and which would become the site for their creative work. Even this simple activity was rewarding as people started to think about the particular places that held meaning for them. It was also a good way for newcomers to explore the farm. One man was drawn to the water, a seemingly meagre stream that marked the boundary of the farm, but one which had previously burst its banks and caused much devastation. He went on to create a beautiful abstract woven willow sculpture at the site, strung with tiny fairy lights. He composed an eerie, melancholic soundtrack which played during the sculpture trail.

Most of the sculptures were created from woven willow. The plant grows abundantly on the farm's marshy ground and frequently requires thinning to keep it under control, so participants made use of the piles of long, pliable stems that were heaped around the farm. One woman was led by her pumpkin through a living willow tunnel to a pretty willow grove, still lush green despite the encroaching winter. It was here that she created 'Hope the Fairy', a towering, goddess-like structure which looked as though it had always presided over the grove (Fig. 1). Old brown curtains became majestic wings with an intimidating span. Instead of a face was a cleverly positioned mirror which meant that spectators found themselves looking at their own reflections and perhaps glimpsing a sense of their own innate power.

An older woman, inspired by her love of labyrinths, created a spiral path around a sundial at the farm. The sundial itself was surrounded by a whole solar system of planets she had created. Visitors were to walk the spiral path to get a closer look. And when they reached the centre, the creator of the installation would read a poem she had written about the spiralling of Autumn leaves. She would offer a basket of foraged leaves to the visitors so they might throw them into the centre of the work, perhaps giving thanks or making a wish (Fig. 2).

The planets were made from willow and tissue paper. This is one of the techniques that the artists were keen to share: bending the flexible sticks into circles or creating square and triangular frames, then stretching tissue paper, damp with PVA glue (also known as white glue or wood glue), over the willow. Once dry, the tissue hardened but retained its translucency so that the autumn sunlight would stream through it creating a stained glass-like glow. We made the lanterns for the trail using this technique, incorporating fallen leaves into the sticky paper so that a tiny LED bulb inside the willow structure lit up the intricate patterns of foliage (Fig. 3).

This spiral installation, and several others, took much more time than we had allocated to the project. It was because of the enthusiasm of the participants and their willingness to continue with the work outside of the organised sessions that the sculpture trail was ready in time for our visitors to walk it. One man, the oldest participant, had been particularly ambitious. He wrote a story based on Garuda, the King of the Birds, from Hindu mythology, a creature with the body and arms of a man and the wings, head and beak of an eagle. He fashioned an elaborate mask to transform himself into the King of the Birds and created several sets of beautiful feathered wings the Performing Arts students he recruited to dance a ritualistic jig. He researched ways of safely using fire in his installation, and managed to source some discarded tiles on which he stood large, catering-sized tins filled with toilet rolls doused with paraffin which stayed burning vigorously throughout the several performances that were given during the sculpture trail. One of the artists was trained in fire safety, so took on the role of fire safety officer whilst the visitors were on site. Fire added a primeval element to the festivities, and the dancing bird creatures were other worldly in



Figure 3: Willow and tissue paper lanterns.



Figure 4: The King of the Birds performance.

its glow (Fig. 4).

There were other less elaborate sculptures and installations that were equally delightful. An autistic boy whose family had brought him to the farm created an intriguing structure made from sturdy sticks. This housed a nest that he had made and to which he carefully added three eggs. The structure was strung with a collection of found objects, including the charity shop treasure of a coloured glass bottle which glowed like amber in the evening light (Fig. 5).

The project inspired much inventiveness in participants. One woman had dedicated decades of her life to raising her family and admitted, before the workshops began, that her creativity was blocked as a result. She lamented how she could no longer access the ability to write and paint that her younger self had enjoyed. As the Natural Sculpture workshops progressed, she was filled with inspiration – she felt something had ‘unlocked’ within her – and she designed a beautiful archway hung with transparent curtains decorated with golden autumn leaves. Visitors were invited to help themselves to a carnivalesque mask decorated with more foliage, and then, suitably attired, to push through the curtains and symbolically walk from Autumn into Winter. (Or perhaps it was more than symbolic; the participant insisted that it really did get cooler on the other side.) The path was lined with tiny elemental beings created from natural materials and large glass bowls were placed in front of the curtain, filled with fruits of the harvest (Fig. 6). The evening of the sculpture trail was clear and cold and the event proved to be surprisingly popular, drawing in lots of local families. Catering was supplied by a local vegan-based team who used as much of the farm’s produce as possible to create



Figure 5: Sturdy sticks house a nest.



Figure 6: The archway leading from Autumn into Winter.

a delicious menu. The farm, remote from street lights, glowed with fairy lights and tiny LED candles. Judicious use of spotlights gave necessary visibility. Visitors were split into three groups and each was led around the farm by one of our student volunteers. The start times were staggered so that each group got to experience the enchantments of the evening without being disturbed by others. It took around 40 minutes to walk around the site, to drink in the fifteen or so sculptures, to walk the spiral path, listen to the melancholy music, push through the magical drapes and watch the fiery performance of the King of the Birds. Visitors to the farm were amazed by the immersive experience. Some spoke of how they had never thought to visit the community farm before, but now felt compelled to return. The participants in the project were proud that their work was so affecting. They in turn had been affected by the project and reported a sense of gratitude to the land and its gifts which they had been able to make use of to tell their stories. The sculptures themselves stayed at the farm, gradually disintegrating and returning to earth. The LED fairy lights and candles were gathered in and reused in the farm's Winter Solstice celebrations.

The community farm offers a place for local people to 'grow together' (as the slogan employed on its marketing materials proclaims) with a strong ethos of fostering community and togetherness with each other and with the land. Our project found that the arts provided a means for people not only to reflect on that sense of connection, but also to experience connections at a deeper level. Working with the land and natural materials in this way might lead to a more harmonious relationship with the earth, and it also led us to rethink our notion of community. David Abram's musings, that he shared in an interview with Hine (2011, p. 63) seem apt:

the human hubbub is always nested within a more-than-human crowd of elementals, a community composed first of the particular geological structures and rocks of our locale. The stones and minerals of each place give rise to certain qualities in the soil, and that soil invites a specific array of plants to seed themselves and take root there. Those shrubs and trees, in turn, provoke particular animals to linger and sometimes settle in that terrain, or at least to feast on their leaves and fruits as they migrate through that landscape. Those animals, plants, and landforms are our real neighbours, the folks with whom we need to be *practicing real* community, if we want to be living well in any place.

SUGGESTIONS TO CREATE YOUR OWN NATURAL SCULPTURES OR ECOLOGICAL ARTS INSTALLATIONS

In conclusion I want to share some ideas for those who want to create their own natural sculptures or ecological arts installations:

- Consider an exercise that involves interacting with the local land and sensing its spirit. This might simply be mindfully walking around the area, feeling the ground underfoot, noting the temperature and humidity of the surrounding air, spotting green shoots or dried leaves, hearing bird song or insect life.
- Choose a location for your installation that speaks to you in some way. Perhaps see the creation of your installation as a way of speaking back to that place.
- Consider what local and seasonal natural materials might be utilised in the work. If other materials are required, can they be biodegradable or reusable?
- Think about sound, touch and lighting. What effect are you trying to create? What message are you communicating to the humans that will interact with the work? And what about the more-than-human life that will encounter it?
- Build in an element of celebration and enjoyment. Appreciating and taking pleasure in the natural world can help encourage us to protect it.

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Colonialism Disrupted: Building Alliance Through Mural Making

BY TRACEY MURPHY

I am a feminist educator of settler heritage who currently teaches senior secondary students in the W̱SÁNEĆ Territory, close to Victoria, British Columbia. I identify art as a tool of possibilities: for voice, resilience, strength, knowing and truth. In particular, I focus on mural making. For me, this practice is centred in the values of feminist art making such as building alliances that seek to critically challenge power. It is also centred in the aesthetics of hope and beauty and so according to feminist scholars Darlene Clover and Joyce Stalker (2007), creates opportunities for transformative social learning. Further, as Iroquois Mohawk multi-disciplinary artist Lindsay Delarond points out, that for Indigenous women and girls, as for many others, murals can provide a place to self-advocate and identify the means to defy institutional oppression (personal communication, January 2020).

In this piece I describe the imagining of a mural, a project in progress, that responds specifically to the epidemic in Canada of violence against Indigenous women. As with other collective artworks that emerge from the concerns of those most being affected, a thoughtful process of reflection and action by feminist educators, otherwise known as a state of praxis (see Freire, 2000) is required. My guide, for planning the initial stages of a mural project or other collective artworks, is intended for educators and researchers who through art want to respond to the concerns of Indigenous communities and specifically, to the concerns of women and girls. For each step I outline below, I offer one point for reflection and a resource for further research.

Mural defined

As this is a collective project, it is important to define and position community murals. These murals are large works of art that live in the public domain with a long history of being married to political discourse and so serve as visual testimonies of active resistance against oppression (Schrader, 2018; Price, 2014). In limited physical spaces such as a building wall, murals may be temporary installations and change as they respond to community needs (Schrader, 2018). It is the collective nature of the process that is a powerful response to injustice and so, participants become empowered to create social change (Price, 2014). Art educator and scholar David Conrad (1995) proposes



(above) Figure 1: Students sketching out ideas for a mural on Indigenous resilience, March 2014. Permission granted for use of all photos.

(left) Figure 2: The young women who initiated our mural project: Lalita, Edna, Stephanie, Sahara and Destinii, at the Moosehide Campaign Event, February 2020.

how murals touch on universal themes of justice, which is evident in our project, as our mural embraces ideas of healing and hope. Second, in my experience and as evidenced in scholarly literature (Price, 2014; Conrad, 1995; & Schrader, 2018), community murals inherently build democracy. Participants work together to plan, design and execute their ideas as they clearly articulate concerted values and goals. Finally, community murals are educational. Throughout the process, professional artists often work with beginners, and teach valuable aesthetic skills. Further, muralists gain a deeper sense of political understanding around the issues. As a finished product, educators can draw from the didactic qualities woven together in an aesthetic story.

Steps, reflective questions and resources

Recognize the issue

Canada's ongoing colonial agenda is most evident in violence against Indigenous women (Murphy, 2018). Indigenous feminists stress how colonialism is gendered, in which the Canadian nation-state profits from the precarity of Indigenous women (Arvin et al., 2013; Million, 2014). The Native Women's Association of Canada recognizes how over 4,000 Indigenous women have gone missing or murdered, and are eight times as likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women (Tasker, 2016). Activists have tagged this epidemic as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).

For the past few years, Indigenous women in my classes repeatedly brought forward their aspirations to bring awareness and attention to issues surrounding MMIW. More urgently, in the fall when voicing their concerns to the local police over an unknown van that was following young women on their reserves in the WSÁNEĆ Indigenous territory, these young women felt abandoned. The danger for these young women was clear and immediate. They proposed a mural project, and in turn, I recognized how this project could bring awareness to their grievances, and serve as an educational tool.

Reflect: How might educators and researchers might respond through art to community concerns?

Resource: A guide to creating community-engaged art, [*OAC Framing Community: A Community Engaged Art Workbook*](#).

Framing the project as a political response

Indigenous feminist scholars Shari Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack (2010) point out that a single normative definition of Indigenous feminism is problematic due to the differing impacts of colonization, and the complex, unique cultural identities of Indigenous women. However, some features stand out that define the goals of Indigenous feminism; namely, to analyze the disruption of power in traditional cultural identities of womanhood, and from this position, reconstruct the future through collective feminist political activism (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; Anderson, 2016). Accordingly, Indigenous feminist



Figure 3: Initial images for our mural, Stelly's Secondary, 2020.



Figure 4: Sarah's artwork on a drum. See more at <https://www.faroutart.ca>.

scholars and artists point out how art can be a powerful weapon to call out the patriarchal colonial agenda of violence against Indigenous women, and to disrupt the patterns of power that continue to define knowledge production (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Savarese, 2017). For example, Indigenous feminist-led art initiatives such as the Red Dress movement by Métis artist Jaime Black call attention to the neglect of MMIW. Another initiative, The Fearless Collective, began in India and aims to build feminist solidarity globally through mural making. The collective is made up of artists who work with participative public art to reclaim spaces and build community through mural making. I am fortunate to have worked on projects with Indigenous feminist educators, and as informed by research on settler feminisms by women such as Carroll (2018) and Arvin et al., (2013), who acknowledge the potential for deeper relationality between Indigenous and settler feminisms.

Reflect: How can Indigenous feminist art projects inspire and guide your planning?

Resource: To understand the impact of cultural identity on Indigenous feminist art, [Resilience Teaching Guide](#).

The Role of the Settler Feminist Educator

As a settler feminist educator, I must clearly identify my position in the mural project. It is essential to identify how the patriarchal state produces binaries of feminism, and consequently, differing levels of privilege and precarity. Canadian settler women are often positioned as benevolent and innocent of colonialism (e.g. Dowling, 2019). As a remedy, Paulette Regan (2010) offers the idea of self-reflective ‘insurgent educators’ who actively engage against colonial domination to re-story these problematic narratives. Rather than approach this project in the hierarchical role of a traditional educator, I am committed to learn about critical self-reflection, solidarity and connected activism.

Reflect: As a settler educator, how can you work towards relationships of solidarity?

Resource: Suggestions on becoming an Indigenous ally, [Ally Bill of Responsibilities](#).

Identifying the lead artist

Another important step in our mural project was to invite an Indigenous artist to teach art skills and facilitate the mural project. To develop a deep

community connection to this project, I reached out to feminist educators in the local W̱SÁNEĆ nation. I was delighted when colleagues suggested Sarah Jim, an emerging artist with roots in the Tseycum community. Sarah sublimely captures contrasts of fragility and strength in the natural world in her artwork. In our initial meeting, Sarah wanted the mural project to resonate with the resilience of Indigenous women, to be a space of healing through art making. This proposal resonated with students, and so I turned my focus to the logistics of funding for Sarah's time and materials. Feminist scholar Amy Mullen (1996) points out that within feminist art theory, there is an undeniable interconnection between art and politics. As equity is an important goal of feminist activism, it is imperative that artists receive fair funding for their work.

Reflect: What steps must be put in place for a respectful collaboration?

Resource: To explore the role of an artist and how to develop a respectful relationship, [Making Art with Communities: A Work Guide](#), Working with Artists, (Chapter 3).

Gathering a community of co-artists

Once Sarah agreed to lead the project, we met with the initial group of young women who had brought forward the crisis of violence against Indigenous women. Sarah was keen to involve a diverse group of students, and everyone in our group agreed. We opened up the project to all students who had a genuine interest in the subject area and would commit to the mural project for the duration of the semester. From my Indigenous colleagues, I have learned that an Indigenous feminist value is to welcome the unique



Figure 5: Initial images, weaving in names of MMIW.



Figure 6: Initial sketches, learning about composition and balance.

contributions that a diverse group of students would bring to an art project. Likewise, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) argues that a recognition of multiplicities in identity offers a step forward towards solidarity. The final group of students, Indigenous, settler and international exchange youth, were eager to learn and share their experiences.

Reflect: How can facilitators strengthen participant engagement in community art projects?

Resource: Tools for community building in the arts, [Neighbourhood Arts Network Arts & Equity Toolkit](#).

Value the process

As I write in this module, our mural is in process! Sarah believes, as do I, that process is the most important step in this project. As Sarah pointed out to students in our first meeting, Indigenous pedagogy values the concept of learning as doing. This view aligns well with feminist art making which takes a political stand to value process over the consumptive and consumerist neo-liberal goals of a final product (Clover & Stalker, 2007). We meet weekly to learn, reflect and sketch while listening to guests who understand the deep political ramifications of MMIW. For example, Raven Lacerte from the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women has visited our group, and we are looking forward to a visit with Chesa Abma, who advises on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. To reflect on the healing qualities of nature, we will do land restoration work with Tiffany Joseph, WSÁNEĆ eco-educator.

Through our individual sketchbooks, we are expected to transform our learnings into sketches and poetry. We have done practice murals, to learn about composition, balance and form. Sarah consistently reminds us to reflect on our personal stories and where we find beauty.

Reflect: How will you enrich the process of an art project with guest speakers and visitors?

Resources: These links will provide background information on our guests.

- [BC Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women](#)
- [UN Women - Commission on the Status of Women](#)
- [The Existence Project - Culture Reawakened](#)

Conclusion

Art making shifts our consciousness and opens up an imaginative space to dream up a different world. In a recent conversation over a beer in a dark musty pub with my mentor, friend and beloved feminist scholar, I asked “What is the goal of feminist art education?” Without hesitation, she replied, “To create a space of hope, and an opportunity to make the world a better place.” I invite you, bound by values of respect and love, to use these resources and reflections.

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3

M O D U L E T H R E E

**EXHIBITIONS AND
ALTERNATIVE
INTERPRETATIONS**

Imagining a Feminist Activist Exhibition: *Disobedient Women: Defiance, Resilience, and Creativity Past and Present*

BY DARLENE E. CLOVER

History that comes not from the lofty perspective of 'great men', conquest and capital, but rather from below, the everyday, is always difficult to perceive. Its protagonists are rarely documented; theirs is all too frequently the untold story...To 'disobey' in order to take social action is a byword for the creative spirit...We have captured through this exhibition snapshots of women's highly visible actions of resilience and imagination and less visible acts, small disobediences that are part of the daily workings of women's lives in an unjust world. Together they are clever, well thought out, patiently pursued; together, they are power and perseverance that place women squarely in the making of a more just and inclusive Canada.

- Curatorial Statement

In 2018, I guest curated in collaboration with colleagues and students a multimedia feminist activist exhibition titled *Disobedient women: Defiance, resilience, and creativity past and present* in a municipal gallery in central Victoria, British Columbia (three weeks) and in the University of Victoria's (UVic) Maltwood Legacy Art Gallery (four months).

I am a professor of adult education and community leadership and engagement at UVic and the idea for this exhibition had percolated in my many years using and researching arts-based practices as a feminist adult educator and activist-scholar. However, its curation was galvanised by two, to borrow from Obrist and Raza (2014), 'unsatisfying conditions'. One was a positioning by the federal government of the Sesquicentenary of Canadian Confederation (2017), commonly called Canada 150, the process by which the different provinces of Canada were united into the Dominion of Canada (a nation) in 1867 - as a story of white male heroism, discovery, conquest, war and ice hockey (what I call thuggery on ice). The very masculine 'imperial' narrative discounted any role women may have played in Canadian history, ignored sexism and colonialism as deep imperfections in the national landscape and negated the dynamically creative resistances to this particular and particularising history. The second

unsatisfying condition was findings from our researches into museums and art gallery exhibitions that painted a similarly problematic masculine heroic picture of Canadian history including tales sanitised of racism, erasures or stereotyping of women and 'the other'. Yet Obrist and Raza also remind us that unsatisfying conditions can be catalysts to "incite the imagination of new possibility" (p. 2). *Disobedient Women* was just such an act of imaginative possibility, an aesthetic coming together of my feminist past and present scholarship with my public pedagogy, and politics and women from across British Columbia.

I begin with who I am and the impetus for the exhibition because situating one's self is foundational to feminist adult education, and exhibitions, despite how often museums and art galleries attempt to make-believe the contrary, never materialise from nothing. Exhibitions are always contextualised and storied through the lenses of our experiences, beliefs, values and understandings of what matters to be remembered and told, and what does not. Put more succinctly, exhibitions are curated by someone who thought something from a particular stance informed by being in the world.

The purpose of *Disobedient Women* was to unearth women's activism and creativity in British Columbia in its diverse forms, past and the present and to spotlight this publicly, by using the visualising and storytelling power of the exhibition format. It aimed pedagogically to provide a space that interrupted the silencing and erasure of women's stories and lives to disrupt the complacency of the historical narrative espoused by the federal government. I combined objects, visuals and texts in ways that I hoped would re-invigorate the public sphere (in this case a gallery open and free to the public) and engulf visitors emotionally, affectively, intellectually and politically in the worlds of colourful rebellious resistance and quiet patience and resilience created by the many women who performed, stitched, painted, drummed, recited, or knitted Canada's other history.

In this piece, I unfurl how the *Disobedient Women* exhibition was created and share some of its images and stories. Firstly, however, I situate how and why exhibitions in museums and art galleries matter pedagogically.

Exhibitions as public pedagogy

We chose to use an exhibition format for reasons that relate to its power visually, narratively and pedagogically. Cultural scholars Hourston Hanks, Hale and MacLeod (2012), for example, describe exhibitions as narrative

environments, storytellers that in visual and textual form, narrate stories about society, culture, arts, history and people. Telling stories in general matter because this is how meaning is made of our complex, complicated and lived realities. Or as Indigenous author Thomas King once argued on his CBC Massey Lecture tour, “The truth about stories is that is all we are.” Stories may never be totally factual and they are certainly not neutral; they have an intentionality which as I said earlier, is embedded in the teller’s values, memories, experiences and beliefs.

Pedagogically, exhibitions are ‘plays of force’, masters at influencing, shaping and even mobilising knowledge about the world and ourselves (Clover, 2018; Steeds, 2014). Through carefully choreographed representations - images, objects, explanatory texts and even positioning and lighting – they activate the ‘seen’, and as this is most often our most commanding sense, “what we see is considered evidence, truth and factual” (Carson & Pajackowska, 2001, p. 1). In other words, what we see (and of course what we do not see) narrated through highly visual stories in influential art and cultural institutions plays a pivotal role because as Bartlett (2016) reminds us “exhibitions are events that mark the significance of their subject, lending authority and a certain amount of cultural value accrued in retrospect” (p. 307). Exhibition stories told in museums and art galleries, as *Disobedient Women* was, are given much authenticity and significance because these institutions are trusted knowledge makers (Gordon-Walker, 2018). Yet exhibitions always create objectives and subjectivities or better said, they include and they exclude. This is both a fact – one has only so much space in a gallery and I will return to this – and problem, because decisions are made as to whose stories count and get told and whose will be excluded. As exhibitions carry the message (the story) and are also the messenger (the storyteller) – we must consider how the story is framed and who tells it. Problematically, the storyteller or ‘gaze’, as feminist cultural scholars call it, has been in museum and art galleries – this is equally true of the narratives of the larger public sphere – male and therefore, the world has been storied for us through a masculine lens to the intentional advantaging and privileging of men (and also white male privilege). All too frequently exhibitions exclude, marginalise or stereotype women and ‘the other’ who do not fit the neatly sewn binaries of masculine or feminine gender. Without the power to see or represent themselves, women and those who fall outside the masculine norm are left to the envisioning and storying (or not) of men (Clover, 2018; Bergsdottir, 2016; Marshment, 1993). *Disobedient Women* was an attempt to counter this masculine aggrandizing, and its handmaidens of exclusion and stereotyping.

Another important element that drew us to use an exhibition format is their power to evoke the imagination (Bedford, 2014). Aesthetic exhibitions – those that use and include artforms – are visionary spaces that ‘imagine’ and story other worlds, encouraging us through creativity to venture into things known yet unknown, familiar yet strange. This imagination, however, is never disconnected from the political values and ideologies and pedagogical aspirations of those who create the exhibitions, and this is certainly true of *Disobedient Women*. Our intent was both illustrate and encourage a feminist subversive and radical imagination. The subversive imagination acts as a rebellion against the normative by creating alternative narratives that illustrate how, in our case, women’s resistance, resilience and creative practices were being performed yet ignored in the national historical discourse surrounding the Sesquicentenary. These rebellious acts of subversive imagination that dare to state and render visible that which has been strategically obscured shock but it can also, according to Becker (1994, p. xiii) “be an object of outrage” if people disagree with what they see or are being told. The radical imagination is similar but more pedagogical. It is the mobilisation of a collective conscious creative force aimed intentionally to not only expose but also challenge the root causes of inequality and injustice. The radical imagination is “the capacity to think critically, reflexively and innovatively about the social world” in order to act upon it (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, p. 2).

Constructing *Disobedient Women* as a space of feminist public pedagogy and imagination

How do you actually create an inclusive, activist feminist multi-media exhibition? For me, this involved a lot of steps. While I outline these in a somewhat linear fashion below, many things were happening simultaneously in this circular world.

Step one: Where to place the exhibition? We chose to curate the exhibition in two locations. One was a municipal gallery in the centre of Victoria. This would give the exhibition a central location, although we were only allocated the space for three weeks (September 5-30). The larger space was the University of Victoria Maltwood, Legacy Gallery on campus. The exhibition was to run from October 15 to December 15, but was held over to January 15 due to its popularity.

Step two: We formed an Advisory Group of women who could explain the ins and outs of curating and exhibiting. I am an adult educator, as were my

colleagues and students, and while I have displayed artworks in the past at various adult education conferences, curating in a 'proper' art gallery - was beyond my/our skills. The Advisory group consisted also of artists and others who have worked in galleries or museums with strong connections to other artists, women's groups and so forth. They assisted in getting the word out but also, as moral support in pubs or restaurants.

Step three: We met a few times to formalise what the exhibition should look like. We decided it would be: a) multi-media (to illustrate diversity); c) inclusive of diverse women's histories and stories (ditto inclusive); d) illustrate the past; and e) incorporate the present. By engaging with both history and the present we could show continuance and/or contrast past struggles with current issues. Maybe issues had gone away? Many past issues were no longer relevant today? Let's find out.

Step four: We sent out a Call for Items (appears at the end of this piece) through listservs, to friends and colleagues, via twitter and other forms of social media. Interesting, most responses came not through social media, but the human connection.

Step five: We did interviews with women such as Indigenous Elder May Sam, who is a knitter of Cowichan sweaters. We commissioned six artists to create works but other artists approached us with works they had created before such as Val Napoleon's Feminist Raven paintings. Two others were inspired to produce something for the exhibition and just showed up with the original works.

Step six: We scoured the archives of the University of Victoria and the Royal British Columbia Museum for stories and images from the past. This was particularly important in order to get stories of, for example, images of Women's Institutes and Chinese and Japanese women's auxiliary meetings and Trans actors in Canadian history. Everything that came in from around the province and through our own endeavours were stored in our research office and although a terrible jumble, it was for me a vibrant, magical place.

Step seven: Curation. When I proposed the exhibition, I assumed the 'real' gallery curators would take the items and, well, curate them into the exhibition. They soon disabused me of this misconception. They would 'hang' the exhibition but I was 'to curate' it which meant I was to envision and imagine it into being.

This was wonderful and daunting because it included 'maths' and working off blueprints to ensure that everything to fit the available wall and floor space or into the glass cases. As feminists remind us, the imagination is both a means of possibility but it is also a pragmatist in terms of what can be done with any number of current restrictions (Manicom & Walters, 2012). It also had to tell a story, but I did not want it to be chronological. Imagining and slotting into place the exhibition was made more complex because there were so many different types of items – textiles, poems, videos, paintings, and hard hats – to which I now turn.

What *Disobedient Women* looked like

Although the exhibition was not in any type of chronological order, I begin with the archives, because every story starts somewhere. From the archives of the Royal BC Museum and University of Victoria we found photographs of the First Chinese Women's Auxiliary, circa 1900; copies of *Zenith Digest* (See Fig. 2), a newsletter edited by Trans-woman Stephanie Castle; the story of Rosemary Brown, first Black woman in the BC Legislature).

Some women lent us photographic collages of commemoration events such as Toronto International Women's Day. Others sent newspaper clippings or photographs of themselves being arrested for civil disobedience. Figure 3 shows Qwetminak, a grass roots Lil'wat leader, who was jailed and convicted for criminal contempt of court for blocking the road to logging trucks through her people's unceded territory.

Feminist lawyer Ruth Lea Taylor gave us a wonderful collection of old phonographic records, slogan/protest tee-shirts, feminist magazines and books and posters which one of my students curated in a



Figure 1: Disobedient Women Exhibition.



Figure 2: Zenith Digest.



Figure 3: Qwetminak on her knees.

wonderful diorama to represent a budding feminist's bedroom (see Fig. 4). This is the statement by Ruth that accompanied it:

Our formative years have a great influence on the music we listen to, the art we are drawn to, and how we choose to dress. For me it was those years when I became a feminist, acutely aware of the injustices in the world around me. My bedroom became an extension of myself, and the ideas I was beginning to form as a young woman. I spent many hours reading, listening to music and adorning my walls with posters, photos and art. I read.

As noted, some women sent artworks that had already been made, but suited the theme of the exhibition. For example, we received a photographic series from a group of Sikh feminists. The photographs were part of *(Mis)Interpretation: Sikh Feminisms in Representation, Texts and Lived Realities* (Sept. 29-Oct. 20, 2015), a critical Sikh feminist ethnographic exhibition curated to de-centre the notion of a normatively androcentric faith and to (re)raise the textual and practical meaning of Sikh feminist thought and understanding. Indigenous artist and law professor Val Napoleon lent us her series of Feminist Ravens (See Fig. 5):

I have chosen to present [the law] with the raven – a trickster for some Indigenous peoples. She can teach us by being a troublemaker and by upsetting the log jams of unquestioned assumptions. She can also teach us with love, patience, and a wicked sense of humour. She can create spaces for conversations and questions – that is her job as a trickster and as a feminist so that nothing is taken for granted and all interpretations are laid bare.

All of the labels were written by the artists and contributors themselves in



Figure 4: (Re)Interpretation Installation of Ruth Lea Taylor's collection.



Figure 5: Grandmother Raven Instructing.



Figure 6: Activist Buttons (1980 - 2000), Status of Women Action Group, Victoria.



Figure 7: West Coast League of Lady Wrestlers.

response to Cixous's (1976) call for each woman "to put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement" (p. 875).

As noted, we commissioned artists to create works focused on the theme of *Disobedient Women*, resulting in two videos (animation and slam poetry), two sets of hand puppets, a bedside table installation, six paintings of women's 'headgear', a lithograph, and a cloth to which were pinned a variety of contemporary slogan protest buttons. I juxtaposed this latter with a blanket pinned with slogan protest buttons from the 1980s to the early 2000s unearthed for us by the UVic archivist (Fig. 6). While some of the issues had changed – trans issues for example – the comments on both sets of buttons were very similar, illustrating visually, just how little things had actually changed and why we still need feminism.

Students working on the project also created a collage and a poster: *We are the daughters of the women you neglected to burn*. We tapped into feminist organisations for stories and artefacts such as the West Coast League of Lady Wrestlers, a women's group that dresses in costume and 'wrestles' social and ecological issues (Fig. 7), and the Raging Grannies (Fig. 8), a courageous group of older women who endeavour to raise awareness of issues relating to peace, the environment, and social justice through satirical songs and skits. They had arrived to my office with green bin bags full of everything from books they had written to a photograph of them heading 'naked' into a freezing lake for the cause, and from the lyrics of satirical songs to a full size cut out of them complete with a feathered boa.



Figure 8: A cut out of The Raging Grannies.



Figure 9: Building the narrative clothesline.

The exhibition included two video creations, one a story told through women's bodies and slam poetry and the other an animated illustration of defiance. These required monitors, headphones and electricity so that was a bit of a scramble. *Disobedient Women* also included two sets of hand puppets, one of women leaders from around the world, such as Wangari Maathai of the Greenbelt Movement and another, creatures that represented four aspects of Earth dwelling women. Another artwork (commissioned) was an installation – a bedside table loaded with bricks as a metaphor for violence. Other items included activist quilts of varying sizes, poems, and hard hats brightly painted with flowers to accompany a story of a woman who worked for years in the trades – *Hammering in a Man's World*. We also shared a book of poetry of Jill Carter, a woman who due to too many tight turns in her life, ended up living on the streets and later became a passionate, creative and committed advocate for others.

We organised an official opening, which included artists talking about their works, slam poetry, drumming, and a singalong with the Raging Grannies. Two arts-based workshops (puppetry and photography) were also facilitated for students and community members around the theme 'women, power and disobedience' in the room adjacent to the exhibition.

We left comment cards at the exhibition onto which visitors could write their responses to the exhibition, or tell us a story. These were pinned to a clothesline a student had made to become part of the exhibition (See Fig. 9).

I would visit the exhibition every few days while it was in the gallery, to see what people had left and just to be with its energy and joy. I cried openly the

day we took it down. But it survives in the [form of a zine](#), created by Kimberly Croswell, my wonderful PhD student. The zine is available [here](#).

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Cultures of Headscarves: Intercultural Education Through a Challenging Feminist Exhibition

BY GABY FRANGER AND ASTRID SCHÖNWEGER

The controversy around the headscarf is always also about fundamental normative decisions that concern the self-conception of the society as a whole.

Heiner Bielefeldt, 2004

Since the 1980s more and more women's museums have been founded with the goal to educate the public by collecting and making visible women's histories, everyday lives, and artworks and to give women a place of their own. These institutions are physical (bricks-and-mortar) and virtual, and some began as travelling exhibitions before becoming a museum. Through exhibitions and educational programmes, women's museums address topics that are relevant to women and/or important to show from a woman's perspective. Each museum has its own focus, taking a variety of approaches to reflect and take up different feminist discourses.

To give women's museums an international platform, in 2008 the International Association for Women's Museums (IAWM) was founded to support the cultural and educational activities of these institutions. This network seeks to promote culture, arts, education and training from gender or feminist perspectives, to foster exchange and networking amongst women's museums, to promote and strengthen the acceptance of Women's and Gender Museums worldwide and to advocate for women's rights and a new gender democratic society.

In this article, we provide insights into an exhibition by the women's association *Women in One World*, in Germany that took up the history of women's headscarves. This was not only one of the most widely travelled of all of the *Women in One World's* exhibitions, but a milestone for the foundation of the *Museum Women's Culture Regional-International* in Fürth, Germany. This still travelling exhibition has sparked a lot of controversy, discussion and queries as to whether or not it could be seen as feminist.

What follows is a description of how this exhibition came about and its potentials and challenges of using both stories and images. It is our hope that readers will get an idea of the complexity of doing feminist work, of curating

feminist exhibitions, and of the importance and ability of exhibitions to stimulate much needed public debate and dialogue.

How everything began

The German and Turkish bilingual exhibition titled *The Headscarf: A Piece of Fabric in History and Presence* was born out of a process of intercultural educational work, in the form of a research and community project, in the 1980's in Nuremberg, Germany titled *Early education of foreign infants: Communication and counseling centre for Turkish women, mothers and families, 1979 -1983*. At that time, many Muslim women who wore headscarves emigrated from Turkey to Germany, and one of the frequent questions posed in German social welfare, health and formal educational institutions as well as society was: Why do these 'backward' women not just take them off? One belief behind this was that if these immigrant women really wanted to integrate into German society, they should take off their headscarves. In addition, it seemed to provide proof for many that Muslim Turkish women were all simply 'oppressed' and thus obliged to wear the headscarf. At the same time, no one appeared to notice that in this very region of Germany many so-called 'peasant' women had for centuries worn not only traditional dresses but also, headscarves. The other contradictory challenge for immigrant women, as Meral Akkent, a sociologist from Istanbul experienced, was repeated comments that she was not a 'real' Turk because she never wore a headscarf.

Within this complex environment, we decided to delve into the topic of the headscarf more historically and to explore its history in Anatolian, Turkish, Islamic, Germanic, Christian and Jewish traditions. The results are often surprising to people, as they learn new things about their 'own' culture, as well as 'foreign' cultures. After many years of research, which we discuss more fully below, our findings made their way into the travelling exhibition *The Headscarf: A Piece of Fabric in History and Presence*, which was both an educational space to promote reflection and prompt questions and a site to enjoy these small but very appealing pieces of fabric. In addition, this exhibition along with other activities of intercultural feminist educational work lead to the foundation of *Women in One World: Centre for intercultural research on women's everyday lives and international exchange* in 1989. Our main approach for intercultural education was through travelling exhibitions that aimed to facilitate real and virtual encounters between women in different milieux to overcome bias and stereotyping to find commonalities. Today, the association runs the museum and is still lending exhibitions to like minded museums as well as to educational



Figures 1- 4: Images from the inauguration of the first exhibition *The Headscarf: A Piece of Fabric in History and Presence* 1986 in Schloss Burgfarrnbach. By Elisabeth Bala.

centres, libraries and other public venues.

Our very first exhibition of *The Headscarf: A Piece of Fabric in History and Present* was created by Meral Akkent, Gaby Franger and the artists, designers and museum educators Elisabeth Bala and Marie Lorbeer and curated in the castle Schloss Burgfarrnbach in Fürth, Bavaria. This turned out to be an emblematic place because we were to later find a home for our *Museum Women's Cultures* in the *marstall* (stables) of this castle. This museum opened in 2006 with an updated version of our first headscarf exhibition. This expanded version integrated a broader spectrum of international experiences to become *Cultures of Headscarves*. The exhibition has been the largest and most successful travelling exhibition of *Women in One World* since 1986 and it is a living and growing project. We, the core team of Meral Akkent, Elisabeth Bala and Gaby Franger, remain fascinated by headscarves and the stories that women have to tell about them. The collection which includes interviews and photographs is constantly growing. Elisabeth has in fact arranged and accompanied all 50 exhibitions in very different countries such as Germany, Belgium, Italy and Austria and in a variety of sites such as museums, libraries and youth centres. In each location, supplements and variations have been added to showcase new stories and images.

Cultures of Headscarves, as mentioned above, is bilingual. The Turkish and German captions support the ability for dialogue between women from different cultural language groups. This exhibition is grounded in a feminist approach of historical analysis of patriarchal cultures and the counter-strategies of women (see chapter eight below for an example). Specifically, it looks at women's aesthetic and cultural notions of wearing or not wearing



Figure 5: Daglyeli Verlag, Frankfurt 1987. First publication with catalogue.



Figure 6: The poster for the first travelling station in the women's museum in Bonn.



Figure 7: Flyer of the exhibition. Four girls with and without headscarves in the streets of Istanbul. By Meral Akkent and Elisabeth Bala.

headscarves and other veils, and places this within historical and current political discourses and debates. The exhibition is contextualized as a space for dialogue with the women who cover themselves, or choose not to, for diverse individual, personal, religious or political reasons. Since the first opening in 1986 in Schloss Burgfarrnbach in Fürth, the exhibition has created controversies across the political spectrum – from left to right, receiving both support and criticism. In 1990 in Brussels, it even led to a bomb threat and relocation of the exhibition on short notice.

Goals, research and curating strategies

As noted above, the core team behind the *Cultures of Headscarves* exhibition is Meral Akkent, Elisabeth Bala and Gaby Franger with the support of members, researchers and artists from the association of *Women in One World*. To create the exhibition, we used a number of research methods.

One was searches into archives, including items from the media, and we looked at documents from the 15th to the early 20th century. We learned that we often need to read the documents against the normative understandings that are so prevalent in society in order to fully understand the real roots, traditions, beliefs and concepts, including those of our own heritage. These sometimes astonishing, sometimes funny, sometimes threatening findings are then curated to further educate through the exhibition. The patriarchal roots of the cultures of headscarves are obvious, they are linked to interpretations of religious demands and traditions, and to the wish to control women's behaviour. In Central Europe, the most important medieval head dress for married women was the 'Gebende', a strip of cloth narrowly framing the face which was a sign of humility before God but also, the husband. And this is where "Judeo-Christian

culture greets the headscarf-wearing Muslim woman,” (translated from German) as Brumlik (2010) expressed in a newspaper column.

A second method we have used to create the exhibition is oral history. We interviewed rural women in Franconia, Turkey, Austria and other regions as well as migrant women in Germany. We collected shorter statements from women in many other countries too. As researchers and curators, we cite the women literally in our exhibitions but they always have the last decision on how we should tell their stories. We affirm and (re)valorise women’s (traditional) cultures, reflect and discuss what tradition means and what seems to be progress because why should the pride for traditions and dressing styles automatically lead to rejection of different traditions? We continue to listen and interview different generations of women headscarf wearers and keep in contact with the institutions that had borrowed the exhibition. We believe that if we want to enable society to understand and listen to women’s voices, perceptions and different ways of struggling against and within patriarchal structures, we need to give them the possibility to speak for themselves.

Cultures of Headscarves, as we noted above, has led visitors to surprising and unexpected insights about what they thought were ‘alien’ women cultures as well as to their own unknown heritages of headscarves. It has thus provided an educationally reflective space to question deeply rooted attitudes that are taken for granted, yet highly problematic. We are filling in these knowledge gaps. From a feminist perspective, the question is not to veil or to unveil but how patriarchy in both western and eastern contexts is determining what women wear and how they should behave. Cultures of veils worldwide show the burden as well as the passion of draping oneself in veils. We listen to the women and learn from their astonishing and amusing testimonies.

As our research started in the 1980s, many of the documents are more than thirty years old - already historical documents. Today new generations of proud Muslim women are questioning the traditions of their mothers and so through the exhibition, they start to discuss what covering means for different generations.

From the beginning, this exhibition aimed to interfere with the discourses of xenophobia and the concepts of integration, exclusion and racism. Our work aims to disrupt stereotypes and xenophobic patterns with a diversity of histories and by demonstrating how patriarchy works in different shapes and through

the times. Hate, racism and tendencies to blame visible Muslim women are still virulent, even growing.

The most recent and vehement controversy in Germany was about another exhibition *Contemporary Muslims Fashion* in Frankfurt, 5 April to 1 September 2019 (see D'Alessandro & Leims, 2018). As long as headscarves are presented as exotic fashion or *Haute Couture* worn by actresses and queens, it is an acceptable subject. But whenever Muslim cloth is displayed as fashion for Muslim women in an attractive and feminist way it leads to fierce rejection for a supposed support of Islamistic tendencies.

Problematically, discussions that attack the hijab or headscarf become another factor that tend to discriminate Muslim girls and women by simply taking it as the proof of anti-egalitarian orientation of Islam in general. This argument, as Berghahn (2006) noted is used in conservative racist ways as well as radical feminist Anti-Islam contexts. Over the past 30 years, women have discovered headscarves for themselves in new and old ways or they have rejected covering themselves. The controversies around the hijab and its wearers have unfortunately not become more informed or differentiated – the arguments of both proponents and opponents have in fact hardened. The questions we keep asking are: What is obscuring our gaze on other women? The type of headscarf, the veil, or simply preconceived images in our head about non-European women? The images and ideas we carry in our heads are not unbiased because they are cultural and they come from past knowledge and experiences. What can we see with our socio-cultural and ideological platforms? What do we want to see? Can we put aside deeply ingrained thought patterns when we look at others?

Pedagogically, with this exhibition we want to create a space for public dialogue. In light of growing islamophobia and general suspicions of terrorism against Muslims and visible Muslim women, prejudices and thought patterns of violent patriarchal and racist structures gain an explosive actuality with threatening dimensions not only for Muslim women. Through encounters and dialogue and through challenging the meaning of self-determination we try to contribute to overcoming the overly heated discourse and to achieve mutual understanding. Finally, the headscarf controversy is in fact a proxy dispute. It is really about the power of interpretation of religious symbols, about the authority to decide what counts as emancipated and what does not. It is about patriarchal structures and power, about the struggle for recognition and about discrimination. It is about



Figures 8-9: Headscarf and photo of mothers and grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, Argentina. By Gaby Franger.



Figure 10: Oyas, with messages collected in 1980s. By Elisabeth Bala.

the right of women to determine for themselves.

A piece of fabric in history and the present: A description in chapters

In this section, we illustrate through images what we call 'chapters' of the exhibition, segments with a specific focus. The items in these chapters should be covered in all the exhibitions, but objects, images and focus will differ depending on the context, as context matters. The sequence of the chapters is not fixed. The exhibition can be transported and varied according to the preferences and concepts of lenders and available space. The most extensive possibilities we had were in our museum (200 square metres), the smallest 80 square metres. At least 20 running metres of wall space is necessary and display cases of different shapes are also required. Contents are presented through images and text - panels, photomurals, a large-scale collection of international headscarves that can be placed in display cases, on mannequin heads, or in picture frames. There are also complete outfits for display mannequins, fashion brochures and so forth. Depending on the size of the room, the exhibition can be displayed more flexibly on moveable walls.

Chapter One: Introduction and 'speaking' scarves

One chapter of an exhibition is headscarves with statements or messages. Interestingly, most visitors do not expect this aspect of the topic but often they can relate to the particular messages (Fig. 8-9).

Chapter Two: "My Headscarf"

This chapter is central to the exhibitions because 13 women speak to what it means to each of them to wear headscarves. They come from Germany, Turkey, Austria and Ukraine and they have personal reasons that may be related to religious or



Figure 11: Testimonies presented in the exhibition in the women's museum, Hittisau, Austria 2005. By Elisabeth Bala.



Figure 12: Testimonies as presented in the 2006 exhibition in the Museum of Women's Cultures Regional - International. By Elisabeth Bala.

political causes, but not necessarily. These very different statements show that women have very personal reasons to cover themselves, with very different attitudes. Through the statements the viewer is directly confronted with their own biases and stereotypes, as opposed to if they would have only seen the women's face with headscarf, and not heard the women's own accompanying statement.

Chapter Three: Cultures of headscarves, images, texts, clothes and objects

In this chapter, we show headscarves from very different contexts, countries and times and it varies according to space and interests of the museum that shows the exhibition (Fig. 10, 13-19). Central items are the objects, images and stories of Catholic and Protestant headscarves from Franconia. These head scarves serve different purposes. For example, they are those used for church going, shopping or to wear on Sundays. Our collection also has Jewish headscarves from Israel, Anatolian fabrics, scenes from a Kurdish village in the 1980s; blue print scarves from Banat, Romania; pagnes and foulards from Burkina Faso, Perú, Panama or traditional cloth from Midoun. There are oyas, which are scarves with edging that have different meanings. Traditionally oyas,



Figure 13: Traditional Franco-nian headscarves of habits of different times and functions.



Figure 14: Image: Woolen Manta, Taquile Peru, 1987. By Gaby Franger.



Figure 15: A recently acquired and included traditional cloth from Midoun, Djerba, Tunisia 2017 with its former owner. By Gaby Franger.



Figures 16-19: Headscarf binding Guatemala, 2001. The cloth is part of the exhibition. By Gaby Franger.

were worn in different villages in Anatolia, and had different meanings and messages, but most are now forgotten. In many cases, we show both an image of the origin or the women wearing this kind of fabric and the object itself.

We have found that this image of the caped woman (Fig. 14) has visitors confused in terms of her cultural background. Interested visitors who like to dig deeper will find a piece of colonial history.

Chapter Four: Fashion

This chapter shows changing notions to fashions and trends in western societies. We take up this topic with images from the 19th century up to the 1960s. The images (Fig. 20-22) are examples of how the fashion chapter could be presented.

Chapter five: Objects of traditional producing and printing techniques from Turkey

In this chapter, we show different print techniques, embroidery and arts that women use to decorate their fabric (Fig. 23-25).

Chapter Six and Seven: Trends and developments of clothing rules for women in German history: witches, virgins, married women and veils and headscarves in 2000 years of Anatolian cultures

Both of these chapters draw attention to the patriarchal nature of clothing instructions through the times as well as practical everyday rules for women to cover in different ways. They speak of fantasies of Western travelers to the East, about economic reasons for clothing strategies pro and contra the *Çarşaf*, and fears and orders of Ottoman emperors (Fig. 26-29).

Chapter Eight: Women's strategies: Cover or not cover? What does the woman beyond the veil?



Figure 20: Fashion - Fan as presented in 1986. By Elisabeth Bala.



Figure 21: Stylish ways to bond headscarves presented with contemporary headscarves and images from different periods in the early 20th century, as presented in 2006. By Elisabeth Bala.



Figure 22: Latest trend in Colombia from the African-Colombian community and the very controversial sport hijab, as presented in 2019. By Gaby Franger.

In the exhibition, we place a focus on women's resistance strategies to these orders throughout time and in different contexts such as in Muslim, Jewish or Christian contexts. The Nürnberg Regentuch or 'rain cloth' is an example of a piece of clothing that drew the ire of men. They were suspicious of what women would be doing under 'the disguise'. In fact, there was a good reason. In the letters by Lady Montagu (1907, 1994), the wife of the English ambassador in Istanbul in the 18th century, she wrote to her friends that the Ottoman women were actually the freest women under their cloaks because they could do whatever they wanted; neither their husbands nor their lovers could control what they did under their veils (Fig. 30-31).

Chapter Nine: Wrinkles, impacts and prohibitions

In this part of the exhibition, we explore how women's headscarves function for political purposes, to exercise power over women. We show different laws against covering, in particular deeply hypocritical policies of western governments against Muslim women which like those in the east, are simply means to control women and to demonstrate men's power. Mahshad Afshar, Iranian artist and director in exile, expresses this in her work 'Cursed Seal' (Fig. 32-33). The female body and societal constructs of femininity have always been at the apex of the patriarchal structures, which continue to oppress



Figure 23: Master Hassan printing with models in 1986 and Mekik technique. By Gaby Franger.



Figure 24: Franconian embroidery. By Gaby Franger.



Figure 25: Igne Oyasi flower. By Gaby Franger.



Figure 26: Image Column of Marcus Aurelius Rome 2nd century, portraying Marcomanni woman with scarf. By Petersen, Eugen.



Figure 27: Hittites tomb relief 7th century BC scarf with oya braids. By Anadolu Mendeniyetleri, p. 267.



(far left) Figure 28: 'Schapel' for virgins and 'Gebende' for married women in medieval times in Germany. By Gaby Franger.



(left) Figure 29: The image in the background shows Ms. Saade Canay with a modernized Çarşaf 1924. By Heinz Selzer.

women of all classes and races. Texts and images in the background like the *Surah An-Nisa* of the Qur'an define the social and legal rights of women in Islamic countries. Texts from an ancient book called *Alfiyah and Shalfiyah*, known as the Persian Kama Sutra depict various positions during sexual intercourse. These texts are ironically called the *Pleasure of Women*. Like so many other books about women, this book is written by and for the purpose of giving pleasure to men.

The absurdity and brutality of the enforcement of dress codes is highlighted in an incident on a beach in Nice, France where the male police officers forced a woman to take off her burkini, a full body swimsuit, which also covers the head and neck. Cartoonist Khalid Albai captures this in Fig. 34.

There cannot be any ifs, ands or buts concerning the situation of women, who are suffering extreme oppression if they do not cover 'correctly'. But revealing this means revealing and thus having to oppose administrative rules in democratic countries that in fact work together with oppressor countries, mainly in circumstances of deportation of asylum seekers and passport rules.

Meran/o (Italy), a station in the itinerary of the Headscarf exhibition in 2006

In South Tyrol, Italy *Cultures of Headscarves* was accepted very positively and without heated discussion. We would argue that this is because



(far left) Figure 30: Girl in Regentuch, Johann Kramer 1669 by Regentuch, 1985 GNM in Kopftuchkulturen. (p. 120).

(left) Figure 31: Mrs. Erber with the Regentuch, 1985, The Regentuch in Franco-nian rural clothes. By Gaby Franger.

headscarf culture has been very present in the country itself, preserved as part of everyday life for many women. Women farmers, for example, have used it as a protective garment against leaves and branches in the orchards, sticky grape juice during the harvest, as well as to block sun, wind, cold and even in the short term, rain (see Fig. 36-37). It also keeps the hair out of the face, which can be annoying at work. In addition, the headscarf was converted into carrier bags to carry food to the field or to collect mushrooms. Until the 1950s, women in South Tyrol had a headscarf for every day and a festive cloth for Sundays and holidays. Due to the decline in agriculture, better hygiene conditions and the spread of other types of hats and headwear, the headscarf has largely disappeared. However, it is still recognised as a symbol of a working rural woman, a traditional authenticity. Older women have never stopped wearing it.



(left and bottom left) Figures 32-33: Cursed Seal, oil on canvas 2018, new collection Museum Women's Cultures Regional – International. By Mahshad Afshar.



(below) Figure 34: Guardians of public morals in France and Iran. By Khartoon Khalid Albai (<https://www.facebook.com/KhalidAlbahi/>), used with permission.





Figures 35: Collage by the Women's Museum, Merano Italy.



Figures 36-37: From the photo collection of Erika Groth-Schmachtenberger (1906-1992), Südtiroler Volkskundemuseum Trient.

Suggestions on how to develop a similar project

We conclude with some thoughts about creating this type of exhibition. For us, this small piece of cloth has proven to be an excellent and challenging object to learn about the structures of patriarchy everywhere, human and women's rights, xenophobia and biased public discourses.

What is the historical and current discourse in your city or country around headscarves and what are the implications of this discourse? Likely you will find structures of patriarchy in all societal 'clothing' rules and habits. That can be fragments of old laws, different approaches of the meaning of decent or appropriate cloth in different generations, or different ethnic fashions. Very important is also to analyze and scrutinize governmental rules and laws related to religious habits of clothing. A current example in the province of Quebec is that they are banning public service workers from wearing all 'religious' clothing, which impacts mostly women. There are so many stories that can be told through clothing and fashion, that bring to light the very different means and levels of discrimination against women. Exhibitions like this awaken everything from biased religious and social beliefs to problematic political policies.

Here are some quick tips to create an exhibition like this:

Do feminist research with girls and women's groups. Give them the opportunity to share their own stories but also, to help them to rethink their own motivations.

Choose a method for your research/activity.

Feminist oral history is both research and an educational tool. It is important to show respect

for women's experiences and the points of view of different women but at the same time, look for controversial and irritating experiences in history and presence to encourage communication.

Collaborate with educators, artists, designers, museum curators. We become very aware through our work that there are even more stories and images that have been hidden and these can be exposed by providing guided tours of the exhibition as well as seminars about clothing and history. We invite you to develop and adapt a similar project as your research or a community activity to continue to create spaces for women's voices to understand their perspectives, struggles, challenges in this patriarchal society.

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- Petersen, E.. (1896). *Die Marcus-Säule auf Piazza Colonna in Rom*, Verlagsanstalt F. Bruckmann AG



Figures 38-41: A variety of headscarf styles. By Gaby Franger.

Hosting Pop-up Events to Nurture the Feminist Subversive Imagination

BY SARAH WILLIAMSON

Pop-up events are temporary occasions which can be great feminist, pedagogical adventures. Pop-up events can be held in museums, galleries or other spaces such as schools, community spaces or even outdoors. Designed to last for only a short timescale, feminist pop-up events, such as art schools and exhibitions, can be vibrant, exciting, full of creative spirit and freedom. This, together with their potential to invert and subvert some aspects of formal education, can harness many aspects of carnival practice, embracing the spirit of the 'carnavalesque'. The term carnivalesque and ideas about the transposition and application of carnival's 'spirit', were developed by the Russian philosopher Bakhtin (1968/1984). European medieval carnivals were a time of inclusion, equality and freedom when there was a temporary inversion of established norms of society and structures of power, and they often involved challenges to the status quo through rebellious behaviour and irreverent folk humour.

The idea of a pop-up learning event is to offer inclusive and freely accessible creative activities where participants can mix, be creative and intermingle informally in a manner not usually experienced in formal learning situations. If pop-up events are to be inclusive and open to the public, anyone can attend, and this can sometimes involve risk-taking and steps into the unfamiliar and unknown. However, "risk-taking and being brave" are characteristics of feminist approaches (Patrick, 2017, p. 186).

Although the temporary and ephemeral nature of a pop-up event is not a replacement for the type of work that community arts workers can develop with groups through close, sensitive engagement over a period of time, they can be liberating and democratising events in their own right with many benefits. For instance, creative activities which are not assessed can relieve a fear of doing something wrong and making mistakes, and short-lived, informal learning situations offer freedom from pressure and judgement.

Pop-Up Exhibitions

Pop-up exhibitions are pop-ups that display or exhibit artworks. An educator does *not* need to be a creative arts practitioner to stage a pop-up event such as an exhibition, and students do *not* need to engage in creative activities

at a pop-up event either, as the ‘witness’ of creativity and art by others can have great value. Lawrence (2012) states that witnessing art which is evocative or provocative has the potential to facilitate deepening awareness and critical reflection. Pop-up exhibitions can be organised which use existing material, loaned or donated, and if wall space cannot be provided or found, temporary hanging arrangements can be made with washing lines and pegs. Content and accompanying statements can be selected to raise awareness, offer a contrast or different perspective, challenge, question and even subvert.

Pop-Up Art Schools

Other pop-up events, such as a ‘pop-up art school’, are much more participatory. They are designed and planned with an emphasis on participant creative activity, which can be an effective way to engage people with feminist issues. They offer the opportunity for individual and personal learning, for expression through embodied engagement and response, and for co-creation and collaboration.

A ‘craftivist’ approach to pop-up art schools can work well. It can be helpful to emphasise ‘craft’ rather than ‘art’ activities in any publicity material, as this can seem less threatening to those who do not see themselves as ‘artistic’. ‘Craftivism’ (social or political activism through craft) is a term coined by Betsy Greer, who describes it as “a way of looking at life where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper” (<http://craftivism.com/definition/>).

The process of creating and making something by hand, and the time it takes, allows opportunities for longer stretches of reflection and thoughtfulness. The act of creative expression through making something can feel empowering, and Sarah Corbett, founder of the Craftivist Collective, says to craft is to connect “heart, head and hands” (2017, p. 3). Greer (2014, p. 173) believes that craft has a way “of inviting people” into political conversations due to its familiarity which “helps bring even those reluctant to be political to the table, if only because they want to know how a handmade piece was constructed”. There is a rich history of craft being used in activism and protest, and a famous example is that of 1913, when suffragette Emily Davison died trying to pin an embroidered protest scarf to the King of England’s racehorse.

1. Here’s some advice for staging a Pop-Up Art School

- Liaise with a gallery or museum, and enquire if you can use an area for a

pop-up event. They will most likely be happy to help, as it's a way to attract visitors and bring a gallery alive. Can they contribute anything to support such as tables and chairs, resource materials, cloakroom facilities? If you are unable to hold a pop-up event in a gallery or museum of your choice, consider holding one outside, or at a venue close by.

- Determine a theme or the type of pop-up, e.g. art school pop-up or exhibition pop-up. A theme could link to a feminist issue and gender justice or celebrate and commemorate a relevant event, place or person.
- Design a range of different creative activities. The important thing is to be practical, avoiding anything too complicated, and to have adaptable activities which are accessible and achievable for all ages.
- Make posters, online event pages, and also publicise on social media.
- Open the event to the public, consider inviting some groups to attend, for example, a supported women's group.
- Liaise with the venue beforehand on risk assessments, health and safety matters.
- Set up large tables as a base for each activity like a stall at a fair. The number of activities will depend on the size of the venue and the number of facilitators. Participants can then wander around, join in, or just watch.
- Have one or two people running an activity. Make signage to advertise each activity and clear activity instructions sheets. Stick these on the backs of chairs and on the sides of boxes placed in the middle of an activity table.
- Plan to have someone who will 'meet and greet', who can explain how the event works, what participants can do, and who can also collect feedback before people leave.
- Make bunting in advance to quickly personalise and easily transform your space on the day. On the bunting, have a letter on each piece of bunting which spells out a word connected to your event and theme (See Fig. 1).
- Customise the space with temporary 'walls' which can be created by hanging a variety of things such as posters, photographs and drawing from washing lines hung around the perimeter and across the room.
- Work produced at the event can also be easily displayed on washing lines too (See Fig. 2).
- Design a creative way to gather and display feedback. For example, squares of decorative (pale) wallpaper for people to write on, which can be stuck onto large pieces of paper to create a patchwork 'feedback quilt'. Blank postcards can be written and pegged onto a washing line to create a visually attractive display and playfully suggest the idea of a postcard being sent from the event.

2. Ideas for activities

Offer a carnivalesque freedom for participants to be imaginative, to see imaginative things and to experience the pleasure of creativity. The activities listed here are 'open' enough to generally be used and adapted for all age groups, levels of ability and experience. It is generally best to avoid art activity which involves water and paints when working in museums and galleries, unless there is easy access to water and sinks etc. Always check first! It can be helpful to have a range of feminist slogans, questions, facts and statistics about representation, injustice and oppression etc, on hand as prompts for many of these activities:

- Collage as feminist action (See [p. 87](#) for ideas)
- Miniature feminist poetry books (from luggage tags and cut-up text, for instructions on [p. 231](#)).
- Feminist bookmarks (use cut-up text)
- Bunting making (make a triangle template to be cut round. Recycle paper or use newspapers, which can look very effective. Have letter stencils or pre-printed alphabet shapes for participants to use. Have some feminist slogan inspiration for the bunting)
- Feminist badge-making
- Feminist zine-making (Fig. 3). See [p. 71](#) for a zine 'how-to'.
- Notebook-making for feminist thoughts! (folding a long strip of paper into a concertina and making a cover from a choice of paper featuring feminist texts and images)
- Mini-protest banners, using alphabet stamps on fabric or cards (e.g. stating facts and statistics such as how many art works are by men and how many are by women in your venue? Are female artists of colour represented?)
- Mini protest masks (decorate a facemask with something you wish to say, e.g. "if you don't have a voice, you don't need a mouth..." Ask permission to attach to a statue!)



Figure 1: Make personalised bunnings for your event.



Figure 2: Customise space with 'temporary walls' using banners, posters, photographs.

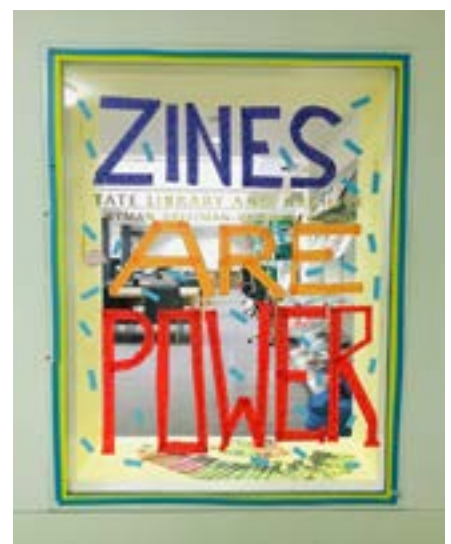


Figure 3: Provide zine-making as an activity.

3. Collaborative and collective activities:

- **Feminist paper patchwork.** Take the principle of patchwork to create a collaboratively-made quilt. An activity can be to create a paper square in some way which has a feminist message (e.g. which has been collaged or has cut-up poetry on it). Piece them all together as the event goes on to create the feminist paper 'quilt'. Create a few examples beforehand for guidance.
- **"Houses of Unrest"** (See Figs. 4 & 5). This activity sees doll houses (borrow or buy from car boot sales) transformed into 'Houses of Unrest'. Ask participants to create their own miniature placard (from card and lollipop stick) of protest or memory associated with women and domesticity. Participants can then choose where to position their placard inside or out using blu-tack.
- **Banner making.** Design a banner (Research suffragette and feminist banners for inspiration), and plan how individuals can all contribute by stitching, sticking or painting a small section.

4. Encourage the subversive imagination!

Drawing upon the principles of the 'carnavalesque', consider some creative activities which have a 'subversive' element, and which change or invert something. For example:

- **Revisioning:** This can be the creation of 'new' curatorial statements/wall labels which re-write from a feminist perspective, or the creation of speech bubbles to add imagined dialogue to printed copies of art works.
- **Guerrilla knitting and yarn-bombing:** Participants wrap yarn and knitting around things in official places, inside and out, to draw attention to something. Attach a luggage label to explain what.
- **Guerrilla gardening:** Give out packets of seeds with flowers or foliage in the suffragette colours of purple, white and green for participants to be a 'guerrilla gardener' after the event. From three packets of seeds in the three



Figure 4: Houses of Unrest.



Figure 5: Houses of Unrest - use a card and a lollipop stick to create a miniature placard.

colours, make up your own mini seed packets with a few seeds of each colour in an envelope. Encourage participants to plant an unexpected explosion of feminist flower colour in a public place somewhere, for example, a roadside verge or piece of land in a car park.

- **ArtActivistBarbie!** Collect and display Barbie dolls on a base table from which participants can select one to transform into an 'ArtActivistBarbie' (See photograph and separate activity in the Guide on [p. 37](#) for details). After a participant has positioned and documented their art activism, their Barbie can be returned to the base table for other people to use.

5. Upcycle, recycle, be sustainable wherever possible!

These are some suggestions and steps that you can follow to start organising a Pop-Up event, although there are many different ways and ideas for organising your own event. Have fun!

To read more Pop-Up Art Schools, check out:

Jarvis, C. & Williamson, S. (2013). University teacher education and the pop-up art school. In D. Clover, D. & K. Sanford (Eds.) *Lifelong learning, the arts, and community cultural development in the contemporary university*. Manchester University Press.

Williamson, S. (2017). Pop-Up Art Schools and the 'Carnavalesque'. In S. Rutherford (Ed). *Informal Learning: Perspectives, Challenges and Opportunities*. Nova Science Publishers.

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- Bakhtin, M. (1968/1984) *Rabelais and His World*, Translated by Helene Iswolsky, 1968. Indiana University Press.
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Mining Objects and Looking for Gaps: Strategies for Your Next Museum Visit

BY KIM GOUGH

Over 20 years ago, a friend invited me to help with a special event at the historic house where she was working. Unbeknownst to me at the time, it was the start of my career as a museum educator. I did not have an education background or even a museum studies degree. Everything I learned was on the job, and I didn't challenge what I was told. As I was exposed to more experiences, and other professionals, I learned to question the museum narrative, and to supplement the missing stories with programs and events. It was while I was pursuing my master degree in museum education, that I fully examined my own pedagogical practices. Since that time I have taken a more conscious approach to critique and collaborative programming.

When we visit museums we are often on one type of mission or another. We are entertaining visitors, seeking something educational, checking an item off our bucket list or even just getting out of the rain. Once inside, our senses are often overwhelmed and we get caught up in the drama of the displays and the energy of other visitors. Rarely do visitors to museums stop to question how the objects we are looking at were collected, why they were chosen for display and who they represent. Even less so do we look for the objects and stories that aren't there. By spending more time considering the objects, we can embark on a different kind of mission, a mission for inclusion and diversity. In an effort to support museums visitors to take on this alternative mission, I offer some activities that invite intentional interaction and deeper reflection for you to try on your next museum visit.

Taking a closer look

Forget the label

First of all, forget about looking at the labels. Start by looking at just the objects and go to where you are drawn. Stand in front of the object and get as close as you can – or as close as you are allowed. Now look at it closely. Take some paper and a pencil out of your bag and sketch the object. Sketching forces us to slow down and look carefully. If you don't have any paper, try looking at the object and then closing your eyes and trying to recall the details. Open your eyes and look again. Was there anything you missed? You should look at the object long

enough so that you could describe it in detail to someone who wasn't there.

Touch it

A second step is, if you are allowed, to touch the object. If so, go ahead and pick it up. Notice the texture, the material, and the weight of the object. Chances are if it is on display you aren't going to be allowed to pick it up, in that case try to imagine the texture, weight and temperature of the object.

Prior knowledge

Try to generate ideas about the object and draw on your prior knowledge. If you could ask the object a question what would you want to know? What does it remind you of? Have you ever used anything like it before? If you are visiting with someone else, talk to them about the object.

Returning and questioning

Now you can go ahead and read the label. Based on what you thought and what you read what else do you want to know? How does object relate to your life? If you could rewrite the label what would it say? If you could replace this object with something more relevant to you, what would it be? If you are visiting an art gallery you can do a very similar activity. Resist reading the label, look closely at the image, notice the materials used to make it, imagine how they feel and then come up with your own title for the painting. Finally, look at the label and compare what you noticed and what you thought the painting was about to the artists.

Mind the gap

Finding the missing

Another tactic you can take when visiting a museum (can also work for an art gallery) is to look for missing narratives. Museums are not exhaustive textbooks, and we don't really want them to be. These institutions should have interaction, storytelling and a sense of theatre, not pages and pages of writing about events and dates on the wall. In addition, despite good intentions to update galleries and story lines many exhibits do not get refreshed as the decades pass by. This means that new and excluded important stories don't get told and problematic stories get perpetuated. The stories that museums do tell have been selected by curators and have sometimes have been dictated by the objects in the museum's collections. Those collections were made by people who made choices about whose history was of value, and by exclusions, whose was not.

Looking at the objects in a museum, you can start to see whose and what stories were valued and whose and what was left out.

Begin with your own story

If you want to look more critically at a museum exhibit, in addition to looking at the stories that are there, you can look for the gaps. You can start by thinking of your own history and story. For example, I am a cis gendered, lesbian woman. If I start looking for objects and stories that reflect me, I am bound to find some gaps. I would begin, therefore, by looking for objects that represent women. Then I might compare that to objects representing men. At some point, it will become clear if there are more, less or the same. Then I might look for objects representing the LGBTQI2S community. If there are any, how many objects are representing lesbians? If you do this for your own history and find these areas are lacking, then start to think about where in the museum you could include some of these stories. You can use social media as a great way to bring attention to these gaps and to share your history with the museum and with others.

Difficult objects

Representation

Museums, as noted earlier, use objects to tell stories. The objects can be literal or they can be representational of an idea, place or time. When objects are used to convey an idea, their meaning has to be agreed upon by people with shared history and understanding. The advantage of using objects in this way is that they can act as shortcuts to ideas, events or places and reduce the amount of text or explanation that is needed. The risk with using objects to represent an idea or place that is common to many people is that it can be reductive.

As a visitor, we can be more aware of these representations and shortcuts. Do these shortcuts rely on stereotypes or do they perpetuate a norm? During your next visit, take a look at the objects used to represent women's stories. Are the objects active, passive, industrial, organic? What pictures do those items create in your mind of the person who used them? Does she look like you? What was her life like?

You can also compare representational objects that are used to tell the stories of men and women. How do the objects used to represent women's stories compare to the objects used to tell men's stories? Are the objects for women active? Are they robust? Do they represent women from more than one socio-

economic class? Now compare that to the objects used to tell men's stories? What does this reveal about assumptions and stereotypes about men's and women's roles?

Conclusion

We can't expect museums to be everything to everyone, however we don't have to be passive consumers of the chosen narrative. We can become aware of the objects used to tell stories, as well as whose stories are being told and whose stories are being left out. Importantly, our own ideas, history and experience are of value to how we see and interpret the stories we are being (or not) told. Bring them to the museum, connect them to the objects and get involved with what is there. Together, we can change the narratives.

Be a Critical Feminist Tour Guide

BY SARAH WILLIAMSON

This activity takes the action of a 'tour guide' at a museum, an art gallery, and other institutions alike, and makes it 'critical'. A critical approach means, for example, analyzing an individual exhibit, an exhibition or a whole institution's representation of women and gender. This can deepen learning and invite students to question what may be taken for granted.

Tour guides, when taking participants on a tour, work within time limitations and can never show and talk about everything at a site or in a building or institution (such as every painting in an art museum). Instead, they have to select a limited number of works and decide on the order and sequence in which they will be visited and introduced. More often than not, a tour guide will select pieces of artwork which are regarded as 'must sees' – due to the fame of the work itself or the artist, for example.

Taking the format of a tour with a tour guide, a feminist adult educator can design their own tour with a feminist focus and be the tour guide for their students. Alternatively, an educator can ask students to become tour guides themselves and invite them to be a tour guide with a difference – a feminist tour guide.



Figure 1: "Where are all the female artists?" – Visit a museum, art gallery, other institutions alike with a critical feminist approach.

SIX STEPS TO CRITICAL FEMINIST TOUR GUIDES

1. Select and plan visit to an art museum, museum or heritage site.
2. On arrival, brief students. Ask them to look around and analyse what they see with a 'feminist gaze'. For example, how are women included, excluded and represented or not, and by whom and how? How are they described and referred to in curatorial statements? How does this compare to representations of men? What messages are sent overtly and also less so? It can be helpful to have clipboards for notes.
3. Ask each student to select 10 pieces of work about which they feel can have something to say from a feminist perspective. Ask them to create a tour which will incorporate these 10 works, deciding on order and sequence. It could be helpful to create a simple template for this to be used on the 'tour' and as a record for afterwards.
4. Divide students into pairs or threes.
5. Each student in turn takes their partner/s on their tour. Make sure they are aware of a time to have finished their tour by, and by which to have returned to a base area.
6. Debrief and review the activity. What has been gained from both being the tour guide and the tour participant?

These are six simple steps that you can apply to encourage your students to be more critical on their museum and art gallery visits. It can be adapted in any way you prefer. Be sure to try this activity out on your next visit to a museum!

4

M O D U L E F O U R

**RE-WRITING AND
COUNTER
STORYTELLING**

Paying Attention to Curatorial Statements

BY KATHY SANFORD

I have visited many museums and galleries in my lifetime, and have found myself to be more or less adequately instructed about the meaning of artifacts or works of art based on the information provided in the accompanying curatorial statements. And while I found some statements to be too long, and some too vague (or not evident at all), I generally relied on this information to inform me about their significance, not wondering about the author behind the authoritative statement, the stance of the invisible author or the messages being conveyed through the statements.

It has only been recently, while viewing museums using a critical feminist lens, that I realized the potency of the messages to construct the world in a singular way. And while each individual statement might be innocuous, compounded by the hundreds that exist in any museum, together they provide a seamless powerful message about how the world is, was, and ought to be. And the world, apparently, is comprised of important men – largely of European descent – who have created, discovered, rescued, and shaped the world in wonderful ways! As I paid closer attention, I became aware of how language was used to describe these men’s many heroic deeds. I also became painfully aware of the absences in these descriptions and statements – of diverse perspectives and questions about cultural, gender, and class differences.

In this contribution to the Guide, I share some examples of ways that curatorial statements perpetuate patriarchal and colonial attitudes, and I offer some questions regarding the language use that visitors can use on their next museum visit. The insights encouraged by this contribution will increase awareness of the ways in which language can shape our thinking and provoke further questions.

What’s in a statement?

A statement, according to Oxford dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.), is a “formal or official account of facts or opinions”. As a formal/official accounting of events, information is presented as factual and definite.

A curatorial statement is a statement written by a curator or organization/institution about the exhibition or project; it can function as an overall

introduction to the exhibition, state the exhibition's organizing theme or topic, and/or provide a brief discussion of the works included in the exhibition. The purpose of a curatorial statement is to guide the public to understand the exhibition, set up a dialogue with visitors (help them to see from the curatorial point of view, arouse viewers' interest in the exhibition, imply a great deal about the exhibition without exposing any details (Leung, n.d.). A statement, then, offers no space for critique, dissention, or alternative viewpoints or perspectives other than those presented by the curator. It is important to recognize that an opinion is always behind seemingly unbiased statements.

Why examine language use in museum statements?

No institution is neutral, and based on ideas about the way in which the world works, values and beliefs can be presented in either explicit or oftentimes in very subtle ways. However, curatorial statements are often written to sound 'neutral' and 'unbiased'. Hegemonic and ubiquitous ideas based in patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and elitism, to name a few ideological perspectives, shape how we see the world. However, we are often unaware how the language used leads us and shapes us to accept certain beliefs and perspectives. These perspectives are tightly interwoven in our actions, our speech, and our writing; they are manifested in 'language'd' ways in museums and galleries through titles, curatorial statements, artifact descriptions, visitor guidebooks and other forms of text presented to visitors.

These guiding statements often recreate colonial, elitist and patriarchal worldviews that have existed and continue to exist in western societies and are circulated through museum exhibitions. Based on the authoritative messages – through various types of documents, titles, and statements – that are presented to visitors, it is difficult to challenge or question this information, or to even notice ways in which they are being guided. Language is a primary way that 'information' and 'facts' are presented, intended to inform visitors of the meaning and importance of displays, objects, and exhibitions. However, what is presented is often incomplete, biased, and reductive – history is represented by those who are in a position to shape the past, through a lens that only partially shares events, historical figures, and perspectives. Perhaps unintentionally, curatorial statements and artifact descriptions are limited, subjective and one-sided, leaving viewers with a skewed and incomplete view of the past, the present, and the potential future.

What did I observe?

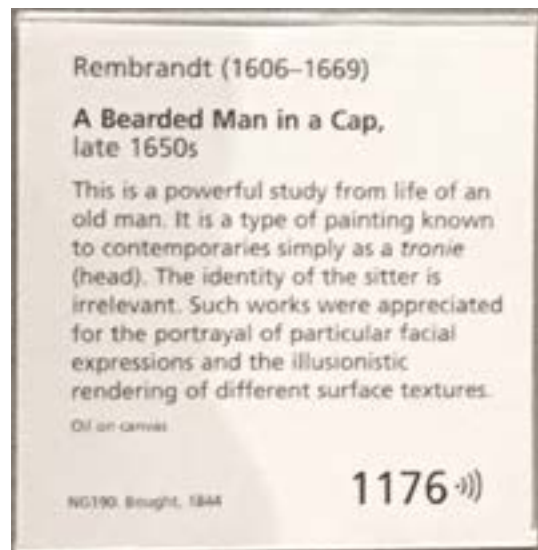
Upon close reading of curatorial statements, I found an overwhelming number of examples of language used to perpetuate a particular view of the world. Take, for example, the statement shown (in Fig. 1) below, found in the Manchester Art Gallery. This gallery houses over 2000 paintings, is a highly valued institution, and has many visitors annually. As noted in the [Art UK](#) website, the Manchester Art Gallery collection “is a reflection of its history”. And while the gallery has also challenged some of the statements and labels, the collections are predominantly described by labels such as the one below. This statement applies a style and tone that is authoritative but with a hidden/ passive author. Viewers have no idea who determined that these were the styles that emerged, that they were profoundly different, or the accuracy of this interpretation. While this statement might be substantiated by other ‘experts’ in Italian baroque paintings, the regular visitor does not know and so by default is likely to accept this as undisputed fact. There is no speaking subject and no opinion is exposed.

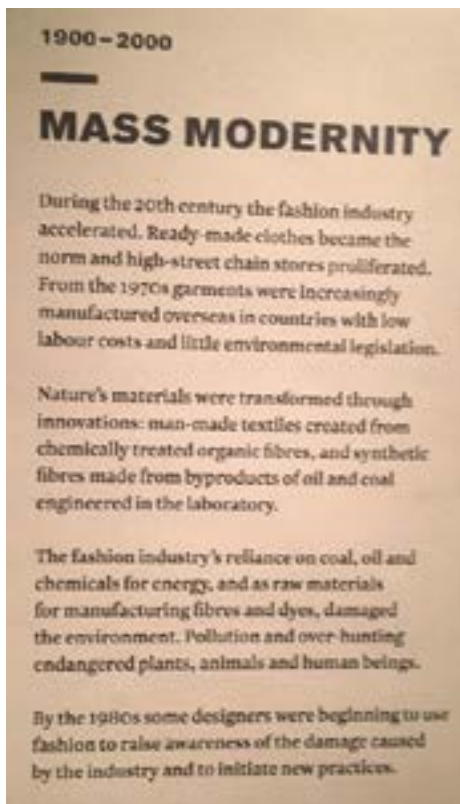
The next example below (Fig. 2), also found in the Manchester Art Gallery in England, uses adjectives (e.g. powerful, illusionistic) to convey a particular perspective, while at the same time negating the identity of the subject of the painting. Again, there is no identified author for this statement, but the message is clearly written by an ‘expert’ who can claim that this ‘is a powerful study’ and that ‘works were appreciated’ – opinion, albeit informed opinion, is patronizing and offers no room for alternative responses.

A further example of language used to manipulate and make women invisible is entitled “Mass Modernity” (Fig. 3), a statement found at the Victoria & Albert

(left) Figure 1: Description of Rembrandt’s painting “A Bearded Man in a Cap” (Manchester Art Gallery).

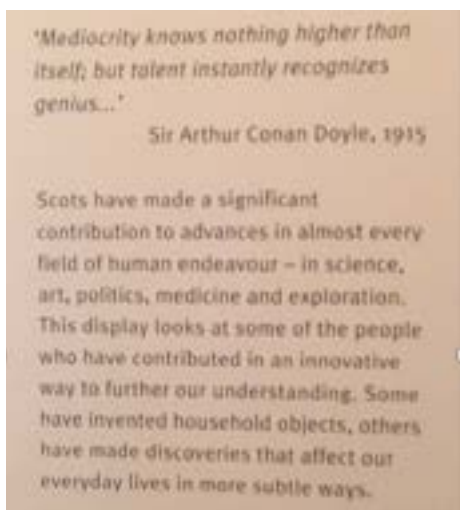
(right) Figure 2: Curatorial statement from Manchester Art Gallery.





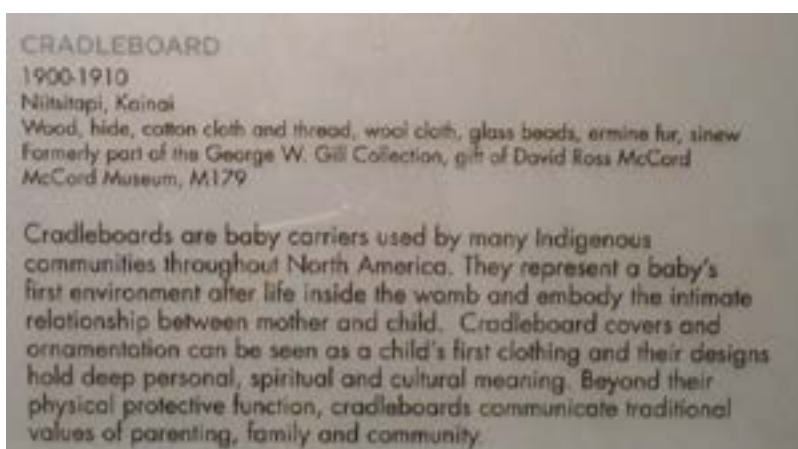
Museum in London, England. The statement was found in an exhibition called “Fashioned from Nature”, a critical examination of ways in which fashion has environmental and gendered implications – “determined to incite change” (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/inside-the-fashioning-from-nature-exhibition>). The exhibition focuses largely on women’s fashion, but in this example a synecdoche is used by which ‘the fashion industry’ subsumes the women for whom fashion is created.

Another eradication of women is in the statement at the Edinburgh Museum (Fig. 4), where ‘Scots’ are described, but clearly the inventors, scientists, politicians, explorers, and doctors were exclusively men.



Expert tone and authoritative statement are even used in describing Indigenous cultural artifacts and ways of life, as seen in the example below (Fig. 5), where the unidentified author of the statement claims to know the ‘deep personal, spiritual and cultural meaning’ of the artifact:

Euphemism is also frequently utilized in curatorial panels to create a pleasant story rather than portray women, working classes and immigrants in their stark harsh realities, referring to ‘engaging with nature’ when they are ‘rambling on foot’ or using bicycles. The tone of this particular example (Fig. 6)



(top left) Figure 3: Curatorial Statement, Victoria and Albert Museum.

(middle left) Figure 4: Curatorial Statement, Edinburgh Museum.

(bottom left) Figure 5: Description of exhibit “Cradleboard”, Royal Saskatchewan Museum.

is also patronizing as it suggests that new modes of transportation and cheaper books could enable the working classes to finally be exposed to nature, assuming they had not previously had any exposure.

A final example that curators employ, in local and international contexts, is amplification, embellishing a sentence or statement with more information to appear more informative and significant. We can find many examples in museums of amplification; as can be seen in the statements below (Fig. 7 and Fig. 8), the panels are filled with words that include lots of facts, dates, and background information. The point being made here is that the large blocks of text is overwhelming and not easily accessible to visitors; it is likely that visitors will read the beginning and no more. However, the message through amplification is that there is a great deal of knowledge, it is important and that it needs to be included.

Many literary devices, including archetypes, juxtaposition, allusion, hyperbole, diction, and connotation, are ubiquitous in museum statements and can be found in most museums around the globe. The intention of using these examples is not to call out particular museums but to show that language use in these statements is pervasive around the world and is problematic if museums are intended to preserve and share cultural artifacts



Figure 8: Curatorial Statement, Maritime Museum of BC.

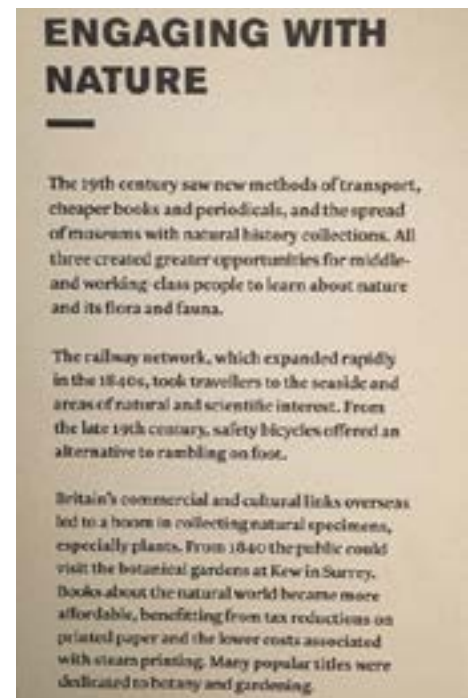


Figure 6: Curatorial Statement, Victoria and Albert Museum.

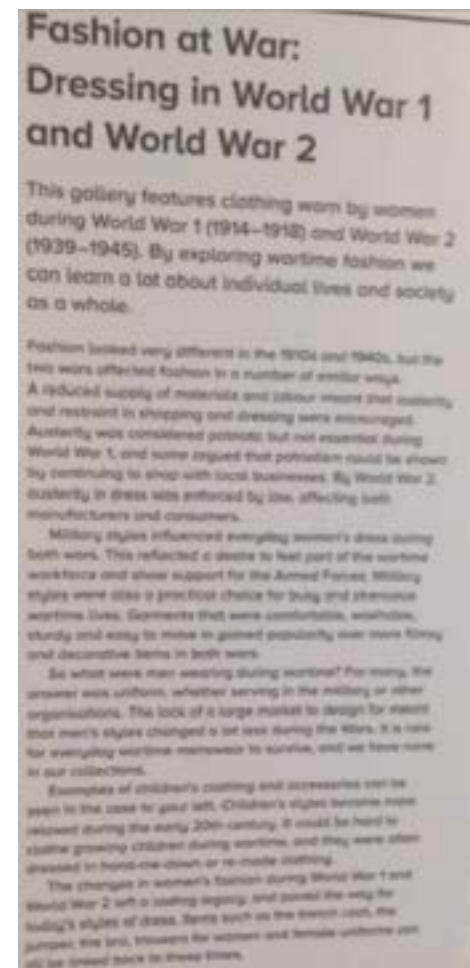


Figure 7: Curatorial Statement, Allied Museum, Berlin.

and stories, if they are indeed intended to represent the world in its entirety. My intention is to show how museum visitors see 'through' the language to the representation conveyed, problematically, in the many statements found within the institutions.

How to pay attention?

I have found that once I became aware of the ways in which language was used in museum curatorial statements and panels, there were no shortage of examples of language use such as I have described above. These uses of language are ubiquitous in museum statements globally; these types of examples can be found worldwide. In order to begin changing the way in which visitors are educated in museums, they first need to be aware of the ways that language shape their experiences, and then ask questions related to the worldviews that are being represented.

Some ways to pay attention include:

- **Descriptions.** Attending closely to the descriptions provided, considering the authority of the creator of the statements.
- **Stories.** View an exhibition with an eye to whose stories are being told, and whose are absent.
- **Alternative perspectives.** Consider alternative perspectives to the histories being laid out through the curatorial statements. Are there other perspectives to these histories?
- **Prior knowledge.** Draw on your own prior knowledge and understanding, asking if the statements match your own awareness.
- **Language comparison.** Compare the language used to other exhibitions you have visited.
- **Different lens.** Use a feminist lens, an anti-colonial lens, an anti-racist lens to reconsider what you are reading.
- **Language usage.** Consider how the language being used to describe artifacts matches with what you are viewing.
- **Accessibility.** Consider how accessible the statement panels are. Are they large enough for all to read? Are they up to date? Are they well lit? Are they at eye level?
- **Vocabulary.** Consider the vocabulary being used. Is it highly technical, patronizing, accessible for all viewers?
- **Other alternatives.** Consider alternative ways in which the exhibitions could be described and alternative ways of using the texts included in the exhibitions.

Beginning a museum visit with heightened awareness of the ways in which language can influence your understanding will likely lead to different visitor experiences in the future. Paying attention to statements can lead to encouraging institutions to shift the ways in which labels are written and exhibitions described. I now view curatorial statements and labels with new eyes; this new understanding can lead to discussion with curators, to suggestions of change, and to rewriting with more inclusive and nuanced language.

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Creating Disruptive Fiction and Found Poems: Pedagogical Engagement with/in Museums

BY NANCY TABER

Fiction allows us to imagine.

- Patricia Leavy, *Fiction as research practice*

Readers and writers turn to fiction for a variety of reasons: escape, entertainment, reassurance, disconcertment, fright, humour... Certain genres, such as historical fiction, are also considered useful for learning. However, fiction is not typically viewed as a pedagogical tool as it is, by its very nature, 'made up', and therefore perceived as not true and perhaps of limited use. But the line between fact and fiction is a blurred one and fiction can be a powerful pedagogical tool. In this chapter, I explore feminist fiction-based research, pedagogy, and found poems and offer examples of how fiction and found poetry can be used to re-interpret museum exhibits. I include suggestions for ways in which adult educators can use fiction and found poems to engage learners and creatively disrupt the ways in which they see the world.

Section one: Fiction-based feminist research

Leavy (2013) describes fiction-based research (which fits within the larger context of arts-based research) as a creative feminist practice. It aims to make research accessible to general audiences in engaging ways by "portraying the complexity of lived experience...promoting empathy and self-reflection... [and] disrupting dominant ideologies or stereotypes" (p. 38; see also Harris & Leavy, 2019). Thus, fiction-based research can pull readers into a narrative that allows them to interact with data in transformative ways, particularly as relates to gender.

Indeed, feminist adult educators use fiction of all types in their practice. Jarvis (1999, 2012) uses fiction to explore love and empathy. Gouthro and Holloway (2013) employ fiction in teacher education to "explore alternative perspectives, envision different landscapes and consider important social, cultural and political issues" (para. 3). By using fiction as an entry point for and focus of discussion, students can inhabit the characters and context in order to facilitate empathy, understanding, and questioning. They can then apply these new learnings to their own lives. As Leggo and Sameshima (2014) explain, fiction

can “hold the past in a certain light in order to interpret” the present (p. 540). In the context of museums, fiction can make exhibits come alive in the minds of learners in engaging, creative, and accessible ways, to help them think differently about museums as gendered pedagogical institutions.

My research in British, Canadian, and European war and military museums focuses on how the gendered representations of masculinities and femininities intersect with discourses of militarism. As Enloe (2016) argues, patriarchy is intricately connected with militarism, resulting in a valuing of male protectors over female protected, the marginalization of those who are perceived as other, and the privileging of violence as a way to solve international conflict.

In each museum, I asked questions framed within the feminist antimilitarist hack such as: How are women represented? How are men represented? How is the queer community represented? How are violence, militarism, and war represented? I narrowed down my findings from each museum to one key point, which was typically encapsulated by what most perplexed, inspired, surprised, or angered me. I then used other specifics from the museum to inform the plot, scenes, and character development, supplemented by research from other sources as relevant to ensure that the details were correct. In the next section I give an overview of one story, explain why I chose to write it, and present a few paragraphs so readers can get a sense of how fiction can be used to imaginatively engage with museums. I then give a series of suggested steps to pedagogically use fiction in museum contexts.

Short story excerpt: Imperial War Museum (IWM)

When I visited the Imperial War Museum (London, England), I was fascinated by the history of its building, which had previously been the Bethlam Royal Hospital (a psychological hospital nicknamed Bedlam). I wrote a timeslipping story, “Things I Learned along the Way,” linking the present to the past through the experiences of the building and the protagonist, Gwen, who works in the museum’s gift shop in present time. It begins as follows:

I looked through the bars of the iron gate at the intimidating building beyond. It was made of tan brick, with six white pillars holding up a large portico. The copper dome at its centre was obscured in fog, but I knew that it was covered in a green patina, a result of centuries of exposure to the elements, although the havoc wreaked on the building from the weather was nothing compared to that inflicted by humans.

Two cannons pointed straight towards the gate. I swore they trained their sights on me as I approached, even though I knew they had been securely mounted since 1968, three decades after the museum was housed here, near the River Thames in London. They now served no purpose but violent decoration. However, if these last weeks had taught me anything, it was that nothing was impossible. I huddled into my pea coat and walked past the cannons. As I entered the building, I shuddered, wondering if it would remain the Imperial War Museum of today, or take me somewhere – somewhere -- different. It sounds crazy. It is crazy. Which is ironic for someone working in a building that once housed so-called “crazy” people. My mother didn’t believe in that word, said one person’s crazy was another’s normal, but I’d long ago stopped listening to her. Tarot card readings lost their allure when I’d started school and been introduced to the scientific method.

Gwen first travels with the building to the early 1800s:

The museum trembled, as if a thing alive. I had thrown myself to the floor and scuttled under the table. What was I supposed to do? If this were an earthquake, should I get under the doorframe? Or in a tub? Not that there was one of those in sight, but I think there was one in the Family in Wartime exhibit. Or was the tub advice for a hurricane? My head throbbed as if there were an air pressure change. A tornado? I knew the advice for that one – get down to the basement. I leopard crawled toward the stairs that would take me to the bottom of our main gallery. The air pressure levelled out. A smell that reminded me of my father’s feet assaulted my nostrils. I winced and struggled to focus.

The museum and gift shop were gone. I was lying in a large stone entryway. Wooden doors opened onto a dirt drive with horses and hackney coaches. The sun was setting in the distance. Two reclining sculptures, naked men with bald heads, flanked the doors. One’s face was twisted in agony and his hands were chained. The other held a blank stare. Torches burned above them so the statues lurched from shadow into light and back to shadow. I realized I was holding my breath and let it out in a whoosh. This was inconceivable. I knew those statues – they were Raving Madness and Melancholia. They used to grace the Bedlam Hospital before it became the Imperial War Museum.

Later on, Gwen chases clues to learn about why she’s travelling, and who else might have information about the phenomenon:

A tall woman stood hunched over in front of me, in a beige dress with a rip down the centre that made them look more like trousers. I was in grey, thankful that I once again seemed to be a nurse.

The woman gaped. "Where the devil did you come from?"

"Pardon?" No one had ever seen me arrive, as far as I knew.

"You," she flapped her hands in the air, "weren't there, and now you are. I think the treatments are making me mad." She reached out and poked my shoulder. "Are you real?"

I looked up and down the hall. It was empty. "I'm sorry I startled you," I said. "I was just in the shadows. I'm not surprised you didn't see me."

She looked at me with suspicion.

"Why are you here?" I asked.

She straightened her spine but had to lean on the wall to do so. "I'm a woman who dresses as a man. They diagnosed me with acute mania. Should have diagnosed me with sanity. Men get more respect. More chances in life."

"Why don't you just walk out that door?" I couldn't see a guard anywhere.

"Tried it once. Got kicked in the stomach. Couldn't shit for a week. Don't recommend it." She laughed at the look on my face. I hadn't expected to hear a woman in the 1800s swear. "Shocked you, did I? That's my stock and trade, it seems. I served in the Navy. Got lots more words where that came from. But you should hear what the women in here say, when no one's listening. We're a bunch of gender misfits."

"Gender misfits?" That seemed like a term from my time, not hers.

"Yes, that's what the woman with the scar called us. Said that-"

"Move along, Ms. Snell," said a deep voice. A uniformed man stepped into the entrance from outside.

Ms. Snell hooked her thumb towards him. "He's stealthy for such a lout. He's the one that gave me this." She unbuttoned part of her dress to show an angry purple bruise. "Likes to hide behind the trees to surprise people."

An orderly came around the corner. "Time for your treatment," he said, grabbing Ms. Snell's elbow and hauling her away.

"Wait," I said, chasing after them. "The woman with the scar. What did she look like?" Ms. Snell turned back towards me but the orderly propelled her on. Maybe I could talk to her during her treatment. I was a nurse, after all. They entered a large room. Ms. Snell was being seated in a metal chair. The floor was covered in foul smelling clumps.

"It's best to try to focus on a single point," she said.

"What?" I asked.

She gestured to the cables attached to each corner of the chair. They led up to the ceiling where they were anchored together. As I watched, she was hoisted into the air. "Three hours of rotational therapy," said the orderly. "Doctor says the more you vomit, the better. Clean out your madness the way leeches clean out disease." He pushed the chair into a spin. "But if you vomit on my head..." "Then stand back, you fool," she said.

Her body blurred from the speed. There was no way I could ask her anything now.

Gwen takes a tour of the IWM in the present to learn more about its past:

I decided that I should learn all I could about the building so that I could predict where...when... I might travel. Before my next shift, I tagged along on the museum's From Bedlam to Baghdad tour. The guide explained that the building had been built on reclaimed swampland in 1815 as Bethlehem Hospital, which became infamously known as Bedlam for the horrific conditions. After World War I, Bedlam moved to another site. In 1930, the land and building were bought by Viscount Rothermere, who built a public park that he named after his mother, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth. Rothermere was an admirer of Hitler, and worked with an Austrian princess, Stephanie von Hohenlohe, to support and try to meet him. Parts of the old hospital were demolished and the Imperial War Museum opened there in 1936.

I followed as the group toured the main gallery, entered World War I, and continued through three floors and multiple battles. I didn't hear much of what the guide said but needed to keep my feet moving.

The guide continued. "We're now in the part of the museum that tells the story of war through insightful objects. As you'll see from this placard, the objects raise questions about how and why we fight, fear, and live with war and its unending aftermath."

Unending aftermath. That was depressing. I stopped in front of a poster of a political cartoon and let the group move on without me. It was a depiction of dead soldiers, their blood dripping and changing into money as it landed in a large bag labeled "war profits." I stared at the non-descript buildings in the background. If I was moving with my building, my time frame should begin in 1815 and extend to the present. Or maybe the future, if the building still existed. The good news was, I shouldn't be deposited in the middle of a swamp in the medieval ages. The bad news was, although I could research the past to be ready for whenever I travelled, I couldn't research the future. With global affairs as they were, who knew what awaited Britain.

As the story continues, Gwen comes to a resolution about her timeslipping with the building and how it connects to her familial and personal relationships.

Suggestions for using fiction

Adult educators can incorporate the use of fiction in the context of museums by visiting a museum (in person or online, but in person usually works best as it is more of an embodied experience) and asking learners to find one aspect of an exhibit that perplexes/inspires/surprises/angers them – maybe it is a narrative that is one-sided, a voice that is absent, or a panel that is gendered or raced. Learners can then creatively relate this aspect through a short story. I suggest proceeding as follows:

- **Create prepared prompts (one sentence) using curatorial descriptions.**

These prompts can be adapted for use as the first line of a story. The best prompts indicate a conflict and a relationship or interaction between at least two people. For instance, the Danish War Museum has timelines contrasting Danish history with international events. One reads, "1641," "Maren Splids, wife, burned as a witch" and "Franz Hals painted Nurse and Child." Both of these imply the presence of at least two people (the

witch, her husband, those burning her; the painter, the models as well as a conflict (an execution; the nurse model trying to keep the child still).

- **Create character sketches based on people represented in the museum.**

For instance, choose a nurse from the Boer War or a woman on the WWII home front with a baby gas mask. Add a few characteristics (i.e., age, race, nationality, religion) and a description of what conflict she is currently facing (i.e., How will the nurse comfort a dying soldier? What is the woman thinking as she tucks the mask into the back of a stroller when taking a child for a walk?)

- **Choose an artifact.**

For instance, in the IWM there is a small “Trench Football” game with the aim of maneuvering a small ball through the trenches into the Kaiser’s mouth, with the label, “British children learned to support their country and laugh at the enemy through games like this.” This artifact could be used to create a short story with children playing the game, adults considering buying it as a Christmas present, or a conversation between a military leader and a designer about its creation. This artifact is ripe with potential for exploring differing gendered viewpoints on WWI.

- **Ask learners to create/choose their own prompts.**

They can choose characters, and/or artifacts from their exploration of the museum.

- **Write a piece of flash fiction in a 20-minute period.**

Use the information above and other details from the museum as relevant. The only rules are to keep writing. The condensed time period can prevent learners from worrying too much about what or how they’re writing, and focus on their ideas.

- **Take five more minutes to clean up the stories.**

Check for typos and minor wording issues.

- **Form pairs and read the stories to each other.**

- **Ask for volunteers to read to the group.**

- **Discuss how/if these stories bring to light ideas and perspectives not**

present in the exhibits.

Do they promote understanding, enable critical thinking, disrupt commonly held perspectives?

Learners can also look for stories within museums and respond to the following questions:

- Which curatorial statements are fact-based and which are narrative-based?
- How do these different types of information engage visitors?
- Whose stories are prominent?
- Whose stories are missing?
- What stories could learners create to address any imbalances and to disrupt dominant narratives?
- Another idea is to read fiction that takes place in and/or connects to museums. How does the fiction represent museums?
- How do the plot and characters relate to the museum and intersect with society?
- How are women and other marginalized groups represented?

Section two: Found poems

Found poems are another way to engage creatively with research data and learners. A found poem is a form of poetry that is created with words that have been previously constructed from any text (i.e., chapters, books, journal articles, commercials, news broadcasts, museum curatorial statements). By choosing certain words over others, and putting them together in a poem, new meanings and understandings can be conceived. For Dillard (1996), “by entering a found text as a poem, the poet doubles its context. The original meaning remains intact, but now it swings between two poles. The poet adds, or at any rate increases, the element of delight” (p. ix). She also details a different type of found poem, one that strays from – or is even opposite to – “the original authors’ intentions” (p. ix). Patrick (2016) describes the concept of “research found poetry,” with the words “taken directly from the qualitative data” (p. 386) in order to creatively engage the imagination of readers. Found poetry can also engage learners and museum visitors. By using museum curatorial statements as a basis for found poems, for instance, learners can highlight stereotypical representations, cast the words in a new light, and create new ways of thinking about exhibits.

When I visited the “Scythian warriors of ancient Siberia” exhibit at the British

Museum (London, England), I was appalled that the museum would continue to display human remains when there are strong arguments against this practice. This resultant found poem aims to problematize how the complex lives of the Scythian people has been reduced to objectified jewellery, weapons, and tools, with their bodies treated as learning commodities. As photographs were not permitted at this exhibit, I created this found poem from the curatorial statements that were reproduced in the Large Print Exhibition Text.

Licensed to Excavate

BP

*discovering energy around world
help you discover
ancient Scythian people.*

*Visitors advised
exhibition contains human remains.*

*Unique insight into lives of people from
past
the British Museum
care
respect
dignity.
Families, saddle up.*

*No written language
archaeology and ancient accounts.
Only structures graves.*

*Skilled riders
sophisticated craftspeople
fearsome warriors.
Elaborately decorated horses
transformed into hooved griffins
killed during funeral
carry rider into afterlife.*

*Death and the renewal of living things
buried dead with all needed.*

*Tsar Peter I
scientific expeditions
unearthed fantastic gold ornaments
ancient burial mounds.*

*Everything found
sent to him
exchanged for generous payment.*

*New museum
cabinet of curiosities
Treasure hunting punishable by death.*

*Scholars licensed to excavate
commissioned to explore.*

*Head of a chief
body dissected
tattooed skin preserved.*

*Studying remains
transforming knowledge.*

The aim of this poem is to crystalize certain words and phrases to bring a new perspective on the curatorial statements, to the researcher herself as well as others reading the poems, that allows for thoughtful critique.

Suggestions for creating found poems

Adult educators can assist learners in creating found poems by asking them to tour the museum, take photographs of curatorial statements, and/or copy down certain phrases. Then, I suggest:

- **Choose to work alone, in pairs, or in small groups.**

This exercise works quite well with more than one person (while fiction typically works better individually).

- **Search through the captured curatorial statements**

Think about what is striking, missing, problematic, inspiring.

- **Decide on a focus.**

This could be the museum as a whole, an exhibit, a theme.

- **Use short phrases and words.**

Delete any unnecessary words.

- **Rearrange the words** as needed.

This way you can tell a particular story.

- **Shape the words in a visual form.**

Consider playing with form. Arrange the words in a particular pattern or shape in a way that brings more meaning to the poem.

- **Type, save, and project the found poems.**

Each author/group of authors can read theirs aloud

- **Discuss how these found poems bring to light ideas and perspectives not present in the exhibits.**

Do they promote understanding, enable critical thinking, disrupt commonly held perspectives?

Conclusion

By using fiction and found poems, adult educators and learners can consider how the characters, contexts, and situations in the creative pieces inform learners' understandings of museums and the content of the exhibits. Do the stories and found poems create ambiguity, foster open-mindedness, and assist with considering others' perspectives? Do learners emphasize with the characters? Do they better understand their predicaments? Do they learn something from fiction and found poems that may have otherwise remained hidden or ignored? In this way, adult educators can assist learners in narratively

engaging with museum exhibits in order to re-imagine whose stories are forefronted and how they are told.

Author's note

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Coming to a Screen Near You: Documentaries of Inspiring Stories of Individual and Community Change

BY CAROLE ROY

Human cultures have evolved in part through storytelling to the next generations. Over time, stories have also changed from oral stories to text and then to film. In Canada's history, the National Film Board (NFB), created in 1939, has played an important role in the education of the public through the sharing of stories of their lives, analysis of the challenges they faced, and the making of documentary films that shared those stories. In the early days, before television, the NFB had a vibrant network of community councils who organized screenings in halls, churches, and schools. They trained film projectionists not only about operating the technology but also in asking questions and animating the community gatherings. The arrival of television in the 1950s provided another venue to broadcast their productions. Rather than the demise of the NFB, the 1970s saw their dynamic and brilliant understanding of community engagement come to the fore with their immensely creative series *Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle* (CFC/SN):

The activist documentary program, which ran from 1967 to 1980, produced almost 250 films and videos in both French and English. It generated a particularly influential and original part of the National Film Board of Canada's acclaimed body of work, and its filmmakers were among the first to exploit portable video. CFC/SN challenged audiences, subjects and filmmakers to confront a wide spectrum of issues, from poverty to sexism to marginalization, with the intention of developing community and political awareness, as well as empowering Canadians. Pioneering participatory, social change-oriented media, the program had a national and international impact on documentary filmmaking, yet this book is the first comprehensive history and analysis of the venture. The volume's contributors examine dozens of films produced by the program, delving into their themes, aesthetics and politics, and they evaluate CFC/SN's place in Canadian, Québécois and world cinema. (Waugh et al., n/d, n/p)

Challenge for Change used documentaries in their analysis of social problems and helped communities to produce films to share their stories.

In this contribution to the Guide, I discuss a personal experience of organizing documentary film festivals; while not feminist per se, they offer a space for little heard voices, such as those of women. However, organizers of the three community-based documentary film festivals I will discuss use a feminist approach to organizing where collaboration, partnership, and inclusivity are part of the fabric of these community events that seek to educate the population on a wide range of issues outside of formal settings. Communicative practices are key to a dynamic pluralistic democracy (Butterwick & Roy, 2020) but we too often ignore the importance of listening (Butterwick & Roy, 2017).

Community-based Documentary Film Festivals: World Community Film Festival (Courtenay, British Columbia, Canada)

By the 1980s, the vibrant example of community engagement that was Challenge for Change was victim of the ascending neo-liberalism and it was cut. Yet, that program had employed people across the country; and by 1990, a former NFB community organizer with Challenge for Change who had moved to Courtenay, BC, was a co-founder of the World Community Film Festival, an attempt to use documentary films to bring awareness of global issues and provide a forum to connect the local and the global (Roy, 2016). Their program highlighted social and political issues as well as creative and courageous actions by individuals and communities. This festival inspired other documentary film festivals in BC and in other provinces. I attended the 2002 World Community Film Festival and immediately felt a sense of kinship with the people in the films, regardless of language, culture, or situation. I recognized a shared humanity, a common analysis of the problems plaguing our earth and its people, and the desire to create solutions. I laughed and I cried. I felt dismayed at the unnecessary cruelty and suffering inflicted through injustices, and immensely proud of the resilient spirit I saw in people standing up, imagining, and creating change. The festival was the first thing I wrote in a new agenda the next year; it had already become a ritual, as I joined hundreds and thousands of people looking for inspiration and practical ideas.

How to Start a Documentary Film Festival: Travelling World Community Film Festival (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada)

Having to move across the country after attending the Courtenay film festival for three years, I felt bereft. However, in a search for how I could keep seeing these films, I contacted the organizers and asked to borrow the films to show them in my new location, Peterborough, Ontario. Having just arrived in this new community and knowing literally no one, the Courtenay organizers

suggested that if I got a group together to organize a film festival they would reconsider my request. A few months later, I had identified a small group of women excited by this project and in January 2005 we held our first Travelling World Community Film Festival – Peterborough (later renamed ReFrame). To our surprise, in a few months we raised double the funds we needed to cover our expenses, sold out of tickets weeks before the festival, and had line-ups at our three venues. For the first few years, the festival doubled its attendance every year. It seemed that the documentaries hit a spot: people were moved by the human stories, stimulated by the smart analysis portrayed in these films, and at times even inspired to action from the concrete examples they saw on the screen. We carefully selected films from the Courtenay program as well as our own sourcing and kept an emphasis on stories that often had a background of injustice and suffering but moved to demonstrations of creativity and courageous actions.

Antigonish International Film Festival (Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada)

In 2007, after organizing the third festival in Peterborough, I once again had to move, this time to Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Inspired by the experience in Peterborough, upon arrival I started looking for a few people who might be interested in organizing a documentary film festival in this small town of 4,000 residents and 4,000 university students. Within five months we held our first Antigonish International Film Festival, a one-day festival held in four venues that became cinema-for-the-day: the Credit Union, a small health clinic, a wedding lounge above a Chinese restaurant, and a business meeting room at a local hotel, all on Main street. When we tallied attendance, it was close to 1000 people. The next year we dropped the Credit Union but added the Courthouse where we showed a film in which police officers, doctors, and judges spoke in favour of the decriminalization of drugs to a packed room. All venues required significant re-arranging of furniture, blocking out of windows with black plastic, the installation of projectors, DVD players, and sound systems. Over the years, we held the festival in different locations until a new library in town anchored our festival along with a cinema and the town council chambers, all three venues next to each other.

Expanding the vision beyond the festival, two of us from the Antigonish International Film Festival started showing documentaries to women in prison a few times a year. I recently did a study that included showing documentaries followed by discussion every week for a month and then doing individual semi-structured interviews after the series. The women especially loved

Apache 8 (Zeig, 2011) for its demonstration of a very professional unit of Navajo women wildland firefighter crew recognized by their peers as one of the very best. They also really like *Trash Dance* (Garrison, 2012), which shows a young white woman choreographer who, through respect and persistence, engaged a group of mostly visible minority garbage pickers in a dance performance attended by thousands. What they appreciated about it, aside from the choreographer's engaging and effective approach, was the opportunity to see multiple dimensions of identity as these workers reveal over the film that they are excellent chef, body builder, or doting single father of a young daughter; the women commented on how no one is defined only by one aspect. Discussions after films became a forum for the practice of the skills of respectful listening and sharing of ideas fundamental to democracy, and they expressed pride in belonging to a group that although they were mostly new to each other, had held respectful, inclusive, and stimulating exchanges of views.

Feminist principle of inclusion: making space for ignored voices and inspiring examples

All three festivals include films of women's voices too often unheard. The films challenged stereotypes. For example, *Sunset Story* (Gabbert, 2003), the story of two feisty elderly women who become friends while living in a retirement home for activists and artists in the United States, "contradicts the assumption that older women are boring and uninteresting" (Roy, 2016, p. 27). *Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy* (Elliott, 2007) offers recognition for the trail-blazing successes of two spirited women, one with Down Syndrome and the other with Cerebral Palsy, who met in an institution for disabled people but were determined to live outside the institution, which required them to lobby and change a state law. A woman who attended the festival drew hope from *Body & Soul*:

Great sense of humour and makes you see disabilities in different ways. I also have a daughter with Down Syndrome so ... it gives me hope that my daughter can have a really important role in her life, have independence and relationships with other people. (Cited in Roy, 2016, p. 38)

It also speaks with "wit and humour of their profound friendship" (Roy, 2016, p. 38). Both films encourage the idea that meaningful connections are possible at all stages of life. *Cuba Mia* (Domeyko, 2005) highlights a group of excellent Cuban women musicians who formed their own orchestra. *Dolores* (Bratt, 2017) tells the story of strong and intelligent Dolores Huerta, inspiring lifelong activist and mother of 11 children who co-founded the Farm Workers Union and who,

despite her brilliant strategic thinking and effective leadership, was not as recognized as Cesar Chavez, the co-founder. In *Nefertiti's Daughters* (Nickolas, 2015), we meet Egyptian women artists who courageously did art on walls to express their hopes and demands during the 2011 Tahrir Square revolution. Be it through friendship, resistance to institutional life, orchestral music, union organizing, or articulation of ideas through graffiti, these stories reflect intelligence, meaningful engagement, and inspiring courage in their defiance of stereotypes.

Different types of films highlighted the importance of history. *Marker of Change: The Story of the Women's Monument* (Simpson, 1998) tells the story of a monument (in Vancouver) to memorialize the 14 women of the 1989 Ecole Polytechnique's massacre in Montreal. The film led a woman to travel to Vancouver in search of that monument. *Archeology of Memory: Villa Grimaldi* (Cruz & Mulford, 2008) is also about historical memory but this time about the terror created by Pinochet in Chile. It is mesmerizingly sad and beautiful at once, created by poets, writers, musicians, and artists who had the unfortunate experience of such horror and are determined to translate it into light as we are invited to see the multiple dimensions of identity and moved to seeing that victims are also gifted art producers. Another eloquent story about invisible contributions is *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World* (Bainbridge, 2017), an extraordinary Canadian film that shows the profound influence Indigenous musicians had on contemporary music. Presenting the transformation of collectively traumatic experiences into art provides an opportunity for greater awareness and partial healing.

Finally, some films told stories of imaginative possibilities. *Facing Fear* (Cohen, 2013) is the unbelievable story of a young gay and homeless victim of violence by neo-Nazi skinheads who, 25 years later, comes face to face with one of the vicious attackers. Their relationship is a lesson for us all that change is possible as they develop deep friendship and moving collaboration. *Bogotá: Building a Sustainable City* (Fettig, 2008) reveals a mayor with the courage to innovate by posting mimes to direct traffic and closing all traffic on Sunday so people can walk and bike. Within a few years, mega-libraries, 1,000 parks, 70,000+ trees, and a state-of-the art public transportation system transformed the city. Then there is *Burkinabé Rising* (Lee, 2018), an enormously effervescent and dynamic community of artists and citizens engaged in political resistance and social change in the pursuit of peace and justice on a daily basis in Burkina Faso. These films challenged what we take for granted as limited possibilities and

easily accepted status quo; however, be it in hate eradication and the possibility of reconciliation, more sustainable urbanism, or artful political engagement, hope, vision, and creativity are real and not delusions.

How to organize a documentary film festival

Today at the start of the second decade of the 21st century, the three film festivals are still going. ReFrame in particular has become a very successful multi-media regional event with poetry readings, workshops, and art walks. How does one organize a documentary film festival? Having a passion for, or an emotional and intellectual liking of documentary films, is a start. Equally important is having a discerning eye for films that are meaningful and memorable. I once attended a well-known film festival that showed hundreds of documentary films; while I saw 44 films, we selected only seven for our much smaller Antigonish International Film Festival. Having multiple venues next to each other, attendees did not have to deal with the (annoying) long wait time and line-up management of a large festival but instead could focus their time on watching films of their choice. Being a smaller film festival does not mean less quality but more discernment and being more selective. People raved about some of the films, still remembering and commenting on them years later.

Film selection

We look for films that are about to be released or just released. Over 15 years, there have been changes from DVDs for preview sent by mail to Vimeo links. However, films are available online sooner, which makes our selection harder as we do not show films available on the internet. The selection team looks for films throughout the year. We contact independent filmmakers and follow up on reviews, suggestions, festival websites, favourite filmmakers'/ distributors' new productions. We have often been lucky to show documentaries that won Oscars (sometimes before they won the Oscars), or selected films whose topics were in the news during the film festival. One notable film we decided not to show, believing he would not last, was a film on Trump and his golf course in Scotland – and this would have been shown a few days before the 2016 US election: we wished people would have seen the scandalous way Trump behaved, but now everyone knows. In order to make the final selection, we meet and review all the films we have seen, usually around 100+, and select around 25 to 30. We show films on various topics but some years we had numerous films about one issue or a region, as we did one year with North Korea. Overall, we try to show documentaries about women, Indigenous peoples, the

environment, youth and/or elderly, the arts including music, dance and visual arts, resistance movements, specific problems, and human-interest stories about individuals and communities confronting adversity with creativity, spunk, or grace.

Fundraising and the importance of partners/sponsors

Aside from the selection team responsible to find, request preview copies, and select films, the organizing team has to pay attention to numerous other aspects. From the beginning, fundraising was crucial so we can pay for films, venues (free as much as possible in the first few years), professional technical help during the festival, promotional material, and recruitment of volunteers. Peterborough is known for its sense of community, possibly because it used to be a working class town with many unionized workers who founded Trent University so their children could afford to attend post-secondary education. Immediately, organizers drew a list of people and organizations that may be interested and contacted them. It worked marvellously well! I knew that my stay in Peterborough would be temporary so by the 2nd year I applied for grants so we could hire someone part-time to ensure continuity.

The community approach to fundraising, which I learned from the activists in Peterborough, followed me to Antigone where we quickly developed a network of 100+ community organizations, small businesses, and university departments who supported the festival. This support allowed us to keep the two-day festival pass at \$15 and \$20 (£8-14) in the last few years, and offered a \$5 (£3) for unwaged – on the honour system. We had a donation box at the entrance of each venue but if there were seats available, we let anyone walk through: we wanted people to see those wonderful films.

Two years ago, we lost our fundraiser of the last seven years; as we were unable to find someone to take that on, we have decided to downsize, and organize a one-day/one venue free film festival. We are a small group of 12 and most of us are in our 60s and 70s with only three younger middle-age people. The selection of films for this new format is more difficult as we must show only the very best films. When we had two or three days and three venues each day we could show a film because we felt morally compelled to show it, knowing it would probably not be the most popular film, but we could show two other films at the same time so people had a choice. Now there is no choice but fortunately, on our first attempt with the new format, all the films were appreciated. We

also show documentaries once a month during the academic year and try to get speakers to share their experience and answer questions after the films. One important aspect of a successful festival is excellent equipment and technical people to deal quickly with any problems that may arise. In our case, the day before, we test all the DVDs on the machines where they will be used. Technology deserves attention as there are only a few minutes before people lose interest. We have been fortunate to have very few problems, but we pay technical people to show the films so if anything happens, they can quickly figure it out.

Promotion

Another important aspect has been the promotion and the original material for it. Currently in Antigonish, we have been lucky to have a graphic artist who, since 2010, has voluntarily designed posters and program pamphlets. She is gifted, has a great eye for colours and for details. Some years we had a coordinator of promotion who organized postering, radio interviews, written articles in the local press, social media campaigns, emails, but other years we each did a bit and relied on word of mouth. We also have had a website for many years, as do all the festivals mentioned here. We always collect people's email so we can add them to our list. However, one of the best promotion tools has been the consistent quality of the films we select.

One group we have had difficulty attracting are university students. We commissioned a small survey and found that Friday night is party night and Saturday is PJ (pajama) day; they also claimed they could watch what they wanted on the internet. Some undergraduate students have told me they felt documentaries had nothing to do with their lives.

However, in recent years, we worked through the university's Service Learning program and undergraduate students attended the festival as volunteers. They seem to like active engagement in learning. The first year, I asked them to write a short review of the film they saw and no one did it. The second and third years, I designed a form for them to fill, and all of them did it: they loved the film they saw; they were surprised at how relevant the film was to their lives or how interesting it was to learn about such a topic; they suggested that more students should come and they expressed their desire to come back next year. Yet, unless they are volunteering, very few attend, a situation that was raised in my meetings with organizers of a number of documentary film festivals.

Volunteers

All festivals need dedicated and reliable volunteers with a wide range of skills and interests. In Peterborough and Antigonish, we have an orientation with volunteers where the important message is that they are the face of the festival and we want them to be warm, hospitable, friendly, and helpful, and go out of their way to make people feel welcome. Attendees do not necessarily know who the organizers are, so the volunteers on the ground are the ones to make a positive impression on attendees. We insist on punctuality, not only is it respectful of people's time, it also offers some predictability in an otherwise emotionally unpredictable event as each documentary opens a new story. People who come to the liminal space a festival creates bring a willingness to suspend their everyday routines and thoughts in order to engage with new ideas, sometimes challenging ones. We want them to bring all the emotional and intellectual openness they can rather than fret about the logistics, which always happens when films do not start when scheduled. In Antigonish, we have a diversity of volunteers including residents and attendants of the five l'Arche community houses. L'Arche is dedicated to the creation of homes that support people who have intellectual disabilities; residents and attendants volunteered at one venue and everyone appreciated their participation. We have volunteers who look forward to the festival year after year, as they enjoy being part of a successful, well-organized event, which gives them a sense of belonging.

Special events

There are often special events as part of the film festivals. The Courtenay Film Festival has a dynamic bazaar with 30 to 40 organizations or small businesses who offer information or products that are loosely related to the films and to social change. For example, Amnesty International, a provider of progressive books, a local group working to protect the estuary, and someone who sells organic cotton, all share tables in a large room that becomes a market. Volunteers cook and sell simple lunch fare in the bazaar, with the result that people viewing films can take a break, eat, and wander around the packed bazaar in search of information related to a film. Alternatively, they may engage in wide ranging conversations with other attendees or with the exhibitors of the bazaar. There are important social links that are made there not only between individuals but also at times between representatives of different issues, for example a labour activist meets an environmental activist and organizes a

talk for the labour group on the situation of salmon farms and its detrimental effects on salmon habitat. In fact, in Courtenay, there are people who do not attend any films but focus only on going to the bazaar as they feel that is where the community is and they want to be a part of it as they can watch the films later when they are housed at a local café after the festival. Peterborough also developed a bazaar; although smaller in size it was innovative as it invited refugees and immigrants from the Newcomers Centre to bring and sell food, and let them keep all proceeds. The space then was inviting with food from different parts of the world and allowed attendees to meet each other for conversations.

Courtenay also had a wonderful dinner which featured organic local produce and which served 120+ people every year before the final evening. This created a space to discuss films seen during the day with friends or strangers. In Antigonish, this feature attracted about 100 to 120 people every year for about 10 years. Once a trained Mexican chef working in a local restaurant cooked an amazing meal of traditional Mexican cuisine and while we sold out 120 tickets, we could have sold at least another 30. Two people who were too late to get tickets and heard there were many people wanting to attend opened their home to those who did not have tickets and invited them to bring a Mexican dish. Every year we asked a small local business to provide the dinner, exploring a range of cuisines until we got the Cultural Connections, a local multicultural association, to cook dinner and raised funds for their own activities.

Other special events as a part of the film festival in Peterborough included art exhibits in each venue as well as slam poetry readings late at night after the film. To our surprise, the place was packed. Other local performers were also invited to perform before related films and many are women such as an Indigenous women hand drummer group. In an effort to become part of the festival in Peterborough, local restaurants offered discounts to attendees and also organized art exhibits to connect to the festival, which developed an art walk through downtown. Peterborough also organized filmmaker panels where they engaged in the discussion of the real issues they faced while the audience listened to their exchanges. This was a very successful model and the panel lasted an hour longer than anticipated due to the high engagement of the speakers. In 2019 in Antigonish, we featured *Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*, a film by Tasha Hubbard, a Cree woman filmmaker who discusses the situation for Indigenous people and the judiciary system in Canada and uses the trial for the murder of Coulten Boushie as the case study. For this important

film, we collaborated with an anthropologist who works with Indigenous people to develop an evening called a Learning Lodge and which was informative and respectful of the local Mi'kmaq Indigenous culture. An elder agreed to do a smudging ceremony at the entrance of the building, and an Indigenous counsellor was present so anyone who was triggered could seek her out at the back of the room. Three young Indigenous women spoke of their experiences and answered questions, which was followed by a reception with local Mi'kmaq food. It was an opportunity to highlight local Indigenous voices and for settlers to listen. Those who attended spoke highly of this special event.

Leadership

Aside from the willingness to try something new and initiate such a project, in both film festivals, the one in Peterborough and the one in Antigonish, the organizing teams had some significant commonalities. All meetings involved sharing food; it communicates appreciation for those involved and helps develop stronger social ties. While in the initial year or two the organizing was quite informal, it formalized over time, with both groups registering to incorporate in order to access some government grants. Women played a large leadership role in both festivals, although there were also a number of dedicated men involved. While we take minutes and have a treasurer, we also try to encourage a free flow of ideas. In general, meetings are devoted to organizing an event rather than philosophical discussions.

However, a hallmark of both festivals has been an approach that seeks partnerships with community organizations, small businesses, and university departments. This weaving together of a wide range of issues and organizations into the same event has been community building as we start to ask about the connections between the seemingly different issues. The fundamental purpose is one of education and community building although the word education is never used. The approach is inclusive of diversity and respectful of particularities, allowing people to tell their stories through the documentaries. It also provides a collective listening opportunity for those who may, or may not, share similar experiences; in this way, these documentary film festivals practice a feminist approach which seeks to surface voices often ignored and create opportunities for listening, often dismissed in a patriarchal society focused on action.

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Calling Rape “Rape” and Confronting Difficult Knowledge: Writing Interpretive Panels and Facilitating Guided Tours from a Critical Feminist Perspective for Early Rubens at the Art Gallery of Ontario

BY LAUREN SPRING AND GILLIAN MCINTYRE

According to the Roman poet Ovid (48 BC-17/18 AD), Medusa was the most beautiful daughter of the god Phorcys. One day, the sea god Neptune raped her in the temple of the goddess Minerva. Furious, Minerva transformed Medusa’s hair into writhing snakes as a punishment. From then on, anyone who gazed at Medusa’s face would be turned into stone.

Here, Rubens captures the moment after Medusa has been decapitated by the hero Perseus. The dramatic close-up emphasizes the deathly pallor of her skin, the terror in her eyes, and the mass of arteries and surging snakes that spring from the drops of her blood. Both revolting and captivating, the painting originally hung behind a curtain in the home of a wealthy merchant.

These words were written by Gillian McIntyre to accompany one of Peter Paul Rubens’ most famous paintings, *Head of Medusa* (1617-1618), while it was on display during the autumn and winter of 2019/2020 at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) as part of the *Early Rubens* exhibition. This classical myth was just one of several challenging mythological and biblical stories represented in all their gory, explicit, dramatic detail in the show. The *Early Rubens* exhibition featured more than 30 paintings and 16 works on paper and billed itself as the North American debut of one of “the most revered painters in Western art... (who was) widely recognized for his riveting, dynamic and even cinematic style, known as the Baroque” (“Early Rubens”). Medusa’s head was not hidden behind a curtain in this exhibition. It was a highlight of the show, in fact – a fine example of Baroque drama as well as Rubens’ ability to capture complex psychological states of his human subjects. This meant, however, that those of us working directly or indirectly with members of the public who happened upon it, had to find productive ways of speaking about this troubling image. The pages that follow lay bare some of the questions we, as educators and feminists, ask ourselves when interpreting and confronting ‘difficult’ artworks for and alongside members of the public.

In the public imagination, museums are often thought of as being neutral, objective and “...trusted knowledge-legitimizing institutions” (Clover et al., 2018, p. 12). However, critical feminist educators have, for decades now, been calling public attention to the fact that museums actually frequently represent, in both subtle and overt ways, hegemonic orders of power – patriarchy chief amongst them (Bergsdottir, 2016; Clover et al., 2018; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Janes, 2015; Pollock, 1988; Spring et al., 2018 et al.; Spring, 2019). Important and creative work has been done in recent years to call attention to and correct what Pollock (1998) refers to as “phallogentric thought” (p. xx) within museum walls. Much of this work takes the form of ‘feminist hacks.’ Clover (2018) defines the feminist museum ‘hack’ as a

participatory visual method...that enables educators to use the museum exhibitions to deconstruct accepted social, political, and cultural norms that are both visible and invisible in museum narratives. The aim is to illuminate the limitations or bias of decisions made around images and stories as well as our own complicity in simply accepting those as told/ shown (p. 86).

Hacks can be undertaken by activist/artist/scholars who come from outside the museum space so their interventions may not be considered as part of regular museum programming but they are also done in collaboration with museum educators, who have critical pedagogical mandates to work with professors and community groups and therefore, form a part of their work (For example, see Clover et al., 2018; Spring, et al., 2019). Our work in this piece draws attention to feminist pedagogy by educators working within an art gallery with ‘difficult objects’.

In recent decades, the practice of ‘new museology’ (Vergo, 1989) has meant that museums have begun to look beyond the objects they display to examine critically what feminist adult educators call the ‘hidden curriculum’ they offer their public. That is to say, those working within these pedagogic institutions now also routinely question which/whose versions of history are being presented or left out; and how the narratives that are recounted are related to notions of power and knowledge, and may impact identity formation amongst visitors (Segall, 2014).

This climate considered, it is not surprising that many museums have deliberately started to centre exhibitions around ‘difficult knowledge’ itself rather than objects on display, and increasing attention has been paid in recent

years to pedagogic strategies for addressing historical injustice, violence, traumatic loss, victimhood, and human rights (Blumer, 2015; Lehrer et al., 2011). For example, important conversations have taken place in relation to exhibitions about lynching (Simon, 2011); colonial genocide (Segall, 2014); the Holocaust (Novick, 2000; Segall, 2014), queer history (Butler, 2018); and Indigenous people's rights (Failler, 2018). Much less attention, however, has been paid to discussing or theorizing how we might politicize and shine a critical feminist light on canonical artworks by old (white, male) masters that represent 'difficult knowledge' in the form of mythological characters and stories. In part, the political implications of these works have been overlooked because they are based on constructed narratives as opposed to actual human history as is the case with the other examples cited above.

Most visitors who came to the AGO's recent Rubens' exhibition, for example, probably did not anticipate that reading the label panels, or participating in a guided tour through a show ostensibly about 17th century portraits and church commissions might actually spark discussions about sexism throughout art history and rape culture today. Yet this particular type of difficult encounter "confronts visitors with significant challenges to their museological expectations and interpretive abilities...when the affective force of an encounter provokes substantial problems in settling (at least provisionally) on the meaning and significance of the images" (Simon, 2011, p. 433).

The interview and reflections that follow highlight specific ways in which we sought to provoke such encounters by employing a feminist pedagogy while working on/touring groups through the *Early Rubens* exhibition. We also illuminate some of the obstacles we have encountered along the way and related questions with which we continue to grapple.

Our job descriptions

We are both employees of the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). Gillian is an Interpretive Planner and Lauren is an Educator. Our feminist politics informs the work that we do every day. As an Interpretive Planner, Gillian's job entails finding ways of engaging broad audiences for temporary exhibitions and the permanent collection at the AGO.

Gillian has been working full-time at the AGO for 18 years. Her Master of Museum Studies thesis paper explored the relationship between the AGO and so-called minority communities. Initially, she worked part-time as an Education

Officer and started the youth volunteer program in 1998. Subsequently, she coordinated the Adult Public Programs for 12 years and currently works as an Interpretive Planner. For *Early Rubens*, Gillian contributed to creating a timeline to contextualize Rubens' art, writing the wall panel and extended label copy (copy refers to the text, and the wall panels are the large texts on the walls that introduce visitors to the theme of each room within a wider exhibition, and extended labels provide more information about individual works), creating an orientation to the engraving process, helped select ambient music and added a digital visitor drawing station aimed at encouraging visitors to learn what makes Baroque art so dramatic.

Lauren has worked for 12 years as an Education Officer at the AGO in the Public Programming and Learning Department and provides tours for both school groups and adult visitors. The adult groups she tours with come from all walks of life. Lauren regularly provides tours for everyone from major donors to the galleries, to corporate clients celebrating a holiday party in the museum, from seniors visiting Toronto on a bus tour to people seeking treatment for mental illness and addiction. Lauren and her educator colleagues have also recently started facilitating art tours for the visually impaired and for those living with Alzheimer's and dementia. Lauren has published elsewhere in detail about some of these programs (Spring, Smith, & DaSilva, 2018). Generally speaking, adult educators at the AGO have a lot of freedom when it comes to guiding groups through the collections. For example, Lauren can choose which of many works of art to focus on during each tour, and which details (beyond the basics) to include in the discussions. There is a great deal of improvisation involved in the job as well, as Lauren often 'reads' a group to assess their level of art historical knowledge and areas of interest before deciding which works to engage with and how to approach certain discussions in the moment.

This latter point reflects the difference between 'education' and 'learning' – a key distinction in museum pedagogy that has been taking shape in recent years. This shift in focus away from an educator's subject knowledge and towards learners' own experiences, ideas, and meaning-making has been widely celebrated by critical museum scholars and is a trend that both authors of this paper see as vital and beneficial (Clover, 2018; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Illeris, 2006). And yet, power dynamics and ethical conundrums still persist for both of us as we, seeking to find just the right words when writing label copy, or the right way of phrasing a courageous question during a tour, move to bring nuance and counterpoint to disrupt hegemonic ways of looking at art.

The Interview

Lauren: Can you describe in more detail what your job entails? Not all museums have interpretive planners, such as yourself. In your opinion, what purpose do they serve pedagogically speaking? What do you like most about your job? What can be the most challenging?

Gillian: When an exhibition is in the initial planning stages, the content team, including the curator, project manager, interpretive planner (IP) and 3D designer, comes together. The curator is the content expert and the interpretive planner specializes in the various ways people learn. First, the interpretive planner writes an interpretive plan for the exhibition with the goal of engaging a broad audience in an accessible way. The plan starts with the big idea of the exhibition drawn from the curatorial thesis. From that, the desired visitor outcomes are established and then the interpretive strategies are designed to deliver those outcomes. Strategies can include panels and label copy, timelines, video, audio, visitor response areas, seating etc. We also play a role in the 2D and 3D design considered from the visitor experience perspective. Once the exhibition is open we work with staff to study visitors' responses and behavior, to test whether or not the strategies are working.

From a pedagogical perspective our work is creating a very open-ended and accessible curriculum in a non-school setting. We have to consider visitors' many different learning styles and how the exhibition design itself contributes to meaning making from the wall colours and lighting to the juxtapositions of the art and the placement of seating. We are really trying to facilitate experiences and assume it will be different for everyone. Rather than thinking that we have knowledge that is transferred to visitors I think that the Gallery is a place where knowledge is created – ideally this is an active and very personal process.

Our assumption about visitors is that most do not have knowledge of or interest in art history – and why should they? Instead we try to find the contemporary relevance of the particular art and how it relates to their lives and what questions it raises? When we write wall panels and extended label copy we do so in an accessible way believing that you can express complex ideas in a straightforward language. I believe this brings more people into the conversation. Beyond copy we always explore other ways of helping visitors to create meaning and have meaningful experiences.

Lauren: The idea that gallery spaces are ones where knowledge is created

resonates with me as well and this is what I strive to practice when working with visitors who come for a tour. However, I imagine you recognize that when you write label copies, you wield a certain amount of power over how visitors interpret an artwork. Did writing the label panels for the recent *Early Rubens* show pose any particular challenges?

Gillian: Writing labels for any exhibition is always challenging. The content comes from a discussion with the curator about what the most important points are and how they carry the narrative of the big idea. Getting to the essence of something and expressing it in 100 words or less is not easy. You have to really understand what you are trying to communicate. The interpretive planner writes the copy and sends it back to the curator. Once there is agreement between them, the copy goes to the editor. It really is a joint effort with much discussion and going back and forth. The IP is responsible for making sure the copy is accessible and hits the right tone.

With *Early Rubens*, some of the particular challenges came from establishing the context of the time Rubens was painting, such as the religious tensions at the heart of the 80 Years' War (Dutch War of Independence) and 12 Years' Truce (a temporary end to the hostilities between Spain and the Northern Netherlands), the Counter Reformation (the period of Catholic resurgence), Iconoclasm (destruction of icons, monuments, images) and so forth in a clear way that did not oversimplify it. For this, I created a timeline at the beginning of the exhibition. I also do not assume that everyone automatically knows the bible or Christian iconography. Since the exhibition premiered in San Francisco, some of the wall texts came to us from that show. I made extensive changes to it in consultation with the curator and research assistant on the exhibition to more accurately reflect the story we wanted to tell in our institution.

For example, in San Francisco, the gallery with Rubens' church commissions was called *The Life and Death of Christ*, but at the AGO we called it *Building a Career* - quite a different take. Another gallery area addressed Rubens' storytelling ability. The images in this gallery were made for private homes and concerned Greek and Roman mythology and biblical stories such as Samson and Delilah and Lot escaping from Sodom. In this room there were images of incest, rape, drunkenness and duplicity. I decided to be very direct about that on the room panels - both the large wall panel at the entrance to this particular space and, more specifically, in the texts accompanying certain works.

Lauren: For as long as I have known you, you have had a very direct approach to addressing difficult material. Do you think this relates to your feminism in any way?

Gillian: Yes, absolutely. It also relates to anti-racism work I have done in the past. I am always thinking about how to make change through education. For me, addressing issues directly but in a non-confrontational way encourages dialogue and a possible way forward. Sometimes when we are looking at art from previous centuries that carry the sexist or racist values of the time, people say, "Well that was how it was then". To not call that out would mean we perpetuate those views. It also maintains a belief that everyone at the time agreed with it – that because 'rape' was the 'way it was' – women did not suffer from it and try to make it stop.

Lauren: I agree. That's one of the reasons I love my job so much. While facilitating a tour I am able to invite participants into this type of dialogue. Of course, some groups are more ready and willing than others. The storytelling gallery you mention houses some of my favourite works in the exhibition, but is also one of the most...*interesting* to tour. Some groups (like post secondary gender studies classes who are well-versed in conversations about the 'male gaze' and are accustomed to thinking critically about what's being presented to them) are eager to delve deeply into the narratives on the canvasses we confront in this space. The term the 'male gaze' was coined by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay entitled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. It refers to the objectification of women by both male protagonists and audience members alike. Mulvey and others argue that common aesthetic practices that sexualize and fragment the female body for the pleasure of a heterosexual male viewer exist throughout both film and art history.

For other groups I tour with, for example, a corporate group who are in the building for a holiday party and they have been asked by their managers to come along on this 60-minute tour between dinner and dessert, I often sense a resistance to face some of these problematic stories. I recently had an especially uncomfortable exchange on a tour when my group stopped in front of the painting depicting Rhea Silvia and Mars. Your label panel says "Mars charges forward, Rhea Silvia recoils" and the painting depicts the moment that the god of war is about to rape Rhea Silvia who would become pregnant as a result and later give birth to Romulus and Remus. During this particular tour, most participants in the group recognized the dynamic between the two even before

I shared your words from the label with them, but one man in the group kept insisting he saw desire, not just fear on Rhea Silvia's face and challenged me as an authority on the subject (i.e. questioned how I could read Rubens' mind/be sure of his intentions when painting this canvas). As the discussion continued, other (mostly female) participants in the group pointed out that his perspective (that an act of rape could be longed for or consensual) was dangerous and wrong-headed and the very reason we need movements like #MeToo. He dug in his heels and responded sarcastically.

This was a challenging moment for me. Pedagogically speaking, on tours I typically welcome and celebrate different viewpoints and interpretations of a work of art, I try to validate everything participants offer up as being a plausible way of understanding the work. However, I felt that him further sharing his perspective or 'interpretation' of the image was actually squelching dialogue. After a few minutes of back and forth between me and him and the other tour participants, it actually didn't feel like the conversation was about the painting at all, but was instead about power. I could tell that his comments were upsetting to other group members and I felt what Freire would refer to as 'a responsibility to teach' in the moment (Freire, 1970; see also Guilherme & Morgan, 2018). I held strong that I saw no evidence of desire in her facial expression or body language and that those who had collaborated to create the text that accompanied this work of art surely surveyed existing scholarship on the matter and came to the same conclusion.

Gillian, I know that for both of us, the objective is to encourage visitors to make their own meaning from the works of art being presented, but what if, at a core level, we believe some interpretations are incorrect or opinions ought not to be given space? How do you decide whether or how much of your feminist politics should inform what you write – and what ultimately influences visitor interpretations – on label copy? How do you think I should have responded to this during the tour?

Gillian: I think my feminist politics inform most of what I do. It is part of me and how I function so it is natural that it enters my writing. I want to encourage visitors to respond to the art individually but I think it is all right to present certain facts. We know a lot of what Rubens was thinking as we have extensive collections of his sketches. Without doubt there is an erotic element in many of his paintings that were sold for private residences, primarily because male commissioners would have found this titillating, but you mention in particular

Mars and Rhea Silvia and that some think Rhea Silvia looks both terrified and attracted. This is an incorrect interpretation and is not based on existing scholarship on the work. When I look at the painting, the tension in the work comes through, but the idea that the rape victim is complicit in her own assault is problematic and offensive and as an educator you are right to address this with your group.

Lauren: Are there other examples, over the years of how your feminist and anti-racist politics has informed the work you've done as an Interpretive Planner at the AGO? Are there any other specific examples (from this exhibition or others you've worked on) that you are particularly proud of?

Gillian: Probably one of the most recent exhibitions I've worked on that I felt good about is the reinstallation of the permanent collection of European art. One of the galleries dealt directly with Dutch and Flemish art from the 1600s. During this time the new wealthy merchant class started buying art for their homes and workplaces. The AGO is often criticized for not diversifying its holdings of art by dead white males. We have policies in place now to make sure our contemporary and Canadian collections reflect the population of Toronto. However, we don't have the budget or expertise to change our holdings of historic art from around the world.

Thinking about the 1600s in the Netherlands I realized that in the 21st century we couldn't ignore the fact that the wealth came from the labour of people enslaved by the Dutch. The question was how to address that without demonizing the work of artists such as Rembrandt. After a lot of thought and negotiation I managed to include that information on the room panel and made references to it by addressing the content of three paintings in extended labels.

Another exhibition I worked on was *Ai Weiwei: According to What* for which I worked with PEN Canada, an international organization with a mandate to help writers who are persecuted for expressing themselves. We created a response station in the middle of the exhibition on why free expression is important. I received push-back, being told that the AGO is not a political place to which I replied that giving our best real estate to a political activist is a political act.

Final thoughts

Unlike many overtly political exhibitions hosted by the AGO and other museums in recent years where visitors may show up equipped and ready to

encounter 'difficult knowledge', the often gritty and brutal stories of rape, incest and gender-based injustice depicted in several of the works in *Early Rubens* likely caught visitors off-guard. In overseeing the writing of the descriptive panels for these works and selecting them as stops on guided tours, both of us opted not to shy away from this content and to address it directly instead. We believe that one of the main roles of the AGO is its function as a safe forum for discussion on a range of important topics and that art can provide a catalyst for debate and as long as the discussions remain respectful. Though painted more than 400 years ago, artworks like the ones we have described in this contribution can speak to modern day rape culture and related contentious issues we are facing as a society today and it feels important (and frightening and brave) to use these images as a spring board into such discussions. In some instances, when Lauren stopped with a group in front of Rubens' (nightmare-inducing) painting of Medusa, participants were quick to relate her story (being blamed and punished for her own rape) to recent headlines in the news namely the 'helplessness' and injustice many women in India are feeling amidst a culture of impunity when it comes to rape and abuse of women; one woman was recently set on fire by her alleged rapists while on her way to court to testify against them (Bunyan & Mansoor, 2019; Ellis-Petersen, 2019). In other cases, upon hearing how Medusa was punished for her own rape, some participants responded with a wry smile, "Sure, but what was she wearing?" Relating this ancient myth to our contemporary culture of victim-blaming; attempting to add a bit of humour to a sad reality that casts its shadow closer to home (Pilkington, 2011).

Though we both dislike the idea of the institutional authoritative voice, museums, of course, are not neutral spaces. We (staff and visitors alike) express opinions and take positions all the time. We align ourselves with Hooper-Greenhill (2001) when she argues that if museums are to remain relevant, they ought to "tell counter-narratives and counter histories that disrupt both public, and their own institutional imaginaries" (p. 123). It is for this reason that we believe that the critical feminist perspectives we offer from within the institution can help provide a vital counterpoint to historical imbalances and 'phallogocentric' hegemonies (Pollock, 1988).

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Making a Feminist Miniature Poetry Book from a Luggage Label

BY SARAH WILLIAMSON

Poetry “invites us to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience” (Leggo, 2008, p. 166). Poetry and poetic inquiry have a history of being used as feminist practice, theory, and pedagogy, offering an engaging way to facilitate understanding and dialogue about feminist issues (Faulkner, 2017; Leavy, 2015). ‘Found’ poetry takes words and short phrases from existing texts, and rearranges them into a poetic form. It is a process of deconstruction and imaginative reconstruction. Laurel Richardson, a pioneer in poetic inquiry, says that “by settling words together into new configurations, the relations created through echo repetition, rhythm, rhyme let us see and hear the world in a new dimension. Poetry is thus a practical and powerful means for reconstitution of worlds” (1993, p. 705). Poetic inquiry affords the opportunity to make an expressive response through a feminist lens.

Additionally, Faulkner (2017) argues it can counteract the “typical power and authority structures” of traditional texts, adding it can be a powerful and “sensorial” medium (p. 197). Cutting up and reassembling text to create a poetic response is to collage with text. A great advantage of the technique is that by using existing or ‘found’ words, the pressure is removed of having to think of original words and language to use in a poem. It is “word play”, says Frances (2009), “best done at speed, swiftly noting key words and ideas and attempting to capture happy and unlikely accidents and connections” (p. 17). The advantage of collaged poetry, or ‘cut-up’ poetry, can be the emergence of a surprising short poem which has the power to stimulate reflection, praxis and consciousness.



Figure 1: Poetry book and poem.



Figure 2: Poetry book and book page with words cut out.

Simple steps to create your own miniature feminist poetry book using 'found words' and luggage labels.

1. Take a luggage label, fold carefully in half.
2. Cut some paper to the same size and also fold in half.
3. Staple the centre crease to secure the pages in the centre crease of the luggage label (keeping the smooth side of the staple on the outside of the 'book').
4. Take a page from a discarded book from a charity shop or yard sale.
5. Take the page for a walk with you around an art gallery or museum.
6. Cut out words and short phrases which speak to you about women's and gender issues, and which connect to your walk.
7. Arrange to make a short 'found' poem as a feminist response to what you have seen in the gallery or museum.
8. Stick your arrangement of 'found' words onto one of the pages.
9. Take another page from a book and repeat to make a poem for another page.
10. Repeat, on the same visit or on another day.
11. Use the string on the luggage label to fasten and close the book.

If you are doing this activity with a group, build in time for reflective sharing and conversation, and ask students to share their poetry with a partner. Another effective sharing technique is to ask all students to pass their book to the person on their left, and to keep repeating this until everyone in the group has looked at everyone's poetry book.

I hope you find this activity useful to engage your students critically and creatively!

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The What, Why and How of Métissage

BY KATHY BISHOP AND CATHERINE ETMANSKI

Are you looking for a creative way to engage with other humans in feminist narrative praxis? ...a way to disrupt normative practices to engage in participatory story-telling? ...a way to engage in and with arts-based research, community organizing, and activism? The practice of métissage offers a method that is creative, disruptive, aesthetic, and aligned with feminist and decolonising theory and practice.

In our article, *Narrative Métissage as an Innovative Engagement Practice* (Bishop et al., 2019), we (Kathy and Catherine) – together with colleagues Beth, Brian, and Cheryl – offered a theoretical overview and practical description of the processes and insights gained from facilitating métissage workshops. With permission from our colleagues and the *Engaged Scholar Journal* (per the creative commons licence agreement), we utilize this article as a foundation to provide both an overview and a step-by-step workshop facilitation guide for this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide*. We begin with an overview of the what and why of métissage.

The what and why of métissage

Métissage is a creative method used for engaging people in learning, teaching, research, and community or organizational development. It interweaves personal stories, poetry, gestures, and images. It values both the individual and the collective and supports the complex and often messy unfolding of our shared human tapestry. It is important because it is “a way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy and pedagogical praxis” (Chambers et al., 2002, para. 1). Métissage draws from the traditions of life writing, storytelling, theatre and – symbolically – from the art of weaving or braiding (See Chambers et al., 2008; Etmanski et al., 2013). Chawla and Rodriguez (2011) suggest that through the sharing of stories, it provides an opportunity to claim and reclaim multiple identities, as well as explore liminal or in-between spaces and contradictory ways of being, knowing, thinking, doing, and relating. Métissage creates a space for critical reflection on the self as well as intersubjective knowing of self in relationship. As such, métissage becomes more than a method; it can also lead to a relational way of being in and perceiving the world. For Hendry (2007), métissage does not seek to “deconstruct [the narrative(s) of] lived experiences” (p. 492); instead, as an artistic practice, it creates a generative and

liberating learning space that assists people in seeing past the psychological, social, and culturally imposed boundaries of their life worlds (Hayes & York, 2007). Furthermore, as a practice in which people can come together and hear multiple and different viewpoints, experiences, and realities, it has the “ability to transform” (Chambers et al., 2008, p. 141) by generating a space that allows for both individual stories and shared experiences to emerge. This can serve to garner new understandings and potential actions that can lead to individual and/or collective change. In this way, “the arts are not [always] an end in themselves but [can also be] an entryway for empowering people to author their own community intervention” (Hayes & York, 2007, p. 91). As an innovative practice, métissage can enable a change intervention by “tapping into experiential knowing to bridge barriers and join people together in community” and therefore creates both an event and artefact (p. 95).

Given this method challenges positivism and celebrates ways of knowing through story, several Indigenous and Métis scholars have contributed to the scholarship and practice of métissage. For example, métissage has been described as a decolonizing research sensibility, an interpretive Indigenous approach, and a Métis manifesto (Donald, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). Although métissage is not solely an Indigenous or Métis practice, as non-Indigenous scholars, we are mindful to acknowledge how the French word métissage (referring to people of mixed ethnicity) has given rise to the cultural group, Métis. We also acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonization, including how racism continues to impact Métis and Indigenous communities.

The how of métissage

In the following sections, we offer key elements, learning objectives, a formatting example of a half-day workshop, and scripts for your use. These are offered in the spirit of sharing and are intended as templates for you to modify, not as prescriptions. As always with arts-based methods, feel free to be creative and adapt according to your own context, skills, and preferences!

Key elements

Although métissage can also be conceptualized as a way of being more than doing, or as a lifelong process of learning through relationship, for the purpose of engaging with others in a shorter workshop that focuses on the narrative aspect of métissage, we have found that certain key elements become important. From our experience, these key elements are: setting the stage, free writing with a writing prompt, offering an example of a métissage,

taking time for editing, sharing stories, and closing the workshop. Setting the stage includes giving participants enough information to feel comfortable, or at least not resistant, to engage in the activity. We highlight that *métissage* is an invitation and together we are co-creating the space. After this is done, we explain the process of free writing and offer a writing prompt. Free writing is writing, non-stop, without filtering one's thoughts, for a timed period. Writing is a way to access creative, and often unconscious, narrative possibilities. A writing prompt is a few words or a phrase that serves to focus participants' individual and collective writing as well as offers inspiration.

Any kind of writing prompt is possible to use; however, we have found that an ambiguous prompt with multiple, even potentially contradictory interpretations, can stimulate more creative responses. Examples of past prompts used have been: "standing outside", "on the edge" and "the words I didn't speak" (with thanks to our colleague, feminist arts-based educator, Darlene Clover). Following the free writing period, we often offer an example of a *métissage*. We either create one prior (based on our own experiences, or from characters in fictional books, either prior or during free writing period). Then we invite participants to re-read for themselves what they have written and decide which of this is meant for their own eyes and ears only, and which sections they would feel comfortable sharing out loud. As they will ultimately be weaving their narratives with those of others, we suggest that they find two or three breaks where they could temporarily pause the reading of their narratives to enable other people to interweave their own.

Once the editing of the narratives is complete, the usual next step is to work in small groups to share stories, weave them together, and create a woven *métissage*. Then, the small groups move back into the large group to share their *métissages*. Before sharing as a large group, we offer three points, namely, for participants: (1) to consider aesthetic choices when reading (e.g. potentially include pauses, gestures, sounds, poetry, symbolism, fiction), (2) to hold any urge to applaud, at least until all the reading is completed, and (3) to really listen to one another's stories for the gift that they are. The stories are then shared. After the final person reads, we allow a pause for participants to absorb the stories by taking a moment of silence. We encourage participants to take in what they heard and feel how the stories have landed inside for them. We then facilitate a dialogue, according to the workshop topic, based on participants' observations about what happened in the experience of writing, editing, weaving, sharing, and listening through *métissage*. After a rich dialogue that

often leads to deepened relationships, as a way to close the workshop, we ask participants to speak one word or a short phrase into the space. This word can capture what the experience was like for them, or time permitting, we allow for a longer wrap up.

Learning objectives

The learning objectives for a métissage workshop can include the following: (1) to increase awareness and acceptance of a specific topic area. For example, radical gender justice, empowerment, reconciliation; (2) to acquire an experiential understanding of métissage; and, (3) to reflect upon the activity in order to gain personal and collective insight.

Formatting example of a half-day workshop

Time	Length	Activity
8:30 a.m.		Arrive, Set Up, Greet Participants
9:00 a.m.	20 min.	Welcome and Overview of Métissage
9:20 a.m.	15 min.	Free Writing with Prompt
9:35 a.m.	5 min.	Break
9:40 a.m.	10 min.	Example of Woven Métissage Story
9:50 a.m.	15 min.	Dialogue: Participants experiences
10:05 a.m.	15 min.	Process for Editing Narratives & How To Weave
10:20 a.m.	30 min.	Small Groups: Read and Weave Narratives
10:50 a.m.	10 min.	Break
11:00 a.m.	20 min.	Small Groups: Reading the Woven Narratives
		Large Group: Weaving the Narratives w/larger group
11:20 a.m.	30 min.	Dialogue: What was learned, how will this be applied
11:50 a.m.	10 min	Closing Circle
12 noon		End

Métissage session scripts

In this next section we offer tips and scripts that you can use verbatim or adapt as it fits for you as a facilitator and your context.

Welcome and overview of métissage

- 1. Create a welcoming space according to the norms and cultural protocols of your setting.** We recommend acknowledging and thanking your hosts and the traditional territory on which your workshop is taking place. For example, welcome to *[insert topic for workshop]*. My name is *[name]* and I am your facilitator. Here's a little about who I am and why I'm doing this work *[include what will be relevant for participants]*.
- 2. If appropriate, offer an opportunity for each person to be seen and heard.** Depending on how much time you have and how many people you are engaging, you can do this individually or in pairs/small groups. For example, let's begin simply by speaking our names into the space. *Note: This is a quick way to acknowledge people in the room, and engage participants. Over the course of the workshop, they will get to know one another on a deeper level.*
- 3. Provide some context about the method.** For example, today, we are going to engage together through the creative practice of métissage. *Note: We suggest that you read a couple of resources about métissage and come up with a description that will make sense in your context.* Today we are going to share our stories and ideas about *[insert topic for workshop]* through métissage.
- 4. Provide a big picture overview of your session.** For example, we will begin with introductions and do some free writing on today's topic. Then we will take a break. After, I will offer an example of a woven métissage story, then we will have some time to talk about it together, before breaking into small groups and interweaving our own métissage stories. At that time, I will give instructions on how to edit and weave narratives. Then we will come back into the large group, read our woven narratives and dialogue after them, before we close the circle and finish at noon.
- 5. Invite participants to co-create brave spaces and spaces of grace.** For example, before we dig in, I would like to say a few words about co-creating

our collective space. In brave spaces, we may feel uncomfortable at times or decide to go beyond our comfort zones and take risks. I recognize the power of the arts to take people to places deeper and more quickly. Some of our content today may be difficult for some so please remember to take care of yourself, however that may look. You are invited to engage over the prompt of *[insert prompt]*. You have the choice to how you will show up as well as how much you choose to challenge yourself. Challenging yourself does not mean opting out, it means that if you choose not to take one part of the activity as suggested, you look for other ways to engage, such as taking on the role of an active observer who can contribute unique insights into the process. In spaces of grace, we accept people however they show up, trusting the process will deepen our understandings and connections. As I said in the big picture overview, dialogue will follow after different points during our workshop to allow us to reflect, question, and share. And I, as your facilitator am always happy to connect after the session as well. So, I just want to highlight that today's workshop is an invitation, and we are co-creating this space together.

Free writing with prompt

Explain the process of free writing and offer a writing prompt. For example, now we are going to take [X] minutes for free writing. Free writing is writing, non-stop, without filtering one's thoughts, for a timed period. It is a way to access creative, and often unconscious, narrative possibilities. I am going to offer a writing prompt. A writing prompt is a few words that serves to focus our writing and can offer inspiration around our *[workshop topic]* today. The prompt is *[prompt]*.

Example of woven métissage story

- 1. Offer an example of a métissage.** For example, now that you have completed your free writing, I would like to offer you an example of a métissage. Could I have (*number of voices in story*) volunteers to read? *Note: prior to workshop you can prepare a metissage script and colour code it for participants to read. See Bishop et al. (2019) for a script with the prompt "The Power of Métissage" (pp. 12–14). Please feel free to use it or create your own.*
- 2. Debrief with participants their experience of the métissage and any insights for their own métissage by using guiding questions.** For

example, what came up for you; either personally or symbolically; regarding the process or stories? Does this give you a sense of what métissage is and how we will now create our own? Any questions before we begin?

Process for editing narratives & how to weave

- 1. Explain the process for editing.** For example, now you are going to have time to edit your own narrative from our free writing session. Please take a moment to re-read for yourself what you have written. Decide what is meant for your own eyes and ears only, and which sections you would feel comfortable sharing out loud. Ultimately you will be weaving your narrative with those of others, so as you are editing, find two or three breaks where you could temporarily pause the reading of your story to enable other people to interweave their own. *Give participants about 10 minutes to do this, then call them back. In other settings, this writing process could take days, weeks, or months! However, for the purpose of a brief workshop, we recommend a short, timed period of free writing.*
- 2. Form participants into small groups and explain the process for weaving.** For example, now, the next step is to work in small groups to share stories, weave them together, and create a woven métissage. Please form into groups of three to five people. *Note: As facilitator, you may have a particular way you like to divide people into groups, or you can let that happen organically.* Once you are in your group, I suggest that you start with each person reading their narrative in its entirety without stopping at the identified breaks. After you have heard each person's complete narrative, you will see where the points of connection are and which sections you might want to juxtapose by placing them next to one another in the reading. In this way, you can decide who goes first, who goes next, and so on until all group members have read all sections of their narratives. Please know that there is flexibility in the structure I offered, and of course, you have the ability to choose a different structure altogether as you create your small group métissage. For example, everyone clear? Any questions? ... Let's begin. I will keep time. We have [X] minutes. I will be calling us back together then, recognizing that this is not about creating a perfect métissage performance, but a starting point for us with our collective métissage. So do your best to draft your métissage for collective sharing within that time.

Small groups: Read and weave narratives

As the facilitator, we suggest that you go around and check in with groups to see if they have any questions and inquire whether they understand the process. *Note: Small group conversations can provide rich opportunities for dialogue and deepening relationships. As such, we have found it helpful to allow a longer period (e.g. 20 to 30 minutes) to complete this weaving and some participants inevitably ask for more time. However, we need to keep to the time to ensure the full completion of the workshop.* What we know, that the participants might not know, is that there is great value in sharing the woven narratives in the group setting. If groups use up the time trying to create a perfect piece, they will not have the experience of that group sharing.

Large group: Weaving the narratives with larger group

- 1. Establish team order.** For example, now we are going to share our stories with everyone. Each group will go one after the other. Which team would like to go first? And next?
- 2. Set the rules for sharing.** For example, before we begin, I invite you to take the time to listen, really listen with open ears and open heart to our stories. As all stories are gifts to be received. To prepare and open ourselves to listening, I invite us to take in three shared breath, and then the first team will begin. One note, often people want to applaud after a story is shared; however, I invite us to hold any urge to applaud until the end, so that we can really listen and allow the flow of the stories to emerge. Also, consider what aesthetic choices you may want to make, for example, you may want to take a pause before the next reader, or not. You could choose to interrupt, to show the interruptions we have in our daily lives. You may decide to add in a gesture, a sound, or no sound at all. So, to recap, we will listen, hold applause, and make aesthetic choices. Any questions?
- 3. Begin the large group métissage.** For example, okay, we will start with three shared breaths as a group, it is helpful to keep your eyes open and look around to stay in rhythm with the group. Once we are finished our three shared breathes, the first team will go. Let's begin. *Note: As a facilitator, model breathing in and out three times. Then look to the team that is to begin first. Nod for them to begin if they are unsure.*

Dialogue: What was learned, how will this be applied

Allow a pause; notice the shift in energy; quietly engage.

- 1. Enable people to reflect personally and then in pairs.** For example, I invite you to take a moment and let this sink in... Next, please turn to the person beside you and share one thing that struck you or that you noticed about our métissage. This could be anything about what we did or what we said...
- 2. Invite a larger group discussion and utilize guiding questions to bring it back to the purpose of the workshop.** For example, the purpose of today's workshop is to *[Insert topic]*, and now we are going to bring it back to the group as a whole. What came up for you, either personally or symbolically, thorough our process or stories? Considering any of the stories you heard, do you have any questions for us individually or collectively? What do you see are the possibilities in how you might apply this? Anything else that needs to be said before we wrap up?

Closing circle

- 1. Wrap up the workshop.** For example, to wrap up our workshop for today, I invite each of us to speak one word in the space capturing a key insight or action today around *[Insert topic for Workshop]* resulting from our métissage.
- 2. Thank participants and offer any final comments.** For example, thank you for your insights, courage, care, and commitment...

Authors' note

We hope that you enjoy facilitating a métissage experience, and discover the power of this method. We acknowledge that this article was based on the work first published in *Engaged Scholar Journal* 2010; in accordance to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.ast>

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The Aesthetic, Collective, and Creative Power of Participatory Theatre to Address Women's Struggles

BY SHAUNA BUTTERWICK AND JAN SELMAN

Theatre, women and change

At the time of this writing, women appear to be both gaining and losing. Long hidden oppressions are being made more public, possibly receiving more airtime than previously, however political, media and opinion leaders, and their followers, continue to engage with emboldened and aggressive racism, bigotry and sexism. Theatre has a role to play in feminist activism, not only in resistance to these aggressions, but in giving power to those most silenced. When theatre processes and forms are participatory, we can strengthen cooperation and imagine alternate, more just futures.

Background: Community-based theatre

Community-based theatre, also known as theatre-for-development, applied theatre, and popular theatre, is an embodied art form used to build community and take action on social issues (Prentki & Selman, 2000). It is particularly useful for exploring difficult topics including injustice, personal health, violence, reconciliation, equity, and colonialization (See for example Bamuturaki, 2016; Chinyowa, 2008; Esmail, 2015; Fink, 2011; Miller, 2018). Worldwide, there are many approaches to using theatre as a creative and disruptive strategy in community. Several initiatives built foundations that inform today's practices of theatre for change, including:

1. radicalizing practising theatre artists and providing them with play-making tools to highlight contradictions and inequities (See for example Bappa & Etherton, 1983; Natale, 1985);
2. inventing collective creation and play making strategies that put actors among communities that are underrepresented on our stages, bringing less-heard stories to public audiences (See for example Barnet, 1987);
3. developing several forms of participatory theatre, including Forum (Boal, 1979) and Playback (Fox, 2007), and others (See for example Filewod's account of Catalyst Theatre's contributions, 1987);
4. moving away from using finished plays as ways of messaging to audiences (theatre *for*) towards community participation in theatre making, using

theatre methods as a process of community building, embodiment, analysis and practice (theatre *with*).

These developments occurred in parallel with, and often because of, changing concepts and approaches in adult education and popular education movements regarding how positive change can happen. Adult educator Ross Kidd (1979, 1985) played a key role in building artists' and educators' insights into how theatre for education and development could shift from outsider-owned messaging to community-owned, insight-building interactions. Disrupting who owns the art form and inventing ways to increase meaningful participation and engagement by citizens and communities through art practice are key components in the development of how activists use theatre art.

To be most potent, particular methods and forms must grow out of specific community conditions and contexts. Where methods are shared, collected and re-applied in differing contexts, they should be radically adapted to encompass new conditions, and particularly to respond to and represent differing popular cultures. For example, an early leader in the popular theatre movement, Sistren, a Jamaican women's popular theatre collective founded in 1977, used plays, workshops, and other activities, depending on the needs of particular projects, to illuminate many women's hidden experiences. (Ford-Smith, 1995). While Sistren sometimes created large multi-storied musical shows, a Readers Theatre strategy was employed in an oral history project that explored the personal histories of four women teachers, representing different races, geographic areas, generations and disciplines (Adams et al., 1998). Weaving together the four voices created an opportunity for the contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities of these women's lives to be revealed. Currently, in Kenya, Ignite Afrika, an organization that fosters the arts in community, in partnership with Old Stories in New Ways, a Canadian/Kenyan creation-research team, adapts beloved and ubiquitous traditional stories, exploring the stories behind the story and performing adapted versions to illuminate current day issues (Selman & Battye, 2016).

How community-based theatre works

At best, community-based theatre-making enables embodied and collaborative critical examination and creative engagement with dilemmas and conflicts. While practitioners use a variety of theatrical methods, these are, at their heart, participatory, involving community members telling stories in a way that honors their truths and meanings and offers them up so they can be heard.

This use of theatre has the potential to interrupt binary thinking (of us and them) allowing deeper understanding of complexity and multiple perspectives. The notion of rehearsal for action is at the core of the power of activist community-based theatre. Theatre is used as a process for investigating our lives and defining, testing and taking actions. We do this by telling stories, analyzing what those say about our living conditions as we create drama, and 'playing' with possible interventions that can address the problems that emerge – and all this from the perspective of the community, *not the view of outsiders*. When we choose to perform, we select and use theatre structures to heighten key events and moments that express a condition and need for action. We create plays that leave questions in the air for audiences to ponder. We can take on characters and roles that are based in story and autobiography, but are fictionalized. We identify common challenges, and find commonality of experience. We build communities of action. In that communally-created location, we can know and see more easily what's to be done than if we were just trying to think through the issues on our own. Using the structure of theatre-making can bring a deliberate, thoughtful and very active attention to problems.

In our experience, taking on roles and characters and acting out certain problems and struggles can create a space for courage that might not be present otherwise. In theatre a double consciousness can emerge. Audience and actors can connect emotionally with characters, identifying with them, but also can assess their behaviours as well as the conditions giving rise to those behaviours. We can see how diminishing external oppressive forces can be. Theatre can be a space where we can start to play with being whole again, imagining and playing with possible different stories, actions and endings.

Two stories

Below, we offer two stories about using theatre within women's efforts for change. One focuses on challenges in Canadian women's communities while the other is situated in Kenya. While strategies varied, both involved a high degree of community member participation. The first highlights participant experience within theatre making, in a project that used theatre to express issues within activist feminist work and discover ways forward. The second describes a participatory theatre project which asks audiences to find ways to take action on issues affecting women's rights.

In 1998, we, Jan and Shauna, created a project with a group of people that used popular theatre as the methodology for exploring feminist coalition

politics, particularly the challenges and risks groups face in creating respectful engagement across differences of race, class, and sexuality, among others. We called the project *Transforming Dangerous Spaces*, or TDS (Butterwick & Selman, 2003). With a research grant, we hired two graduate students: Sheila James and Carolina White, both active in popular education and justice movements. The team of four recruited ten more women who all worked in some way with equality-seeking organizations. Having four facilitators involved meant that each of us could also be a participant at times and tell some of our own stories. Of the total of fourteen, there was a mix of Women of Colour and White women, Lesbians and cisgendered women, and the ages ranged from early 20s to late 40s. We met over three months for three hours every Saturday morning at a local neighborhood centre. In the first few weeks, we got to know each other and became familiar with theatre exercises which engaged with our bodies, emotions, and minds. Then we used various theatre processes, including sculpturing and story making through image, to explore, tell, perform and analyze our coalition stories. At the end of these three months, the wider feminist community was invited to join us for a day-long performative workshop. The first half was devoted to sharing and playing with some of these exercises and in the second half, we showed and discussed scenes we had developed from our 12 weeks together, including the one below.

Shauna's story

One of the scenes grew out of a particular coalition I had joined which was advocating for high quality women's employment training programs. Membership included women running mostly community-based programs. In that coalition a few of us, including myself, took turns in leading our group discussions and initiatives. One of the concerns raised in our group discussions was that the impact of race on women's experiences of government programs and entering the Canadian labour market was not well addressed by many programs. We sought and received some government funds to undertake a consultation process which was led by Women of Colour coalition members who met with women in local communities around the province of BC. At one of these meetings, a significant event occurred challenging the coalition's sense of solidarity and my own skills in dealing with conflict. I had not attended the event but the women involved contacted me to help sort out the issue. I was unable to help reach a mutually beneficial resolution. I have faced similar challenges in other coalitions when conflict arose between women, often based on race, class and sexuality. Below is a fictionalized scene that grew out of my coalition stories which we played at the day-long workshop.

The Performance

SCENE: Three Women of Colour sit facing each other, chatting. Just as the meeting is called to order, a White woman arrives, nodding to several of others she recognizes. As the agenda is outlined, one of the original three women indicates she is not comfortable having a White woman present because Women of Colour needed a safe space to tell their stories. There is surprise and discomfort amongst the group. The White woman is shocked and upset with the request and states that she understood the purpose of the meeting was to explore issues facing minority and immigrant women. She is an immigrant woman who, furthermore, is working with an immigrant serving agency. The woman asking her to leave asserts that Women of Colour have particular experiences that need to be explored. The White woman reiterates her right to be there. Someone suggests that there be a vote on the matter. The scene stops there. As a reader coming to this story, what thoughts do you have about ways to intervene?

Before the day-long event, the TDS group created this scene and I played the role of the White woman. At the performative workshop, I felt a distinct emotional shift; my heart was pounding and there was a kind of roaring in my ears. I was in a new place with retelling and performing the story to a new audience. It reminded me of some key principles of popular theatre we had learned in our TDS gatherings, including coming to each scene, no matter how many times it had been played, with a sense of natality or newness. In the TDS project, we learned how essential it was to develop empathy for the characters, to explore their motivations and desires, and avoid stereotyping or creating caricatures. With a new audience bearing witness to the story, my empathy for both women *and myself* deepened. I too had felt discomfort when, in other circumstances, I was asked to leave meetings so Women of Colour could speak among themselves. I also was growing in my understanding of racism and why Woman of Colour sought their own spaces. At the time this happened, others in the coalition were turning to me to resolve this conflict which I endeavored to do by myself, rather than engaging in a collective exploration. I sought to have both women's needs met but failed; no solution was found and deep fractures developed within our coalition.

This particular moment in my coalition history has stayed with me for years. Through popular theatre, a space was created where my private struggles became public, as I joined with others exploring what led to the crisis and some

possible interventions. And it is a cautionary tale about the complexity of conflict and the importance of staying curious in order to develop empathy and to seek solutions.

Jan's story

For some years I've partnered with remarkable community-based artists in Kenya. Responding to earlier projects, and partner organizations' and artists' insights, in 2018 we decided to develop a highly participatory theatre outreach event under the umbrella title, *Theatrical Interactions for Change*. It was created by the company: Davis Abuga, Onyango Daisy Awuor, Belinda Khama, Horace Okal, William Okumu, Sheilah Onguo, and Collins Ouma. William Okumu is Assistant Director and Dramaturg, Jan Selman is the Director, and Raphael Omondi is both Researcher and Producer. It is presented by Ignite Afrika, funded in 2018-19 by University of Alberta and SSHRC (Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada). The project continues to this day. Scenes grew out of participatory research grounded in story-based theatre workshops in urban and rural settings. The actors are also members of these communities and their own experiences as well as previous community-based theatre projects also inform us as we create and perform. This is one of the scenes, developed based on a cast member's experience. At each animation point you might like to think about what you would say to the character Sheilah, if you were in the audience.

The Performance

SCENE: Four people plant rice: Daisy rushes through her work; Collins works as little as possible, preferring to entertain with funny songs; Sheilah and Horace work side by side; they are friends and she is clearly the best at rice planting.

Back story: Sheilah, 15 years old, is a good planter who supports her young brother and sister through day labour. They are orphans.

Action: It is the end of the working day, the Farm Manager arrives. When he arrives, all line up to be paid. Collins' work is poor; he is paid and told not to come back. Daisy is very attractive and flaunts this; the Farm Manager lusts, doesn't check her work, pays her, and watches her walk away. Once he can get the Manager's attention, Horace is paid and told to return early tomorrow; he leaves. Sheilah is left. She expects to be paid. But he stalls her. He looks at her work and finds it wanting, she protests, but he says she should stay and redo it if she wants to be paid.

ANIMATION 1. Dismayed, Sheilah goes to the audience and asks:
How can I get him to pay me?

Her objective: to get paid for the work she has done.

She tries audience advice, but it fails.

So she asks the audience for more ideas. She uses the advice she receives as precisely as possible.

She makes a little progress with these strategies from the audience, but now the Farm Manager comes on to her. He wants sexual favours.

ANIMATION 2. After this sexual come on, she goes to the audience with more urgency. She asks: What should I do, how can I get the money and get away. Her objective: to explore how to stay safe if possible, yet be paid.

She builds the conversation:

I need the money (little brother and sister at home without food)

He owes me, I did a good job.

I'm afraid of him (but I need the money).

Who can help me?

By now the audience is emotionally engaged with her. They propose a lot of ideas. Some focus on ways to convince the Farm Manager, some on calling the other workers to come back, some on ways to have it all – get the money then run, some on her safety and the urgent need to escape right now, some say hunger is nothing compared to the danger she is in.

ANIMATION 3. After she fully leaves the situation, safe if not paid (it varies each time), she returns to the audience, time has passed. She asks: what can we do so this does not happen to anyone else ever again? Audience members talk about what their community has and what it needs to protect young women.

Sheilah Onguo (2020), who brought this story to the group and plays the central role, says “I think that after all that happens to our young girls and women there is still nothing for us. We need to know our rights and help each other be protected. They neglect us because we are ladies.” Thinking about the experience of performing her story, she says,

When I share my story and what I feel about it with the audience and get their responses I feel free and relieved from those times. At the same time, I find myself happy because even though I am passing on things that are so difficult, I know I have people who love me and understand my situation.

After the play, a remarkable number of audience members revisit this scene, observing that in Kenya, this scene could be re-located to too many situations – hotel service jobs, baristas, applying for work, and more. It is all too familiar.

In each setting, we work with local organizations to select from our collection of scenarios and fashion an event for the particular circumstance. During the performance, we also make a “Scene-on-the-Spot” based on audience suggestions. Sometimes a post-performance discussion leads to a new scene. The primary intention of our theatre event is to facilitate discussion and debate on actions that communities can take at the local level. Local partners include development, education and citizen groups. The play is highly interactive – audience members advise characters about how to overcome challenges, and in so doing, share and test knowledge and strategies with their neighbours. So far, themes and issues we tackle include: apathy in the face of corruption, challenging tribalism and clannism, blocks to community development, blocks to improving environment and health risks, sexual exploitation, and how ‘bystanders’ can become ‘allies’ in supporting child and women’s safety. Actors switch languages in response to the particular community’s preferences. In all cases, the questions and stories are posed through characters who resemble the audience, and possible answers and strategies emerge from audiences seeking ways forward for characters that are like themselves, characters that find themselves in apparently intractable conditions.

Principles of community-based theatre

Using theatre as a way to engage with community requires an understanding of some key principles as well as well-developed facilitation skills. First, understanding the specific context in which a process is to be used is essential (Butterwick & Selman, 2003b). Second, this art form is not about following a recipe or set of fixed steps because, from start to finish, this approach is participatory and exploratory. Issues or outcomes should not be predetermined. The whole purpose of community-based theatre is, in an inclusive way, to create opportunities for members of groups and communities to participate in genuine and meaningful ways and to create performances that honor complex cultural contexts and enable audiences to undertake analysis and problem solving. Participation by those silenced and marginalized by racism, sexism and other forms of violence is essential to reaching these goals. Participation in community-based theatre often requires people to tell difficult stories and use their bodies. Skillful facilitation must be undertaken with

care and assessment of participants' discomfort. Theatre making requires an appreciation for the differing levels of discomfort and risk found within any group or community; what might be safe for one person can be risky for another. Rather than assume or aim to make a process or space 'safe', facilitators must have a finely tuned sense of the complex mix of risks and benefits and move towards more equitable risk taking. Challenging injustices is risky and dangerous even in a performed scene. Along with a keen sense of risk, facilitators must be able to radically change plans and enter new territory.

At the same time, we choose theatre because it can disrupt received truths. It employs the power of story and builds empathetic engagement between audiences and characters. It can offer a safety valve for discussing difficult and sensitive subjects; in interactive forms, audiences can advise or critique characters in ways they may not or should not speak with their family members or their neighbours. Theatre is live and the audience has an opportunity to engage with a performance and with one another. It can build and strengthen the community. It can embrace contradiction and contain and recognize differing points of view. But it is also fun! Or it can be. Facilitators and theatre makers need to find a balance of fun and deep digging, of play as well as the demanding work of delving into challenging topics. These creative tensions belong in the processes of making theatre as well as in the performances we offer.

Invitations and reminders

In closing, we encourage others to use participatory theatre and theatre making in their feminist activism and advocacy work. If you have limited experience with these processes, we recommend that you partner with community-based theatre practitioners. You can also access further reading and attend community workshops and performances. Explore what popular theatre training is available in your local area. Workshops offering theatre training are sometimes linked to conferences. On a smaller scale, theatre games can be used to lead into discussions and to animate topics within meetings and classes. As we noted, skillful facilitation is necessary, so think about what capacities exist inside your group, and when you work with others, pay your theatre artists. We want to highlight a few elements that are central to making the most of the power of theatre processes. First, the development of performances or scenes are grounded in stories told by community members based on their lived realities of conflict and injustice. This is the aesthetic value of community-based theatre, in the sense that it creates space for the sensual world to engage

with the sensate body and to generate affective forces as a result. Second, the theatre processes involve collective creative engagement, as individual experiences are shared and explored with others and collective brainstorming of possible interventions take place. The process fuels curiosity as groups explore what led to a crisis and how might it be addressed. Finally, telling local stories, particularly about women's struggles, with a wider community is disruptive; theatrical action sheds light on taken-for-granted or private troubles. Bringing human stories that are ignored or that are hidden behind statistics or generalities into public view is foundational to transformation and change.

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5

M O D U L E F I V E

**THE ART OF
FEMINIST
FACILITATION**

Six Reflections on Feminist Aesthetic Practice

BY CATHERINE ETMANSKI

Find a way to make beauty necessary; find a way to make necessity beautiful.

~ Anne Michaels (Canadian Poet and Novelist)

Bread for all, and roses too!

~ Women Garment Workers Marching in New York

In this module, I outline six reflections drawn from my own feminist aesthetic practice, shared with the intention of supporting you to take up creative, arts-based practices in your work to bring about radical change and gender justice in your own contexts. These lessons are based on my work using a range of arts-based methods, especially: popular theatre, narrative métissage, and photovoice. (For further resources, see: Bishop et al., 2019; Clover et al., 2017; Etmanski, 2007a; 2007b; 2014; and Etmanski et al., 2013.)

In the spirit of supporting readers who are new to arts-based practices, I came to these practices first as an educator, community organiser, activist – and then as a researcher. This shift was transformative and empowering for me. I distinctly recall the period of coming to understand that research was not only about quantitative surveys, the scientific method, or even standard qualitative methods; I recall feeling empowered when I realized that research could be just as creative, engaging, and action-inspiring as my work as an educator and community organizer. Only later, as I began deepening my practice with theatre-based methods, did I also begin developing an identity as an artist. Through this transformation, I came to better appreciate that statistics, facts, and science alone would not bring about change; we also need to reach people at the heart level. Herein lies the power of the arts.

Six reflections on feminist aesthetic practice

Recognizing that creative methods held the potential to engage people's full selves (body, mind, and spirit) and spark a different kind of dialogue for change, I turned to theatre-based research in my doctoral work (Etmanski, 2007b). As an adult educator, I have since deepened my learning about creative, arts-based practices through my own and my students' trials and errors, as well as through collaboration with colleagues and the wisdom passed on from mentors. Over the years, I have come to use the word creative in some contexts, due to the

resistance or fear the word *art* evokes in some readers (more on that below). Despite perceived and real obstacles to engaging through the arts, I remain curious about how we can tap into our collective creative potential to address today's complex challenges. In this section, I explore how including creative and arts-based methods can offer a range of possibilities for promoting embodied, sensory experiences; building empathy with multiple audiences; and opening new ways of seeing, being, doing, and knowing.

Reflection 1: Creativity and the arts are not inherently participatory or progressive.

First, it can be helpful to understand that creative or arts-based methods are neither necessarily nor inherently action-oriented, democratic, or participatory in and of themselves. The extent to which they meet these criteria is determined by the way in which they are facilitated. To be effective methods for change, like other methods or practices, it is helpful when they are embedded within a larger community-oriented and decolonising framework, one that fosters emancipatory change and promotes human flourishing.

Reflection 2: Value the process and the product.

At times, a creative intervention will lead to a final arts-based product (such as a theatre performance or art installation). In such cases, artistry and aesthetics become a relevant consideration, particularly for feminist works that do not wish to be dismissed as inferior and thus, lose the power of their messaging (i.e. Clover, 2012). However, not all feminist creative processes need to focus on a final product. At times, a collective creative process may serve solely to build relationships, empathy, and trust among participants, all of which are helpful in efforts to promote gender justice and radical change. In such cases, producing a product for public viewing may not be necessary. Or sometimes, that public display need only be empowering for participants and it is not essential that it be understood or appreciated by a wider audience. When making a decision on whether your creative intervention will lead to a final product and the quality of that product, consider your goal, intended outcomes, desired impact, and audience. When it comes to research, creative or arts-based methods can be included at any point in the research process, from problem or question-definition, to data collection, analysis, knowledge mobilization, and action.

Reflection 3: Value artists' expertise.

Since I did not start out as an artist, I have learned the hard way that the idea of researchers or educators, activists, community developers, and so on merely *using* the arts can sometimes be perceived as offensive or distasteful to some professionally trained artists who have spent a lifetime developing their artistry, skill, and craft. Mason (2005), for example, stated:

I find 'artistic action researches' presented at educational conferences unpalatable because researchers seem to be manipulating artistic symbols, media and techniques, and lack the necessary skills to craft aesthetic-qualitative products. (p. 577)

This sentiment was reflected by some artists I have encountered who have been dismissive of community arts; likewise, some students I have taught have suggested an untrained professional would not be permitted to conduct surgery or perform psychotherapy, so what might this mean for untrained artists? For people like me who have not come to these practices as an artist first, it is useful to understand that there is a range of different skills and knowledges associated with the arts, just as there is with education, research, community development, or strategic activism. When planning to facilitate a creative or arts-based process, consider whether you may need to complete additional training in specific arts-based practices (e.g. training in participatory theatre, as I did) or at least seek guidance from individuals who have more skill in a specific media than you do. There may even be times when it is helpful to hire an artist to support you in your work. In this way, not only do you honour the art form, you also ensure the perceived lack of aesthetic quality or artistry does not detract from the potential to mobilize change.

Reflection 4: Transformation takes many forms.

Often, we hear reference to the arts as means of promoting transformative learning experiences. Transformation is such a widely-used term that I have given some thought to how the arts are helpful in this regard. First, I have noticed that creative or arts-based experiences often generate what we call in adult education "ah-ha" moments of insight. Creative or arts-based methods can bring to the surface pre-conscious or previously unarticulated concerns and desires (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006). These insights may seem

non-linear or irrational, yet they are rooted in the symbolism inherent to the arts. As such, through bypassing rational defense mechanisms or censorship of the brain (Jackson, 2002) and revealing insights straight from the heart, working with symbolism can support greater self-awareness. When facilitated skillfully, creative and arts-based methods can also build relationships, trust, empathy, and a sense of community through enabling people to share insights with others, all of which can support transformation.

When drawing upon symbolism to co-create meaning of a shared experience, any creative medium can be adapted to become a research method. Different researchers-as-facilitators will use their own techniques for teasing out the symbolic connections between the experiential activity and the topic of inquiry. We have found that the most straight-forward way to co-create meaning in a group setting is move through an experiential learning process of discussing what actually happened in the activity, to what this could symbolically mean in the context of the topic under investigation, and how this collectively articulated knowledge could inspire action.

Next, as is understood by grassroots activists, corporate marketing teams, and politicians of all stripes, creativity and the arts are also central to communicating powerful messages. Creative methods can therefore promote transformation through their educative, political, or consciousness-raising effect.

Finally, in the context of corporatization of the arts, rather than seeing creativity as a human attribute or birthright, many people have early wounds related to their perceived deficiencies and lack of artistry (think of teachers, parents, or other influential figures who told you that you can't sing, can't dance, or can't make money through the arts). With skillful facilitation, you have the potential to enable people to re-engage with creative methods in a way that supports them in healing those early wounds. As with any transformational experience, a core element of skillful facilitation is to ensure that people are not forced to participate. As an educator, I recognize that people have different comfort zones. I invite people to identify their own edges and choose to what extent and how they wish to push up against them.

Reflection 5: Creative and arts-based methods are deceptively powerful.

On the surface, engaging with creative or arts-based methods may be perceived

as fun, lighthearted, and playful. But make no mistake: the arts are powerful methods – more powerful than one might initially imagine. Although deep, personal, or emotional responses may not *necessarily* emerge through a creative or arts-based practice, should you engage with the arts, it is best to be prepared for a range of emotions or mental states to emerge – from: curious, to energized, joyful, sad, excited, confused, embarrassed, bored, or angry. At times participants' emotional responses can be powerful, overwhelming, and even unexpected – no matter how many times you may have articulated that they might react strongly to the process.

As educators, facilitators, and researchers, we have an ethical responsibility for the welfare of our participants. I therefore encourage you to be well-prepared to respectfully, compassionately, and professionally support individuals and groups through difficult emotional responses. I suggest that you check that people are giving their voluntary, informed, and ongoing consent to engage with you, offer validation for their experiences and emotions, and provide support should they need to walk away. We never know the extent of one another's wounds, but in cases where you know you are working with people who have experienced trauma, we recommend that you have a counsellor or culturally appropriate support person present or available on easy referral. As mentioned previously, symbolism can go straight to the heart and catch people off-guard, bringing up memories they may have forgotten or intentionally pushed aside for their own survival.

Reflection 6: Creativity and the arts are more than utilitarian tools.

Although creative methods have all the benefits mentioned above, and can furthermore serve a purpose of promoting problem-solving or stimulating out-of-the box thinking, consider that beauty and aesthetic form need not have a secondary utilitarian purpose. In the face of neo-liberal corporatization and globalization, it can be difficult to remember that the arts have their own place and intrinsic value in societies the world over. We're working for both bread and roses, as the opening quote suggests. Moreover, creative or arts-based methods are not simply tools; they are infused with their own meaning and traditions and offer new ways of revealing the world to those who choose to engage with them.

Concluding thoughts

Having learned what is possible for creative and arts-based methods in feminist aesthetic practice, it is helpful to keep the bigger picture in mind. That is: in the face of increasingly complex global challenges and gender injustices, we can no longer rely solely upon the same strategies that maintain the status quo. We need to find new possibilities for collectively envisioning a more just and compassionate future and learning our way forward. Creativity and the arts offer us many possibilities for doing just that.

Author's note

The reflections I share above were first delivered as part of a lunchtime talk at the University of Victoria. I have since repurposed this talk for different occasions, and published it with some additions about the artist's worldview from my dear friend and colleague, Kathy Bishop. I would also like to thank Darlene Clover, Budd Hall, and David Diamond for sharing their insights with me. These lessons have been adapted and reprinted here with permission from Hilary Bradbury at AR+ and were originally published in another guidebook called, "Resources for self and community transformation" (See full reference below, Etmanski & Bishop, 2017). This guidebook is another accessible, practical, and usable tool for scholars, practitioners, students, and community activists alike. It's available online at <https://actionresearchplus.com/action-research-book/>. I encourage you to download a copy and take a look!

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What I Wish I'd Known Then: My Three Top Tips for Engaging 'Vulnerable' Women in Arts-Based Research

BY NIC DICKSON

Throughout my adult life I have worked with so-called vulnerable groups in various roles, including as a social researcher, community artist and adult educator. Through this engagement, I have learnt to view vulnerability as an 'amorphous concept', which is often quite meaningless to how research participants view themselves (van den Hoonaardan 2019, p. 3). For my PhD study, I chose to work with women who could be considered acutely vulnerable, as all were survivors of childhood sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and recent homelessness. In this module, I reflect on my experiences of facilitating a collaborative, arts-based research study with nine 'vulnerable', yet extremely powerful, young women.

Please note that for some readers the content may be difficult; although no reference is made explicitly to the participants' abuse histories, the trauma they endured is seen to impact on their ability to fully engage in the study.

Why art, research and adult learning?

I understand arts-based research to be a qualitative approach in which some form of art-making is employed as the primary mode of systematic inquiry (McNiff, 2011). Arts-based research can include all artistic disciplines, from dance and drama to music and the visual arts. The artistic approach is usually linked to the practitioner's interests and strengths. In my case, I chose to employ the visual arts as I have always been a keen visual artist. In my late teens, I led art and photography groups when volunteering at a mental health charity. In my twenties, I trained as a social researcher and continued to work with what were considered vulnerable and marginalized groups, developing my qualitative research skills in order to capture lived experiences. I now practice as a qualitative researcher, adult educator and community artist. Arts-based researcher Patricia Leavy (2015) argues that there is a certain synergy between art and qualitative research, as in both the practitioner aims to illuminate something about the world which they chose to study. I recognize this synergy in my own work and see how the two complement each other. I would add that as a feminist adult educator, I believe it is important to create an environment where participants can connect, develop relationships and have learning

the sessions were sometimes surprising, behaviours unpredictable and the learning took unexpected turns. I would like to share my experiences for those planning to engage similar groups in arts-based adult learning and/or research. These may not be universally applicable but I hope they are helpful in assisting practitioners to reflect on and shape their approach.

TOP TIPS

1. DO: begin with a session plan but be ready to modify or even drop it!

Before commencing the fieldwork, I became increasingly concerned that my skills as an artist-facilitator would not be sufficient. Leavy (2015) argues that arts-based researchers do not necessarily need formal training in their chosen art but can begin where they are and learn as they go. However, I wanted to present as an arts-based researcher and educator, able to facilitate a process that was robust and well structured. I was able to shadow a community arts organization in order to observe the work they undertook with marginalized groups. As a participant/observer I noted the pace, the materials, the outcomes and outputs of their work. From this experience, I went on to create detailed lesson plans. I designed warm-up activities and produced examples of artworks in various materials including acrylic paint, ink, pastel, pencil, wire, plasticine and clay. I practiced my craft on family and friends, and through these carefully planned steps, I felt ready to conduct fieldwork.

In reality, my plans did not work out quite as I expected. We did explore art materials and experiment with various techniques but the anticipated learning outcomes were unattainable. This was because I had not fully appreciated the process of recovery and the impact of trauma on the women in my study. Every aspect of their lives was affected, from the psychological strain of accessing the venue via public transport, to the physical pain experienced when attempting an art activity. It took time for me to understand the barriers to participation and appreciate the preferences of individuals in the group. I learnt to adapt the session and to curb my expectations, slowing down the pace of facilitation to one activity per session (with rest breaks) and providing alternative options for those who were not ready or able to take part in the planned sessions.

My first 'top tip' for undertaking arts-based research in an adult education framework is to prepare and plan, but be cognizant that when working with any community, individuals will have their own agendas and interests which will be shaped by personal histories and outside influences.

2. DO: set boundaries – establish why visual art is being created and how it will be used

Being invited to create visual art can hold multiple meanings for a participant. The women involved in my study indicated that in the past, they had been encouraged by support staff to use visual art to express emotions and to communicate that what could not be put easily into words. A number had tried art therapy sessions during their time in psychiatric institutions and understood the potential therapeutic release of this form of non-verbal communication. As the facilitator of the group, I was at pains to stress that the purpose of the art activity was to learn new techniques and 'play' with different media, in a relaxed space where we could enjoy the creative process. Through their engagement, I hoped to explore the relationship between arts-based adult learning and the perceived recovery process of young women who had experienced trauma and abuse. The purpose of the research was communicated to the participants during the course of the study. It was also stressed that the space was safe because it was in the charity building where staff were on hand, not because it was a safe space to discuss abuse histories, or disclose information that could be potentially triggering for others. This was an exploration of adult learning, not therapy.

To ensure the safety of the space, I utilized the approach used by the charity group worker, who told me that group rules were established at the beginning of any given project. These included respecting the opinions of others, being kind to one and other, valuing each other's personal space, and not sharing stories which could cause discomfort. Usually, this was written up on a flip-chart but I decided to create an art piece with the young women to capture the group rules in our first session together. We constructed a mural, using chalk pastels and sharpies (See Fig. 4). They were encouraged to doodle their names and free-draw patterns on a large sheet of paper, covering the table. The women were then asked to add group rules to the mural. This caused lots of laughter whilst the women sketched and discussed the group rules and created a lively atmosphere. I was instructed to draw some of the suggested imagery. The individuals in the group were sometimes unsure how to represent ideas but often forceful in their guidance. Once complete, the mural was pinned to the wall as a reminder of the group purpose and parameters. In interview, a member of staff commented that this was a clever and subtle way to involve the participants in establishing the rules of the group and ensure the space felt safe:

"It's been so cleverly done in art... I was watching their participation in that and their conversation, because it was involving art, [it] seemed to flow much easier than it would have if I was just having a conversation with them."

In the one-on-one interview, the young women spoke of their relief in coming into the space to have fun, learn different art approaches and try new materials, rather than explicitly using art as part of the therapeutic process. It is interesting to note that some participants did use the visual techniques outside of the sessions, creating images and artworks to express how they felt about their lived experiences. These were sometimes shared with me at the beginning or end of our sessions, privately, so as not to upset or trigger other members of the group. Boundaries were understood and maintained throughout.

My second top tip is to communicate with the participants and ensure that boundaries are understood and respected. During the 6-month period, we discussed how the art would be created, how it would be used, who it was for and which audiences should be targeted. By doing so, the process felt participatory and empowering. The young women in the research understood what was being asked of them and how their involvement and creative expression helped me reflect on and capture their experiences.



Figure 4: Section of the group mural in chalk pastel and sharpies (Names obscured).

3. DO NOT: underestimate the time it takes to build rapport and trust

My third and final top tip links to the need to take time to build rapport and sustain relationships with vulnerable groups. The young women in my research did not bring in their personal artworks to show me at the beginning of the process. It took a number of weeks before trust was established, both to share artworks and to reveal aspects of their lives. For some, it took many weeks to even engage in the creative process. One young woman attended the group every week and most times, declined to take part in the activities offered. She sat in the same chair, joining in the conversations, sometimes laughing or joking, but wasn't willing to make art with the group. As the facilitator, this worried me, as I wanted to create an environment for active learning and hoped we would produce artworks for exhibition. When I encouraged her to participate, she replied, "I'll try it later" or "I'm not bothered" and did not engage. Over time, I realized that this was okay, as she was attending and contributing to discussions. At that point in her recovery, this was enough. I learnt to stop comparing her to the other more prolific members of the art group and slowly, she began to participate. In the autumn, following a summer of weekly meetings, the young woman brought in a sketchbook. She concealed the artwork from the other members of the group, motioning for me to view the book under the table. I understood why when I saw the content. Words and images related to her abuse were embedded on the pages. Some had been ripped, scribbled over, destroyed, others were perfect and crisp. In her interview, she explained that she knew her artwork could be triggering for others but wanted to show me she was using the materials and techniques. It had taken over two months for this young woman to trust me enough to share her artwork and reveal glimpses of her past.

A final example I'd like to share is a difficult one, but I am including it for a reason. We had an incident of self-harm during one of the art sessions, where a participant went to the bathroom and cut herself badly with a razor blade. She was taken to the hospital to get the wound treated and as a result she was off for a number of weeks. When she returned, she was welcomed back to the group and I began setting up an art activity, that involved cutting thick paper with sharp blades. When I placed the knife on the table, I hesitated in front of the individual who had just got out of hospital. The group began to laugh and the young woman quipped, "Ha, you better not put that in front of me, you won't know what I'll do with it!" at which the group exploded with laughter. I

was shocked by this and felt vulnerable as the facilitator. I asked, "Are we doing this? Are we laughing about this, is this okay?" The young women assured me it was fine and an important thing to speak about in the group. For the rest of the session we created artworks and the young women led discussions about self-harm as a coping mechanism. Two things came from this experience for me. The first was that through the provision of an informal learning space, where art materials and free expression were encouraged, a positive healing environment was created. The young women seemed to value the opportunity to talk openly about self-harm as they worked with the art materials. It created a space for the feminist ideal of co-learning and collaboration. The second realization was the shifting relationships between those in the group and with me as facilitator. I was learning and growing along with the participants. One commented in the interview that I had shown trust in supplying the young women with blades and treated them as adults who could learn to use sharp tools for creativity and expression. This was important in the development of our relationship, as the following quote illustrates:

"I think it's erm... with the self-harm thing, it's just nice to be trusted with kinda objects, rather than people be like, oh, you can't touch that, you can't touch this. You may cut yourself, you know?"

The relationships and rapport between myself and the adult learners continued to grow. At the end of the process, once artworks had been produced and interviews had taken place, we came together to exhibit. The young women chose to speak at the opening of the exhibition. They presented images from the sessions, detailed how the research process felt and how the opportunity for adult learning had impacted on their recovery. They spoke about the importance of being involved in an academic research and the pride they had in showing other survivors that they could produce such powerful images and artworks. It was humbling and gratifying to hear them speak with confidence and authority.

My third and final top tip therefore is to build time into the research process to allow relationships to develop and trust to grow between the participants and facilitator. Art-making is an activity which makes us vulnerable to criticism. We all carry the fear of 'getting it wrong'. The space has to be welcoming and relaxed; relationships supportive and encouraging. Most importantly, the facilitator must allow participants to engage at a level and pace which is comfortable and sustainable.

And so this concludes my top tips for this work, I hope they are useful. No doubt

more will transpire as I continue to write up my PhD findings and analyze the data. For now, the take home message when undertaking arts-based research, or other arts-based engagement, with vulnerable groups is to try to have fun, allow yourself to laugh and don't expect anything to go quite as planned. As John Law (2004) observes, research is often messy and complex. Add to the mix visual art, learning and recovery, and it can be very messy indeed! Enjoy the process and where possible, share the mess. Together we can establish how to best use arts-based research approaches to engage the most vulnerable of groups.

Although my experience is based on my academic research, these top tips can be applied by anybody who is interested in organizing an arts-based workshop, a community project or a small group activity.

To learn more about Nic's work, please follow her on Twitter @NicMDickson.

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Using Participatory Photography with Marginalised Populations

BY SUSAN M. BRIGHAM

Photographs have the power to arouse emotions, promote deep reflection, and communicate feelings, ideas, and experiences (Brigham et al., 2018). They can be powerful tools to raise awareness of various issues and spark social activism. That is why I value participatory photography. Participatory photography is a collaborative method in which research participants are actively involved in taking photographs to document their lived experiences, tell their stories, explore community needs, and create awareness of their experiences and circumstances within a group, and possibly with a wider audience (Brigham & Kharbach, 2020). I have used participatory photography as a teaching process and as a research approach. The method gives people, who are often not heard in society, a means to express their perspectives, circumstances and the situations they encounter in the world (Brigham et al., 2018). With its reliance on visuals, it crosses language barriers allowing participants to communicate without relying solely on words or a common language. For these reasons, it is a valuable research method when working with refugees and immigrants, including youth.

I share some steps for using the method while reflecting on my own experiences using participatory photography. I have been involved in five participatory photography projects over the past eight years involving immigrant and refugee women and youth in Atlantic Canada with funding from The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) / Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) and internal grants from Mount Saint Vincent University. The steps I discuss include ethical considerations, building your team, recruiting and building a supportive trusting community, photo training and taking photos, and sharing the participants' perspectives in public events. First, I begin by highlighting the feminist perspective of this method.

Feminism

Hierarchies of power and privilege have been reproduced in the family household, in everyday practices, social relations, and in institutional and state policies. Gender influences people's expectations, roles and identities. And because we live not only in a sexist society, but a White supremacist capitalist one, we must acknowledge the intersections of race, class and gender. For

me, a feminist approach helps to understand these intersections in all contexts (e.g. in the classroom, in the workplace, in the processes of migration, etc.) and uncover hegemonic power relations. It emphasizes women's voices, which is the primary goal in my work in community, as a teacher and researcher. The participatory photography method reflects "the principles of feminist theory, specifically that no one is in a better position to study and understand the issues of a group than are the people within that group, and that discovery is best promoted through shared experience" (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004, p. 49).

Ethical considerations

One of the first steps for the researcher and participants is understanding the ethical issues behind photography. A good way to begin thinking about ethics and photography is by having discussions around a book, movie or article that can help highlight some of these ethical issues. An example of a relevant book is *The Boy on the Beach* (2018) by Tima Kurdi. In her book, the author writes about the now infamous photo of the body of her 27-month old nephew, Alan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee washed ashore on a beach in Turkey in the early hours of September 2, 2015. She declares that the photo "smashed my family into pieces" (p. 148) and traumatized the boy's surviving father, Tima's brother, Abdullah. The body of Alan's four-year-old brother, as well as a little girl wearing pink jeans were nearby Alan's body and a little further down the beach was Alan's mother's body. The photographer took photos of the two other children's bodies but those photos did not go viral. The photo depicted the boy's body with his face in the water and the bottom of his shoes in the foreground. Tima explains, "People in the Middle East think that it's a bad sign to see the soles of someone's shoes, and therefore



Figure 1: *The Boy on the Beach* (2018) by Tima Kurdi (Photo by Susan Brigham).

many people believed that his pose conveyed the message that Alan was upset, casting shame on a callous and hostile world” (p. 153). Tima stated, “Within twelve hours, the photo [of Alan] had reached 20 million screens. A handful of initial tweets by refugee advocates and journalists quickly led to fifty-three thousand tweets per hour. The viral tweet changed the entire tone of public conversation about refugees” (p. 154).

The dreadful story behind the photograph of the boy on the beach reminds us of several key points that are critical for anyone using photography as a research method. These are that photographs:

- Have the power to evoke profound emotional responses that vary depending on the viewer.
- Are not objective (What is true in this photo? Who and what were left out of the frame and why? What was altered or modified and why?).
- Are social constructs whose significance resides in “the way the people involved with them understand them, use them, and thereby attribute meaning to them” (Becker, 1998, p. 74).
- Are not accultural (the position of the boy’s feet in the photo was read by some as having specific meaning that a viewer from another culture may not see);
- May take away the dignity of the subject (Alan’s body was not yet identified nor his family notified before the photo was shared) and photography, “despite its inherent mechanical objectivity, manipulates, distorts, and thus re-victimizes the subject in its pitiless formal attention” (Choi, 2018, p. 99).
- May have the power to shift public awareness and opinion and stimulate social action. About the boy on the beach photo, Slovic et al. (2017) declare that this “iconic photo of a single child had more impact than statistical reports of hundreds of thousands of deaths” (p. 640). The authors add, “people who had been unmoved by the relentlessly rising death toll in Syria suddenly appeared to care much more after having seen Aylan’s [sic] photograph” (p. 640).

And finally, the story of this photo reminds us of the ubiquitous nature of taking photos that can be uploaded and shared in an instant on social media, where the dissemination of the digital images are out of the control of the photographer and the subject (and in this case, the deceased subject’s family). These ethical issues require us to consider how photography is a “culturally embedded technology of power” (Prins, 2010, p. 441). Another useful resource

to analyze for ethical considerations is the film *Born into Brothels* (available on YouTube) that raises several complex ethical issues around, for example, working with youth, colonial attitudes, culture, race, class, and gender. Discussions with your research participants could include such questions as: How would you feel if a stranger took your picture or your child's picture without first asking your permission and then walked away without explaining the purpose? If someone posted a photo on social media – does that person still have control over it? Do you think a photo reflects an objective truth? Can you give an example of an image that may be considered fine in one culture but offensive in another? What safety concerns should a photographer keep in mind when taking photos?

Planning your participatory photography research project while considering ethical issues will take time even before beginning to apply for funding – at least several months because research with vulnerable groups is complex.

Funding

While having funding is ideal, it is still possible to conduct a participatory photography project by keeping the project simple. For example, in lieu of having a professional photographer, the facilitator can provide sample photographs from books and magazines and ask participants to compare the different techniques and angles the photographer used, and discuss the qualities that the participants appreciate. Having participants use cellphone cameras if they have their own, or sharing a few cameras may be options (although when sharing cameras, care must be taken to remove the sim/memory cards before handing the camera over to the next participant). Also instead of developing the photographs, to keep costs down the facilitator could print them out on a black and white printer.

Here are the next steps I would recommend:

Building your team

Include people on your team with experience and training in dealing with trauma. In one of our projects, *Social Justice in Focus: Participatory Photography and Refugee Youth* the team hired a professional social worker with experience in working with youth who have experienced trauma, and who herself, like the participants, is a racial minority, which is important as it helps the participants feel better able to relate to and open up to her. This social worker was available

at all times to provide our participants with professional support when needed.

Involve established community partners who have networks in the community early in the research. They can provide critical insights to the research and help shape the research project. Additionally, such partnerships have a broader reach for recruitment and at the culminating event, such as a photo display, community partners can draw on their long-term connections with policy-makers/people in positions of power to ensure policy-makers are present to hear the participants' stories.

Hire a professional photographer to be involved regularly. I have been fortunate to have Sylvia Calatayud – a professional experienced photojournalist, trained arts therapist, and immigrant woman work with me on all my photography projects. If funding is an issue, a photographer might be asked to make one short presentation (as opposed to attending every session) and/or they may be willing to accept an honorarium for their time (negotiated with the photographer).

Recruiting and building a supportive trusting community

If you are doing participatory photography as a research project and you are affiliated with a university you must first go through an ethics process with the university's research ethics board. After getting ethics approval from the university and receiving grant money to purchase cameras and develop film/print out photos, the next step is recruiting participants to be involved in the project. This type of project is very time consuming (with many meetings over several months). To ensure lots of opportunity for discussion and to hear each participant's voice/story at each session, I recommend a minimum of four and a maximum of 10 participants. It is also important when selecting participants that you make them aware of the time involved in these types of projects and get a commitment from them that they will attend the sessions as frequently as possible. If participants indicate that it is unlikely they can attend many of the sessions, it is unfair to ask them to be involved because they would be missing the interactions, discussions and community building in the group and building a trusting community is critical. I would also strongly suggest participants receive some form of compensation for their time, like gift cards for groceries. Compensation for each session may also encourage regular attendance to the sessions.

To build community, at every session in all my projects we did icebreaker activities and games to get to know one another better and develop trust. One good way of having participants introduce themselves is having them choose a photograph from a group of photos laid out on a table. The photos could be of landscapes, animals, flowers, etc. Ask the participants to select one that reflects who they are and introduce themselves using the photo. For example, “I chose this photo of a wolf on a snowy hillside because I am a bit of a loner like the wolf and I have been told I am kind of a cold person.” Community building also involves taking breaks with refreshments, practicing story-telling and developing personal reflection using objects and visuals, and going on field trips.

Photo training & taking photos

Training involves camera operation, photography skills development, photo editing skills, and safety. It also includes discussing power dynamics, the use of cameras in public places (including getting consent by anyone who appears in the photos, being prepared to explain what they were doing, and being safe), and interactions within the group (e.g. develop community standards and review them regularly). The amount of time spent on photo skills will depend on the participants’ previous knowledge, skills, and interest level. In one of my projects with older participants we spent several days learning about focal point, framing, lighting (inside and outside), practicing taking close ups, portraits, action shots, and landscapes, and editing. At every session, we focused on further developing skills and techniques. We provided several photography books, photos from magazines and Sylvia’s personal photo collection to demonstrate techniques, for example, angles, the three parts of a photo, use of light, and so on.

Plan outings to practice the photography skills. In one of my other projects, *Refugees Learning and Storytelling Through Participatory Photography*, we went on field trips and held our workshops in various locations around Halifax, such as the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History where we could practice taking photos of animals and other objects in the exhibits as well as the Junior Bengal Lancers horses grazing in the field next to the museum. We provided bus tickets for participants to get around town, and copies of the photo consent form for when the participants took photos of people.

Assign homework on an agreed upon theme such as ‘my neighbourhood,’ ‘my everyday tasks,’ ‘things I enjoy,’ ‘what I love,’ and others. I asked participants for suggestions or came up with ideas myself.

Developing photos

Be prepared to print out the photos in a timely way. In one of my projects, during a break or an activity, my research assistant would upload photos from each of the cameras, develop them at a kiosk, and bring them back within the hour as 4 x 6 prints. I suggest providing the participants with various storage options, including photo albums, photo boxes (shoe boxes would work), and jump drives (USBs). I have also printed out photos on a regular printer that saved time and money.

Storytelling & thematic analysis

Over many sessions, participants select from their prints the ones they wish to share with others, and arrange and group their own and/or other participants' photos to tell a story or define a theme. In my projects, as each participant shared, other participants and facilitators asked questions and made comments. The professional photographer also helped to highlight the strengths of the photography techniques demonstrated. I have used a projector to project the participants' selected photos on a large screen so that the participant could share their story to the larger group. Participants also used their prints as part of an art project. Using mixed media, paints, glue, scissors, pencil crayons, etc. participants selected their photos to make collages or tell a story.

The feminist approach of this type of research requires a constant dialogue between researchers and participants (Brigham et al. 2018). This is where the group thematic analysis can take place. Most of my projects had a loose boundary around a topic such as migration, social justice, or lifelong learning. Having a broad focus leaves room for participants to develop many smaller



Figure 2: Camera training Participants Zainab and Rebecca (Photo by Fatima Al-habibi).



Figure 3: Sorting photos printed on a regular printer (Photo by Susan Brigham).



Figure 4: Refugee youth practicing public speaking in preparation for public event (Photo by Sylvia Calatayud)

themes. For example, in one of my projects participants talked about the broad theme of social justice and this moved to a smaller theme – the importance of nature and then more smaller specific themes such as growing organic vegetables, and making policies about protecting the environment and not littering. Involving participants in thematic analysis is powerful. This may be facilitated by asking participants at the end of a number of sessions to talk about some of the topics that arose and then asking if they can think of links between them. The facilitator might begin by recalling a few photos that had been shared over the sessions and then asking participants if they recall any other photos that were similar. For example, in one of my projects images of windows came up in several participants' photos, which led to interesting discussions about light, feeling the sun's warmth, seeing stars at night, feeling less confined, and having an escape route. As the participants select their photos for enlargement and write the caption for each photo the excitement builds.

Sharing the participants' perspectives in public events

This kind of arts-based research serves as an advocacy tool to create social change. Having a public showing of the participants' photographs should not come as a surprise at the end of the project; it should be discussed at the beginning of the project with the proviso that if they do not wish to participate in the final showing they are not obligated. How participants choose to present their photos should be up to the participants, although it would be helpful for the facilitator to provide/show examples and suggest they be as creative as they like. For example, for the project involving youth, we asked what talents they have that they would like to include in the event. Each participant chose a talent, which helped them connect with their photos; they decided on dancing, drumming, and reading poetry with music (See Figs. 5 & 6). In a project with

older participants, they wanted a pop-up gallery in a formal space with the photos displayed on easels around the room and a podium and microphone at the front of the room where only one participant who was selected by the participants, spoke about their collective experiences (See Fig.7). In another project, participants shared a script they developed about the themes, which they took turns reading while sitting amongst an audience as the photos were projected onto a screen. Considerations should be given to possible venues (e.g. a community hall, public library, or school gymnasium), materials needed (e.g. framing, display easels), possibly refreshments, who should be invited (e.g. family, friends, policy-makers, politicians, etc.) and how (e.g. invitations sent by email, put on social media) and if media should be invited.

Conclusion

Through this research method there is great potential for learning and social change. That it reflects a feminist approach is beneficial for developing trusting relationships; exploring sexist, racist and classist behaviours and practices; and getting to know one's own subjectivities. The projects have led to some improvements for the refugee communities, raised public awareness,



(above) Figure 5: Youth sharing at Social Justice in Focus event at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Photo by Sylvia Calatayud).

(above left) Figure 6: Youth sharing at Social Justice in Focus event at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Photo by Susan Brigham).

(left) Figure 7: Refugee participatory photography project photo display at Mount Saint Vincent University (Photo by Hairong Liu).

led to some educational resources for preservice teachers, publications and some benefits to individuals, although admittedly, significant policy changes have not yet come to fruition as a direct outcome of the projects. I hope this paper will provide some inspiration and guidance for those adult educators and researchers interested in an arts-informed project that has potential for social change.

Author's note

The team in *Social Justice in Focus: Participatory Photography and Refugee Youth* consisted of (in alphabetical order): Oladayo Afolabi, Research Assistant; Nabiha Atallah, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS); Susan Brigham, Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU); Simone Chia-Kangata, Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition; Louise Hanavan, Project Coordinator; Mohamed Kharbach, MSVU, Research Assistant; April Mandrona, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) University; Hilary Thorne, ISANS; and Ryan Veltmeyer, Youth Art Connection.

The team in *Refugees Learning and Storytelling Through Participatory Photography* consisted of (in alphabetical order): Dr. Catherine Baillie Abidi (Red Cross and now with The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative), Zainab Al-habibi (MSVU), Susan Brigham (MSVU), Sylvia Calatayud (YMCA and MSVU), David Neilsen (MSVU), and Yuhui Zhang (MSVU).

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Good Mind and Heart: Facilitating Indigenous Feminist Aesthetic Work

BY DOROTHEA HARRIS

Uy'skweyul (Good day). My name is Dorothea Harris. My parents are Sandra and William Good from Snuneymuxw First Nation. I also have German and Irish ancestry. I have been raised and taught in Snuneymuxw territory. My children, grandchildren, niece and nephews are Snuneymuxw. It is my responsibility to my Elders (respected older, relatives who carry traditional knowledge), and to the next generations, that guides the work that I do and motivates me to continue this work. I am a guest on Lekwungen, W̱SÁNEĆ and Sc'ianew territory, in Victoria, BC, Canada where I work and live. These are all Coast Salish Nations, and I am also responsible to these communities for the work that I do.

I have been working in the field of social work for many years, with a particular focus on social justice for Indigenous people. I have done a lot of front-line work specializing in mental health and addictions, as well as doing community capacity building in early childhood education and parenting, and in the last several years, I worked with a local First Nation as the Manager of Education and Programs. Currently, I am working at the University of Victoria (UVic) as the Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator, and I am pursuing my Master of Education (MEd) in Leadership Studies at UVic. In my research, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the community work that I have done and the potential that it has for broader applications, some of which I share in my contribution to this Guide.

Context

I experienced many challenges working in the local First Nation's community, all of which were caused, directly or indirectly, by the impacts of settler colonialism. Arvin, Tuck & Morrill (2013) describe settler colonialism as "a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there" (p. 12). In Canada, residential schools were used to remove Indigenous children from their families and communities and 'educate' them for the purposes of assimilation and the eradication of Indigenous epistemologies. These tactics were effective to the extent that many Indigenous communities in Canada have lost their traditional languages, cultural teachings, and/or parenting practices, as well as access to land and

resources. “Western knowledge has been engaged in epistemicide, or the killing of other knowledge systems” (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 6) for hundreds of years in Canada. The killing of traditional knowledge systems, particularly women’s knowledge, combined with racism and discrimination, has resulted in an inordinate number of children being placed in the child welfare system, with 62.7 percent of the children in foster care being Indigenous (Sherlock, 2017).

My work has always been interlaced with these realities. When I worked with adults on the street, suffering from trauma and homelessness, the causalities could often be traced back to their residential school or foster care story. My subsequent work in education in a local First Nation’s community was primarily with children and youth, and their families, which I believed was an opportunity to do more preventative work. Despite being strong culturally, in some respects, this community suffered from the loss of their language – with one fluent speaker; a lack of Indigenous artists and medicine people; and the loss of traditional parenting practices, to name a few of the challenges. At one point, I was told that 60 percent of the families had open child welfare cases. Urbanization served to exacerbate the issues faced by this community, as a small First Nation on a tiny reserve surrounded by the much larger city of Victoria. Regaining and retaining cultural values and practices, that had the potential to breathe health back into the community, was constantly undermined by the pressures of city life and lack of access to a land base that would support a more traditional way of life, such as cedar and food harvesting.

When I began working in the community in 2014, I became very concerned with the amount of active child welfare cases. I was hired to monitor the children’s attendance and success at school, and advocate for their wellbeing, but this was hampered by constant child welfare investigations, apprehensions, displacement of the children from the community, and then reintegration when the parents were once again deemed fit to parent – or sometimes the children didn’t return. All of this was incredibly traumatic for the children, families and community, and disruptive to the children’s education. In order to have children returned to them, the parents often had to attend parenting classes, which had long waiting lists (up to a year wait) and required travelling some distance to attend. I decided to offer parenting classes in the community, both to eliminate barriers, and to create accessibility and safety for the parents who were already feeling assaulted by the child welfare system. At times, this was also preventative, as a parent could demonstrate that they were actively engaged in pursuing positive parenting skills while a case was still being investigated, which



Figure 1: Suzie Thomas, shown here wearing the blanket that she wove, shared that the parenting/weaving program “really helped me get through my difficult times for sure, definitely deep connections within our selves. Very powerful work. I really enjoyed it.” Photo and quote shared with permission.

may result in a case being closed.

At first, I reached out to the local Neighbourhood House, a non-profit agency that specializes in providing support to families. They were able to offer mainstream parenting classes in the community, and while they were extremely accommodating and supportive of the families, there was a cultural disconnect in terms of what constitutes appropriate parenting skills. Much of what was being taught didn’t resonate with the families as it reflected Western middle-class values. “Cognitive imperialism disclaims other forms of knowledge, thus promoting a public discourse informed by racism and colonialism” (Atleo, 2016, p. 36). Many parenting programs are unwittingly engaged in cognitive imperialism through the centering of non-Indigenous parenting practices, which both undermines the reclaiming of traditional Indigenous parenting practices and reinforces the superiority of Western values and norms. Understanding this, I subsequently partnered with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre who provided the community with an Indigenous infant development specialist and cultural coordinator.

The woman who came to work with us is both a leader in the local Indigenous community, holding many traditional teachings and ways of being, as well as an adult educator in the sense that she brings knowledge of traditional practices, such as cedar weaving and Coast Salish (wool) weaving, back to the local communities. “The cultural revitalization work of Indigenous women is a form of critical adult education that interrogates the socio-cultural myths that reduce the horizon of social consciousness and enables social justice and equities to promote societal change and transformation” (Atleo, 2016, p. 36). Embedded in these traditional practices, that

were historically often undertaken by women, are teachings that have been lost or dormant – traditional knowledge about parenting practices and how to carry yourself in relation to your children, family, community, cultural responsibilities, and the land. As she worked with these families, young women (and men), she shared these teachings which were embodied in the work that was being done, and I watched the community shift how they interacted with one another and the children. If someone's weaving was becoming too tight or tangled, for example, she would explain how they were carrying too much stress or anger in their body and their spirit, and then give them ways that they could ground themselves on the land or in culture to work that out of their being, so that they didn't pass it on to the children or one another. She was often teaching what we would call in social work, self-regulation, but it was more than that as she provided physical and spiritual practices that could help the individual to make themselves right again in relation to their own spirit, their family and the community.

I can't overstate the healing work that was done in these parenting/weaving groups (Fig. 1). I watched the transformation in individuals, and the community as a whole, with awe. Outcomes included: improved self-esteem, self-regulation, and parent/child attachment, community healing, as well as a remembering of ancestral knowledge as many of participants 'knew' how to do this work almost immediately. Atleo (2016) talks about survivance, "a unique cultural response by Indigenous peoples wherein critical consciousness counters genocidal contexts by activating traditions, affirming presences, and embracing rights and responsibilities" (p. 37). The parenting/weaving facilitator was engaged in survivance with this community as she brought back cultural weaving practices that counteracted the genocidal impacts of the child welfare system and reinforced the rights and responsibilities of the parents to care for their children.

Practice implications

I have described work that I undertook in a local First Nation's community that had a profound impact on my praxis (the intersection of theory with action), and multiple benefits for the community. "Indigenous pedagogy is one that emerges out of the local context of praxis and, more significantly, among those who use it, there is a sense of ownership: it is our pedagogy because we have shaped it to suit our aims and goals" (Ormiston, 2012, p. 43). While the exact circumstances cannot be replicated, because those teachings were specific to the community, there are principles that may be helpful to someone

who will be teaching or facilitating this type of work. Cultural safety is a common framework that is used to do work in and with Indigenous communities in a good way. In this spirit, I will frame the principles as creating safe spaces for facilitating Indigenous feminist aesthetic work. This work doesn't take place when people don't feel safe or when Indigenous ways of knowing and being aren't respected, so there are many aspects of cultural safety that have to be attended to for this work to happen, as well as attending to cultural protocols.

Consultation

I can't emphasize enough how important consultation is when working in and for Indigenous communities. When I am preparing for this work, I ask whose territory is the work being done on, and who do I need to consult with in order to respect the self-determination of the community and the cultural protocols. This involves community consultation, asking the community what kind of programs or services they want or need, and it often requires permission of a local Chief or Elder to proceed with work on their territory. The community will usually alert you to who you should consult with to receive permission. A Chief or Elder can also guide you to follow particular cultural protocols. It is good to open programs with a territorial acknowledgment, if you are a guest on the territory, and an opening prayer by an Elder or respected community member. It is also important to listen to the community's guidance in relation to who you bring in to facilitate cultural work. "Indigenous cultures and traditions are very diverse and not necessarily transferable from culture to culture" (Thomas, 2018, p. 112). It is imperative, therefore, that you do not displace local teachings by bringing in someone from another First Nation with different teachings, unless you get a clear mandate from the community.

Relationship building

Consultation and relationship building go hand in hand, and both build trust and respect. There are times, when you are new to a job or a community, that the consultation process can be a form of relationship building. When I started in the position that I have spoken of, I held a meeting to ask the community what kinds of programs they would like to see in the community. I ensured that I had food and gifts for all those who participated, thus introducing myself to the community in a respectful way. I shared who I am, my familial connections, what my objectives were, and I took advice from the community about the kinds of programs they wanted and who I should talk to about offering programs, as

there are always experts in the community. Then I introduced myself in person to the Elders and knowledge keepers (those who hold cultural knowledge) that I was recommended to speak with, going to their homes when appropriate, and gifting them for their time. There have also been settings, such as when I worked with the homeless community, where I have spent time just being present, getting to know people and develop trust, before I held consultation meetings. Consultation and relationship building are both interchangeable and symbiotic, and must be done in person.

Respect and reciprocity

It is critical when working in Coast Salish communities, and most Indigenous communities, that you work in a spirit of respect and reciprocity. Gifting someone, in Coast Salish communities is called a handshake, and is a sign of respect. Any work that you ask someone to do, whether it be consultation, advice, a prayer, territorial acknowledgement, or physical work, requires some form of reciprocity in the form of a gift or honoraria. The teaching in Coast Salish communities is that you give whatever you can afford. This is a strict law, so to speak, and it means that if you are working for an organization or institution with substantial resources that you should give a substantial amount. If you are a student or someone of limited means, then you give what you have to give. Gifts that are homemade are also very appreciated. When I was a student/parent with five children at home and I needed to consult an Elder, I gifted the salmon that I had canned. On the other hand, when I have worked in community agencies, I applied for grants to run programs and always included substantial honorariums for the Elders and facilitators in my budget. There are times, such as when I ran the parenting/weaving group, that the facilitator/knowledge keeper is being paid by another agency and cannot accept a second payment. In this case, you can provide a gift, such as a homemade item or food, to say Huy ch q'a (thank you). I also try to gift the participants, as a way to say thank you for coming, as well.

Food

Food is very important in Coast Salish culture, as there is a teaching that as we eat together we are ingesting the teachings and the good feelings that we are receiving. Every program that I have offered, whether it was art classes for the homeless or parenting/weaving classes in the community, centered around food. Whenever I apply for grants and plan programs, I include a

budget for food. Depending on resources, both financial and human, I provide a hot meal or snacks. In the case of the parenting/weaving group, I was able to access funding to hire a community member to cook a hot meal for the group each week. If attendance was low, we would post a picture of the hot meal on Facebook and the community room would fill up quickly. I also took time out of my day as an administrator to sit with the community and eat lunch at the programs, which is something that I would recommend because eating together is a way of doing solidarity and dismantling hierarchical systems of teacher/student or practitioner/client. As Freire notes in Salter (2017), “solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture...The positioning of the therapist/group facilitator/community practitioner is central to the ‘doing’ of solidarity” (p. 380). Much personal sharing and connecting takes place over food.

Consistency

I am a strong believer in creating and maintaining consistency for those who have been impacted by the devastating effects of colonization. As I spoke of before, the impacts of colonization are such that land has been suddenly taken, housing has been lost, children have been removed from homes, and families have been torn apart. Providing consistent culturally appropriate programs and supports are ways to counteract the impacts of colonization, and again, build trust, which in itself is part of the healing process. This means that providing programming in and with Indigenous, or other marginalized communities, should have some planning around the potential longevity of the program funding and employees or volunteers who will be attached to the program. If program funding is limited or cyclical, having consistent staffing will help to mitigate feelings of loss and mistrust. Programs offered by well-meaning practitioners, researchers, or community groups, that come into the community and then leave, can be very damaging and are often unsuccessful. Relationship building takes time, and once those relationships are built it is important to honor them. Most of the programs that I have offered were weekly sessions that lasted several years. Some of them took three years before they were really successful, with a large number of consistent attendees and buy-in from the community. Once they have made it to this point, they are often self-sustaining. The parenting/weaving group was at this stage when I left my position and it was able to continue despite the changeover of staff. I still visit the community to maintain the important relationships that I built, though, as this is an ethical approach.

Supplies and resources

It is important that we are giving to, not taking from, Indigenous communities. While there might be research, practicum, and job opportunities in Indigenous communities, we must always remember that we are working for the community. Resourcing the community is a way to demonstrate our ethics in this regard. When I run programs, I reach out to community partners, funders, volunteers and governmental agencies to resource the community. With the parenting/weaving group, that included finding funding for weaving materials, such as looms and wool, cedar, food, transportation and extra staffing for food preparation and child-minding, so the parents could focus on their weaving. Over time, I was able to find early childhood education (ECE) funding to hire an ECE teacher to provide the children with an enriched learning experience at the same time as the parents. I have also used volunteers and practicum students for child minding and food preparation, but these are all things that must be planned for when doing feminist aesthetic work in community settings.

Uy'skwuluwun

Robina Thomas (2005), a Coast Salish educator, talks about the importance of doing this work with “a good mind and a good heart or, to use the Hul'qumi'num word, uy'skwuluwun...I have been taught that when you ask people to share their wisdom, you must respect and honour their teachings” (p. 249). We must go into the communities that we work in with a good mind and a good heart. That means respecting the cultural practices that are being shared with us and not appropriating them. It also means having cultural humility, recognizing that everything that we have been taught in our Western education systems is limited, and there are many other ways of teaching, learning, and doing community that are effective. Cultural imperialism is insidious. I remember an incident wherein my supervisor asked me if the parenting/weaving group had any “deliverables” because the benefits to the community were not evident to her. We must actively decolonize our own minds, so as not to fall prey to this thinking. Cull et al., (2018) defines decolonization as a “process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches... [it] is the process of examining your beliefs about Indigenous Peoples and culture by learning about yourself in relationship to the communities where you live” (p. 7). Centring the local Indigenous communities, their knowledge, wisdom, right to self-determination, efforts at cultural

resurgence, and the resources that they need to do this, is necessary to do Indigenous feminist aesthetic work. This must be done with a good mind and heart: Uy'skwuluwun is the most important teaching.

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Approaching Settler Decolonizing from a Feminist Perspective: Stumbling Through Decolonization Together

BY CORTNEY BALDWIN

The point is not for women simply to take power out of men's hands, since that wouldn't change anything about the world. It's a question precisely of destroying that notion of power.

Simone de Beauvoir, 1989, p. 46

In 2019, I facilitated a three-part workshop series called *Community in Action: Decolonization*. Structured by and for settler (non-Indigenous) Canadians, the goal of this workshop series was to create a safer space where settler Canadians could begin to build the skills necessary to start and/or continue down the path of decolonization. The workshop series was adapted from my own research in decolonizing pedagogy. It was a chance to take what I had built theoretically and move it into a community practice for the first time. In essence, it was a chance to take what I had learned as a feminist and move into a space where we could address the notion of power inequity through decolonization. However, as in any conversation around patriarchy, racism, social justice, diversity, inclusion, and colonialism, it is important to identify and situate myself before I go any further.

Where I come from

I am a settler Canadian. My family comes from Southern Alberta, which is Treaty 7 land and is the traditional territories of the Niisitapi (Blackfoot). This includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, including Chiniki, Bearsaw, and Wesley First Nations. Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta. I am so grateful for the lessons I learned out on the prairies, and carried those teachings with me as I moved to Victoria, B.C. and became a visitor on the unceded traditional lands of the Łək'wəŋən (Lekwungen) people, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, known today as W̱JŌŁŁP (Tsartlip), BŌKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), S̱ÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum) and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nations.

My parents were part of a progressive pocket in Calgary, Alberta which was infused with feminist and social justice ideology. I was raised by two loud and

proud feminist activist lesbian moms. Educated on patriarchy and raised in a home that valued diversity and inclusion, I was able to explore and incorporate feminist and social justice ideologies into my core at a very young age. Thanks to the feminists before me, I was able to look at the ways we can root out notions of 'power over' that permeate patriarchal, racial, and colonial ideologies. To that end, I focus on delivering decolonizing workshops and speaking to audiences who hold 'power over' so that we can challenge those notions within our society while inviting participants to learn to engage in a 'power with' model.

What is decolonization?

Decolonization offers a different perspective to human and civil rights-based approaches to justice, an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an "and". It is an elsewhere.

Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 36

Like Lowman and Barker (2015), I believe that decolonization is "not necessarily an easy or straightforward concept to understand and act on" (p. 110). However, in the context of this work (and in the context of Canada's settler colonial state), I refer to decolonization as the tools, processes, and lived experiences of not only identifying but evaluating, rethinking, and deliberately changing parts of us and society in which privileged and oppressed identities hinder our progress to an inclusive, sustainable, and relational way of being. Decolonization "has to be about changing relationships and making them healthy, supportive and safe" (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 22). In essence, decolonization for me is about learning about how colonization works, questioning why groups of people hold privilege over other groups, and finding ways to learn and act in non-colonial ways. The goal is for us to learn how to be powerful together without groups having power over one another, but that cannot be done until we de-program our colonial thinking. Non-Indigenous people have been privileged in Canada, and now it is time to learn how to shift that thinking so we can shift the relationships, which I call Reconciliation. Reconciliation is about beginning to shift the relationship between Indigenous Canadians, non-Indigenous Canadians, and the land we live on through systemic change. That can only be done when we start to question, and challenge the thinking that puts the desires, rights, and feelings of non-Indigenous people above Indigenous people and the land. Decolonization is a process I believe settler Canadians must go through to participate in reconciliation in a meaningful way.

In order to accomplish this, there are key elements that must be present in decolonizing pedagogy. Decolonizing pedagogy is not just about what you teach but how you teach, as “*how* people learn about historical injustices is as important as learning truths about *what* happened” (Regan, 2010, p. 11). Unfortunately, many decolonizing initiatives lack the necessary emphasis on the structure and delivery of decolonizing pedagogy, which could explain why many settlers remain stuck in denial and guilt, and why public initiatives have been ineffective in bringing about social and political change. It is not enough to simply expose people to the truth of Canadian colonial history, we have to frame and deliver it in such a way that participants can move past shock and grief to become agents of change. This is how we begin to really shift our collective thinking and begin to change society in a real way.

What you need in a decolonizing workshop

Beyond social justice

As decolonization addresses issues that are incorporated under social justice initiatives, there is a growing assumption that decolonizing pedagogy should be included within the social justice (anti-oppression) narrative. However, the growing body of literature surrounding decolonization and Reconciliation overwhelmingly oppose that approach (Regan, 2010; Lowman & Barker, 2015; Mackey, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015, 2017; Mohanty, 2018; and Reyes, 2019). The critique is that much of the social justice literature is centred on the concept of ‘anti’ and speaks to removing oppression (racism, homophobia, etc.) from the culture. However, decolonizing pedagogy must be focused on progressing *beyond* the removal of oppression. It must challenge the colonial systems, structures, institutions, and cultures of society, while simultaneously centring Indigeneity and reimagining said structures, institutions, and cultures after colonialism. Decolonizing pedagogy is not a critical ideology, it is in a *re*-ideology: “resisting, refusing, rehumanizing, remembering, reminding, restoring, reframing, revisioning, and reimagining” (Reyes, 2019, p. 7). Decolonization is not about challenging the ‘power over’ model, it is about moving past that model to something different. That is why decolonization is not an ‘and’, it is an ‘elsewhere’.

Framed with critical hope

A framework of critical hope is also a key element for effective decolonizing pedagogy. Critical hope can be summarized as “an act of ethical and political responsibility that has the potential to recover a lost sense of connectedness, relationality, and solidarity with others” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 14). In the context of

decolonization, critical hope is understanding how terrible our societal inequities are AND still holding the belief that we can move past colonial ideology. Using the work of bell hooks, Regan (2010) argues that framing decolonizing pedagogy in critical hope “strives to create a community for learning that goes beyond the classroom and encourages learners to embrace the challenges that lead to systemic change” (p. 23). Ensuring that decolonizing pedagogy is framed in a way that links learning, critical reflection, and social action is necessary in order to avoid both metaphorizing decolonization (providing lip service) and maintaining the centrality of whiteness within societal structures (to make decolonization about white people instead of about Indigenous people and communities).

Praxis-oriented

With the understanding that decolonizing pedagogy moves beyond social justice, it follows that a praxis-centred approach to decolonizing pedagogy is vital. In this context, praxis is defined as a “continuous and cyclical process of reflection and action” (Bishundat et al., 2018, p. 91). Decolonization pedagogy asks participants to learn about decolonization and then to **move that learning into practice** while working to reimagine a society beyond colonization. Too much emphasis on critical reflection within non-Indigenous decolonizing pedagogy can result in the settler becoming centred within that dialogue alone. This maintains and supports settler colonial ideology by further marginalizing Indigenous voice and experience. Reyes (2019) details a praxis of 'Re-We-Me' within decolonizing pedagogy, where participants rework and resist coloniality, reframe and reflect on our own colonial programming, as well as rehumanize, revise, and reimagine a society where we can collectively move past colonial systems and structures. Given the dynamic, intersectional, and insidious nature of settler colonial ideology, effective settler-oriented decolonizing pedagogy must be inherently praxis-oriented.

Transformative

The body of literature on transformational learning within adult education is substantial. Within the context of decolonizing pedagogy, incorporating a transformational element is crucial to provide participants the opportunity and space to de-program their colonial programming. Incorporating transformative space within decolonizing pedagogy is vital so participants can learn “to re-evaluate and re-story prior learning experiences which can lead adults to make sense of their experiences and find a new sense of identity” (Foote, 2015, p. 84). As decolonizing pedagogy asks participants to find both a new individual and a new national sense of identity, the transformative element is essential.

I get excited about transforming from a colonized settler to striving to be a decolonized agent of change and I share that excitement with participants when I am teaching about decolonization.

Relationship-centred

Relationships are vital in decolonizing pedagogy. When experiencing decolonizing pedagogy, participants are asked to examine the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada. In doing so, settlers must also examine the relationship we have with our identity as an individual, the relationship with our nation and the earth, and the relationship between colonialism and societal structures and institutions, to name a few. As many scholars have argued, decolonization pedagogy is inherently about relationships, and as such, must be positioned and supported by methods which continue to nurture relationships and community (Regan, 2010; Poelzer & Coates, 2015; Lowman & Barker, 2015; Reyes, 2019). So, encourage your participants to learn this in community, and aid in building one while in the workshop.

Unsettling

Decolonizing pedagogy is inherently unsettling, as it is “based on the premise that settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: we must experience it beginning with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society” (Regan, 2010, pp. 23-24). As Mackey (2016) argues “embracing particular kinds of uncertainty is likely required, even necessary for decolonization” (p. 191). However, those unsettling feelings, though uncomfortable, should not be diminished. In fact, these uncomfortable feelings can be seen as indicators that a settler is engaging with decolonization in a meaningful way. Unsettled feelings, framed within critical hope, can “work as a compass, pointing away from settler colonial security” (Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 106). In other words, feeling unsettled or uncomfortable can be a tool settler’s use to move away from colonial thinking. I always tell participants to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, because change is often uncomfortable. Feelings fearful or unsettled can be great indicators for us, and in this context can be embraced as tools to help us on our decolonizing journeys. Therefore, understanding that decolonizing workshops must be unsettling workshops is necessary.

Community-based

A consistent factor regarding pedagogy with a social justice lens is the need for

the learning to happen within community (Ferrara, 2015; Harro, 2018; Regan, 2010). Although decolonizing pedagogy is more than social justice, this does not negate the necessity of having a community of learners. In actuality, the need for community in a decolonizing journey is heightened. This need for community may explain why the attempts to provide information on colonization, decolonization, and Reconciliation have not been as successful as predicted, as there is no form of community in a one-way information stream (Regan, 2010). Any facilitator attempting decolonizing pedagogy must work diligently to provide the participants the opportunity to create community, as well as participate in ongoing dialogue amongst themselves and others within their networks. Thus, participants are able to continue to participate in decolonizing dialogue once the workshops are complete.

Bridging theory to practice

In order to take the elements necessary for decolonizing pedagogy and deliver it to settler Canadians, a facilitator must consciously question *how* it is delivered. I choose to use *Teaching Controversy* by Livy Visano and Lisa Jakubowski (2002) as my foundation, but also work hard to create a community of learners responding to dynamic conversation, so sometimes I follow what feels decolonial and necessary. In doing decolonizing work, whether it be in workshops, with family and friends, or with ourselves, we need to be constantly reflecting on the elements that create decolonized thinking/pedagogy. When we try to come from a place of community-based, critically hopeful, transformation, and a willingness to move between reflection and action the results are powerful, no matter how it plays out. Decolonization is a journey, not an outcome.

Facilitating decolonizing workshops: Considerations and workshop example

Decolonization is a dramatic reimagining of relationships with land, people, and the state. Much of this requires study. It requires conversation. It is a practice; it is an unlearning.

Syed Hussan (Walia, 2012, p. 2)

The truth is, facilitating workshops involving social inequities can be an incredibly complex and emotional work. Regardless, in order to teach about decolonization, I believe we have to walk the path ourselves. I work hard on my own decolonization journey by making sure I am always looking for ways to decolonize myself, my community, the institutions I engage with,

and participating in actions as an aspiring ally to Indigenous people. I hope the references in this paper and in the workshop examples I provided are as valuable to you as they are to me, and that you find (or build) a community that is as passionate about imagining a world beyond colonization as the ones I am a part of!

WORKSHOP EXAMPLE

Programme Title: Community in Action: Decolonization

Overall Aims:

- Create safe and transformative space for white settler Canadians to stumble through controversial topics related to decolonization
- Provide participants with an understanding of settler colonial society to empower them to decolonize and disrupt

Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of decolonization by:
 - Re-learning Canadian history through a decolonial perspective
 - Identifying and naming colonial ideologies and practices in Canadian society
 - Situating oneself in a colonial context
 - Practicing decolonization in daily life
- Provide resources on disrupting colonization in daily life
- Provide a community where participants can learn, support, and engage in decolonizing pedagogy.

Workshop 1: Educate

Adaptation of the KAIROS Blanket Exercise

Explanation:

Week 1 workshop is designed to introduce participants to Canada's settler colonial history, thereby non-confrontationally challenging settler colonial ideology. This is done by utilizing the [KAIROS Blanket Exercise](#), a participatory history lesson developed by Indigenous educators, knowledge keepers, and Elders. The exercise "covers more than 500 years in a 90-minute experiential

workshop that aims to foster understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples” (KAIROS Blanket Exercise, 2019). The exercise is followed by a sharing circle where participants speak to what parts of the exercise impacted them the most. The goal of this workshop is to get participants comfortable with the idea of being uncomfortable.

Aims:

- Conscious
 - Introduction to decolonization pedagogy
 - Inviting participants to embrace feeling uncomfortable or unsettled
- Non-Conscious
 - Challenge colonial history in a fact-based, non-confrontational manner

Structure:

- Introduction
 - Territory acknowledgement
 - Housekeeping
 - Safer space
 - Expectation of open hearts, open minds
 - Inviting participation out of comfort zone
 - Move up, move up technique
 - [AORTA anti-oppressive facilitation resource sheet](#)
 - Aims and objectives
- KAIROS Blanket Exercise
 - Participatory Canadian history lesson
- Debriefing Sharing Circle
 - Sharing of impactful moments
 - Ask participants to answer two questions before they leave:
 - What was the most important thing you learned today?
 - What question remains in your mind?

Facilitator:

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Introduce workshop series
- Facilitate the blanket exercise
- Facilitate sharing circle

- At the conclusion of the workshop, review participants stories and exit questions to ensure Workshop #2 answers participants learning needs

Suggested reference material

NOTE: The reference aterial sections are designed to give facilitator suggestions on what to speak to, but this list is meant as a guideline only and will largely depend on the facilitator, participants, and where everyone is in their decolonizing process.

- *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* by Regan, (2010) particularly the critical hope framework
- *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century* by Lowman and Barker (2015)
- *Teaching Controversy* by Visano and Jakubowski (2002), particularly the codifying participant experiences section

Workshop 2: Empower

Diving Deeper into Decolonization

Explanation:

Week 2 workshop is designed to continue the understanding of colonial ideology and practice in Canadian society, both past and present. The facilitator opens the workshop with a brief explanation of territory acknowledgements, emphasizing why they are important, and provides the opportunity for a participant to volunteer to do a territory acknowledgement. After a check-in, the facilitator uses the participants sharing from Week 1 to identify colonial ideologies and practices that impacted participants most, then connect them to current colonial practices and assumptions in Canada's present, culminating in an explanation about privileged and oppressed identities. A guided discussion will then allow participants to engage in decolonizing dialogue with one another. The facilitator will then walk participants through the power walk exercise where participants will role-play to identify colonial ideology and practice in everyday life. The facilitator will subtly codify experiences and link to

decolonizing theory and practice. Participants will be tasked with sharing their desire to decolonize with someone they trust whilst also looking for ways they could potentially disrupt colonial practices in their own community.

Aims:

- Conscious
 - Engage/increase participants ability to identify and name colonial ideology in current Canadian settler society through experience
 - Connection of privileged/oppressed identities to 'power over' and the necessity of challenging and disrupting when possible
- Non-Conscious
 - Developing a positive engagement with decolonization through critical hope ideology

Structure:

- Territory Acknowledgement
 - Invitation for participants to engage in a territory acknowledgement
- Check-in
 - Group check-in to gauge emotional/physical experience of participants
- Teaching
 - Identifying colonial practices in Canadian society
 - Privileged and oppressed identities conversation
 - Connecting 'power over' notion to colonial ideology which encompasses racism, patriarchy, homophobia, classism, etc.
- Guided Discussion
 - Creation of dialogue around colonization and decolonization
- Privilege Activity
 - Adaptation of the Power Walk exercise
 - [UNODC Gender Dimensions of Ethics exercises](#)
- Action Item
 - Share experience and new knowledge with someone
 - Ask participants to question how they can be involved in decolonization work in their community

Facilitator:

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Invite explanation and participation of territory acknowledgement
- Teach and lead guided discussion and Power Walk exercise

- Facilitate the sharing of participant experiences
- Provide participants with action item
- Ask participants to share their experience and new knowledge with someone they trust
- Ask participants to think of ways they can disrupt colonial practices in their own community

Suggested reference material

- *Settler Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* by Lowman and Barker (2015), Chapter 4
- *The Social Construction of Difference* by Johnson, (2018) discussion of privileged and oppressed identities

Workshop 3: Evolve

Walking the Path of Decolonization

Explanation:

The objective of Workshop #3 is to review all the participants have learned, review decolonizing initiatives through their new knowledge, and ask them to commit to participating. Following an invitation to engage in a territory acknowledgement and a check-in, the participants are asked to engage in discussion around how they will take the knowledge learned and move it into action. The facilitator then provides each participant with a list of resources and asks for a commitment for participants to engage in decolonizing initiatives. In addition, the facilitator will encourage participants to continue their decolonizing dialogue. A survey will be handed out to help gauge the effectiveness of the series and reflect on ways to improve.

Aims:

- Conscious
 - Solidifying action-oriented decolonizing framework
 - Ensuring participants understand decolonization has to be connected to action
- Non-Conscious
 - Fostering action-oriented decolonizing community

Structure:

- Territory Acknowledgement
 - Invitation for participants to engage in a territory acknowledgement
- Check-in
 - Group check-in to gauge emotional/physical/experience of participants
- Activity
 - Groups of two or three, what can you do to:
 - Push back against colonial ideology
 - Continue on the path of decolonization
- Sharing
 - Share ideas with the larger group to create a collective decolonizing plan of action
- Resources
 - Provide resources to each participant
- Survey
 - Short questionnaire gauging their engagement and comfort level with decolonization

Facilitator:

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Invite participants to engage in a territory acknowledgement
- Complete a preliminary check-in
- Facilitate dialogue and sharing of potential action initiatives
- Focus on addressing systemic issues to which Indigenous well-being is central
- Craft a decolonizing plan of action with the participants with the goal of motivating and increasing accountability
- Provide resources for engaging with Indigenous voice through text, audio, visual, presentation, etc.

Reference materials for participants

Authors	Video projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leanne Simpson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Islands of Decolonial Love</i> ◦ <i>Dancing on Our Turtle's Back</i> • Robin DiAngelo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Is Everyone Really Equal?</i> • Bob Joseph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act</i> ◦ <i>Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples</i> • Thomas King <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>An Inconvenient Indian</i> ◦ <i>The Truth About Stories</i> ◦ <i>Green Grass, Running Water</i> ◦ <i>Truth and Bright Water</i> ◦ <i>Medicine River</i> ◦ <i>The Back of the Turtle</i> • Wab Kinew <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The Reason You Walk</i> • Monique Grey Smith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Speaking Our Truth</i> ◦ <i>Tilly Series</i> • Robin Wall Kimmerer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> • Mary-Ellen Kelm & Keith D. Smith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Talking Back to the Indian Act</i> 	<p>Film</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Indian Horse</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Directed by Stephen Campanelli ◦ Written by Dennis Foon <p>Documentary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trick or Treaty</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Alanis Obomsawin ◦ National Film Board (NFB) of Canada • <i>Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Métis Child</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Alanis Obomsawin ◦ National Film Board (NFB) of Canada • <i>nipawistamasowin: We Will Stand Up</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tasha Hubbard ◦ National Film Board (NFB) of Canada <p>TV Series</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>North of 60</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ CBC Television (1992) • <i>First Contact</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ APTN (2018)

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A Listening Toolbox: Listening as a Feminist Practice

BY CLAUDIA FIRTH

I would like to highlight listening as an important feminist practice particularly here within arts activism. As well as outlining why listening should be paid attention to, I will describe two related examples I have been involved in. In 2017, I published a short book co-written with sound-art researcher Lucia Farinati, on listening in particular intersections between arts and activism. The second example is one in which I was invited to use listening as part of a community arts event in Southwark, London, UK by design collective Public Works (See [p. 311](#)) They are both examples of producing different kinds of toolboxes for practices of listening.

Listening has been a key feminist practice, although it has not been as focussed on as much as the struggle to find voice. On its own, it can seem quite abstract. However, rather than being purely an abstract attitude or process, listening should be understood as not only an integral part of the struggle to find voice but also as the conditions that can be created in order to render that voice effective and meaningful. If voice is understood as giving an account of one's self, paying attention to listening is to make voice really matter (Couldry, 2011, p. 13). As a skill, listening has been associated with the feminine, as something which women do more of or are perceived as doing better than men, and (perhaps consequently) it has also been associated with passivity. Dale Spender (2001) asks "is there any connection between the devaluation of women and the devaluation of listening?" (p. 21). Listening makes up a large part of emotional labour, which, while coming to be recognised more recently, has also been traditionally done by women and is often invisible. The labour of listening and all that it entails, including as political theorist Susan Bickford (1996) has suggested, an attitude of the self that is open to potential change, has also gone largely unnoticed. Listening is a pre-requisite for good communication and therefore crucial for a well-functioning democracy. Not only that but it has real consequences for challenging contemporary conditions of neoliberalism.

Listening, in parallel with speech as part of an inter-relational, reciprocal practice was fundamental to the basic building blocks of the feminist movement of the 60s and 70s, consciousness-raising groups (C-R groups). These groups were a place where both speaking and listening played a liberatory role as tools

for organising. As women-only spaces, C-R groups were safe places for women to start speaking about the conditions of their everyday lives. Speaking of their own conditions they also listened to each other's accounts of their lives and through this sharing process, realised that their personal issues were not purely individual, but part of the much bigger social situation created by patriarchy. This led to a process of collective analysis which both developed solidarity between women and enabled the women's movement to produce political demands. Solidarity can be understood as being produced through the inter-relational processes of resonance and recognition. If something someone says resonates with others, it can produce a mutual recognition of their "abilities to create a concrete contribution to a 'material community'" (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 147). As Axel Honneth (2014) argues, solidarity can be thought of as a form of recognition. The building of solidarity therefore can be defined as a process by which an individual recognises themselves in a collectively produced voice. For the production of the book, *The Force of Listening* (Farinati & Firth, 2017), Lucia and I were interested in tracing a trajectory from second wave feminism to contemporary practices and in particular, examining what it meant for the forming and functioning of groups working as collectives and for the production of solidarity. In preparation for the production of the book, we had conversations with two contemporary arts activist collectives, Precarious Workers Brigade and Ultra-red, and collaborative artists Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri. These contemporary arts/activist practitioners used listening within practices which covered a spectrum ranging from more activist based contexts and approaches to more artistic ones. As noted in *The Force of Listening* (Farinati & Firth, 2017), we also spoke to two feminists who had been in consciousness-raising groups during the 1970s and 80s and theorists Nick Couldry and Adriana Cavarero, who have written extensively on voice and have drawn both from feminist philosophy and political science. The other theorist who became increasingly important to us was political theorist Susan Bickford (1996) who in turn draws from intersectional feminist theory, Hannah Arendt, and Aristotle.

It is worth pointing out that these conversations were not structured or semi-structured interviews as such and that the final text was not strictly speaking an academic one. The book is written in dialogic form. Lucia and I edited the conversations into a montage with some additional dialogue and small editorial sections added. This choice was made partly to reflect our interest in listening primarily as a practice. The conversational mode, we hoped, would actively allow questions to be raised and addressed in a more open ended and dialogic way. This also reflected our focus in listening as part of the two-way process

of dialogue rather than as an end in itself. The montage of dialogue made it appear as if our interlocutors, the artists, activists and theorists were all in the same room, while in actuality they were only meeting on the page.

The conversations we had with all the interlocutors were free flowing rather than being fully structured interviews. Each speaker was allowed to veer off and meander in different directions. What surprised us when listening back to the recordings, was that definite topics emerged and developed through one conversation to another. Instead of collecting and presenting this material as separate moments in time, we opted for a long, constructed conversation in eight chapters or acts, each one resulting from themes, words and stories that echo and resonate with each other. The book owes its montage and dialogic form to Carla Lonzi's *Autoritratto* (2019) a work that deeply inspired us not only in its form but also as a symbolic threshold between art and activism: *Autoritratto* was Lonzi's last text written as an art critic before going on to write as a feminist. (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 5-6)

Carla Lonzi's *Autoritratto* (2019), comprises of a series of conversations with artists and is the text she writes before giving up writing about art. Our book not only took the montage form and developed it further, but also helped us to clarify somewhat our own positions in relation to art and activism. What takes place on the page is a polyphony of voices that think through issues in these fields together. These include the role of listening in different kinds of practice, dealing with institutional frameworks, and the ethics and politics of listening. The final chapter discusses the Occupy movement for which speaking and listening also played an important if contradictory role. The book therefore not only collected accounts of different listening practices and how these might be transformational but also attempted to enact through its form something of the open ended dialogic processes we were discussing.

The arts-activist practitioners talk about how they used listening in their particular practices, which I will share in the examples below. The aspect of consciousness raising (C-R) which was most important for the Precarious Workers' Brigade (PWB) was the shared social aspect of conditions which appeared on the surface to be individual. PWB has done much work around working conditions in the arts, issues of free labour and internships, and solidarity campaigns with cleaners in cultural organisations. The activist collective has worked with students and arts workers in getting them to share their experiences of precarious, underpaid and unpaid labour. Listening to

themselves, each other and others helped to both form the group and increase general awareness of the ubiquity of free labour in the culture industries. This in turn helped for example to create a zero tolerance approach to unpaid internships.

Chloe (PWB): I suppose our trajectory as PWB, how we started to become a group seems to me very much about listening. At the first workshop at No.w.here we were collecting around the word *precarity* and what that meant individually for each of us. At the beginning we told our own stories and why we were there. We also collected testimonies... I remember creating a map using a lot of post-it notes where we wrote what the word *precarity* made us think about and it suddenly became something else. It became a great map of a systemic issue. Then we started to write our own particular stories and these became the material for forming working groups for the tribunal we set up at the ICA. Even in the process of becoming PWB, it seems that the telling of our own stories was part of a mapping process, mapping issues of *precarity*. (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 26)

Ultra-red (UR) describe themselves as a sound art (an artistic practice in which sound is the primary medium) and activist collective who work equally in activist and artistic domains. Ultra-red work predominantly with sound recordings and slowly over time, they have moved from using the recordings to create performances to using them in social processes with people. They have done work around issues of HIV, racism and gentrification and others, in cities across Europe and the United States.

Janna (UR): As I entered into Ultra-red in the early 2000s this conversation was underway. Of course listening had always been a part of Ultra-red's practice before. Though we narrate this shift rather abruptly – that we used to compose and now we are concerned with questions of listening, the sounds created within Ultra-red processes were always generated and received through practices of listening. For example, the original compositions were created through making recordings in a needle-exchange in Hollywood in Los Angeles. That was how the group came together: as HIV/AIDS activists working with people who were living very precariously in East Hollywood in what was then an illegal clean needle-exchange. The recordings of the exchange were listened to and used for reflection on what was happening there – you know, in a

situation where video documentation and other forms of documentation were not really appropriate. So I think there was always a practice of listening. But there were many years when Ultra-red was much more known for performances and compositions, and where that was more of the focus. Since around 2004 there has been a much more concerted effort towards thinking about collective processes of listening and what the listening actually produces. (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 25)

With both PWB and Ultra-red, there is a focus on collective analysis, which then feeds into further action or production. In this, the work is similar to an action research cycle.

The second example I will more briefly set out, takes inspiration from the book and its contents to construct a practical tool box of listening exercises. In 2019, I was invited by members of Public Works, a London-based design collective to take part in The Lore of Blackfriars, a public art project commissioned by the local London borough council of Southwark. This commission was funded by what is known as 'Section 106' connected to a private housing development in the area. Section 106 sets out legal requirements around planning permission and agreements with the local planning authority. It is used to mitigate the impact of any new development on the local community and infrastructure. In this case, it also coincided with Southwark Council's desire to improve and unify their community engagement and consultation processes connected to urban regeneration in the borough. Southwark Council aimed to introduce a consultation charter for developers to sign up to. This comes in relation to a background of some very aggressive gentrification schemes in the borough, some of which have decimated long-standing local communities.

Public Works' project The Lore of Blackfriars included workshops and community events that aimed to gather and "showcase the wealth of knowledge that exists, yet is rarely recorded, in our neighbourhoods," (Public Works, 2019, para. 1) as part of developing a community charter for the area. Community charters are rights-based documents "which set out things in a local area which residents have agreed to be fundamental to the present and future health of their community and related rights and responsibilities. They can provide the framework for community impact sessions during public inquiries and enable local residents to stand as witnesses "on the basis of their own personal experiences of place" (Community Charter Network, 2018, para. 4).

The workshops run by Public Works, culminated in two festival type events that took place in two outside spaces at the end of the year. Local residents prepared a meal for people to share and there was music, craft and performances. The invitation extended to me was to do some kind of listening activity within this festival context in a dedicated 'listening booth'. Given the quite complex context, including the imperative to contribute to the spectacular nature of the festival, this was a very difficult if not impossible brief to fulfil. I eventually decided to create a toolbox of different questions and activities to engage with whoever might come into the booth. I wrote a series of questions relating to the gathering community wealth and the creation of community charters. I found some meditations from the musician and 'deep listening' practitioner Pauline Oliveros. I also collected some listening games and several listening objects: a stethoscope, an ear trumpet and a telephone made of tin cans. These provided a whole range of activities and prompts for different kinds of conversations. Generally speaking, people did not tend to come into the listening booth. I did have a few conversations, but they were mostly quite informal. Most of the questions did not seem so appropriate to ask in that context. The objects, however, were very accessible and allowed children to play while I spoke to the parents. I did manage to give one of the meditation exercises to two students to do as 'homework'. In this meditation, Pauline Oliveros (1974) instructs us to walk as if we had ears on the soles of our feet, an attitude gleaned from First Nation practices. This, alongside the insights gained from the conversations for *The Force of Listening*, I think has some lessons in it.

The 'how' of listening

I now want to discuss the 'how' of listening: the art and craft of listening as an activity. Listening is an inter-environmental skill, in that it involves extending the self out into the world and becoming aware of what surrounds us. It is a heightened state of awareness, one that involves intention and attention paid to something or someone beyond the self (Nancy, 2007). It is different to the physiological phenomenon of hearing in that we cannot close our ears to the continuous waves of sound coming into them but we can decide whether to listen or not. Listening is therefore something to be cultivated. As Pauline Oliveros (2010) put it "hearing represents the primary sensory perception – hearing happens involuntarily. Listening, on the other hand, is a voluntary process that produces culture through training and experience" (p. 73). So what is it that needs to be cultivated? Oliveros established a practice of 'deep' and 'quantum listening' developing a whole series of meditative exercises for cultivating listening skills in tandem with an environmental ethics of attention.

In the examples I am writing about here, the focus is on listening to people, to different voices and perspectives. As an interpersonal skill, listening involves creating psychological space for an Other. This can require painstaking emotional labour which is not to be taken lightly. As Arlie Hochschild (2012) has documented, this is a growing prerequisite of much post-industrial ‘feminised’ work, and can have a huge personal cost if the self is pushed to one side in the process. Susan Bickford (1996) therefore argues that for political listening to be effective the self should not be negated. Borrowing from Merleau Ponty, Bickford (1996) argues that political listening cannot be grounded in an absence of self, which is most often the position that is imagined when thinking of listening as an activity. Rather, “politics requires self-involvement with others in action, where we do not ‘draw back’ but actively engage with one another with direction and purpose” (Bickford, 1996, p. 146). The relationship is one of consultation and exchange. There must be an openness but also agency and situated-ness. The need for attention to others must not erase or annul the self. It is therefore anything but passive. Listening is also risky as we have to accept that what we hear might require change from us, and change can be painful. So it involves a nuanced position of enabling a space for someone to speak, holding one’s own space and allowing that speech to have consequences for the listener and beyond. Bickford (1996) also suggests that listening should be seen as a journey or bridge to travel on. The journey is a joint effort between listener and speaker, with the listener being expected to change as much as those who are being listened to. There is therefore a necessity to accept inter-subjectivity in a way that might change the self and this is precisely where a feminist perspective is useful.

From speaking to the interlocutors for *The Force of Listening* (Farinati & Firth, 2017) and from personal experience, it also seems that if the labour of listening is to be taken seriously it also often necessitates a slow process-based temporality. It is not always enough to set up a space and declare it as a space in which listening can take place, as often happens with managerial or public consultations. People may not be willing or indeed able to immediately voice their concerns. There is time and duration involved in really setting up the conditions for effective listening. Most often, in public projects, art projects, urban regeneration projects and similar, there is an emphasis on outcomes and the time taken to consult is often only cursory. Ultra-red suggests that taking the time to create the conditions for listening is a key part of how they undertake their investigations. For a project on racism in rural England, for example, they spent six weeks drinking tea with people who had experienced

racism, before they really started to explore the topic with them. This way of working is indebted to feminist organising practices: the labour of the cups of tea, the decisions made in the organisation of encounters, the affect created, these are the conditions that make a collective analysis and action possible (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 140).

In their pamphlet on community charters, Public Works stress the importance of organising collaborative workshops, particularly for people to cook and eat food together. Food and drink create their own temporal processes, effectively slowing down and easing communication. Other activities such as craft and walking can also do this, but food and drink add an extra convivial element. Speaking and listening might seem to become more incidental to these other activities, but this incidental quality is exactly what makes it more likely that people will feel at ease to talk. It's as if 'the doing something else' enables a level of safety to be built up. The informality of the conversations I had with people at the Lore of Blackfriars events made them no less important, indeed given the particular context, the informality was probably the only way that meaningful speaking and listening could take place.

Obviously different contexts will change the framework within which the speaking and listening takes place as well as the tone and quality of it. In certain contexts there may be demands that are readily spoken and need to be heard where with others it may take a more nuanced approach. Workshops that are billed as producing or exploring something specific will need one kind of facilitated approach while a more open-ended event will need another. The listening booth as a dedicated space within a community festival at which there was food, and choir and dance performances was not an easy situation. People had to volunteer to make the journey to enter into the booth and be listened to and not many did. It may have been more effective to have integrated listening processes into the meal that took place, having questions for example written on the table cloths for people to answer or ask each other or other ways in which questions of value could have been broached in an informal way. However, it was a useful exercise in collecting the questions and exercises together.

There is no doubt that the festival would have done something to assist in the building of social relations between the people who were there. And hopefully this will work in some small way toward the creation of a community charter. It takes time to build trust and confidence of people, especially if you are to assist them in thinking about the value of their local area and how to fight for it.

This means building some kind of solidarity between themselves and between them and the project coordinators. As Leah Bassel (2017) writes, “solidarity is a conversation in which relationships are built over the long-term” (p. 81). In order to really understand the non-monetary value of a place and the people who live there, the metaphor of ears in our feet might perhaps be helpful in encouraging us to attune ourselves carefully to our own bodies, the relationships we have with our environment and to listen both to the things that are easily spoken and those that are not.

By sharing these examples, I am inviting you to consider the ways in which you might also be intentional in your listening practices. I encourage you to use this toolbox (See Fig. 1) as a starting point, think about the specific contexts in which your and others’ listening might be incorporated, how the invitation is made and what other activities could accompany and encourage it.

Capturing conversations to address the role of listening

Next is I share an extract from *The Force of Listening* (Farinati & Firth, 2017), a book I co-wrote with Lucia Farinati (See Fig. 2). In compiling this book, we wanted to address the role of listening in the context of contemporary intersections between art and activism and in particular in relation to social relations and collective practices. Our own experiences as cultural producers and activists have led us to come to the conclusion that the importance of listening in shaping the social and the political in this intersection has been overlooked and needs to be addressed in more depth.

Rather than writing an academic text on the subject, we edited a montage of conversations in order to reflect our interest in listening primarily as a practice. This conversational mode allows questions to be raised and addressed in a more open ended and dialogic way. This also reflects our focus in listening as part of the two-way process of dialogue rather than as an end in itself. We are interested in exploring what listening can do rather than just what it is. How it might be considered an action, and what transformations might occur as a result of doing the listening or being listened to. On a psychological level, this also can be linked to therapeutic practices. In the book, we investigate the role of listening in group formation and collective processes, how listening can be a political tool and the possibility of wider social and political change. For many of our interlocutors, Hannah Arendt’s notion of action has been a key reference point, and we therefore give this particular relevance and space in the book. We also however recognise how difficult it can be to define political action within the contemporary landscape and discuss how listening might function in these debates.

Figure 1: Listening toolbox.

LISTENING TOOLBOX

This is a toolbox I devised for a collaboration with Public Works, a not-for-profit critical design practice, on a project developing a community charter in the London Borough of Southwark, London, UK. These cards denote a mixture of games, meditations and questions to engage with members of the local community.

Please cut out and use, or adapt these cards for your community!

Listening Game

Take the tin telephone.
Tell each other things you've never told anyone.

Listening Game

Listen to someone's heart beat with the stethoscope.

Local Listening

What do you think the shared values of your neighbourhood are, if any?
What would you like them to be?

Local Listening

What's it like living where you live?
What's good about it?
What's challenging about it?

Local Listening

How would you want your grandchildren and/or future generations to experience living in your neighbourhood?

Listening Meditation

"Take a walk at night.
Walk so silently that the bottoms of your feet become ears."
(Oliveros, 1974)

Listening Meditation

Take an imaginary sound walk around your neighbourhood in the future. What does it sound like?
What do you hear?

Figure 2: An extract from the book *The Force of Listening*.

The Force of Listening Book Extract

Claudia: Our central question is asking what the role of listening is within the current crossover of art and activism and how it relates to politics.

Lucia: Yes, we have decided to focus on the intersection between art and activism. This can be a pretty slippery terrain, but precisely because it is quite difficult to define these emerging practices, there is, it seems, a potential for new actions to emerge. The way we are going to frame listening in relation to our examples is not in purely aesthetic terms, yet what all of this brings together cannot be entirely defined as political listening. What we are aiming to map here is the move towards action which results in principle towards some kind of social change. This force of listening does not rely, in other words, on self-referential experiences or acts (listening to listening). It is rather *listening with* and *for*...

Claudia: Social change is also a concept that can become slippery. I was once at a seminar about utopian projects called *It Doesn't Have to be Like This* at the Whitechapel Gallery. It became obvious in the discussion, that the term was losing any relation to progressive or revolutionary histories and coming to mean merely changes in the social world. So there are perhaps two kinds of slipperiness we are dealing with: how terms lose meaning and become depoliticized especially within art contexts and (as in some of our cases) slipperiness as a strategy.

Lucia: We are interested in how listening can be a tool, or a strategy that makes things happen or leads to (political) action. How listening can be understood as a practice that might activate a space and a time which is not purely theoretical, experiential or perceptual, but intrinsically social and political for the reason that it sustains an “other-doing”? Dialogue and voice seems very much part of this process.

Claudia: If we think about the dynamic of speaking and listening in social contexts, having your words shared with other people in a small group,

repeated by a crowd, being asked a question and the answer being reflected back to you, all go towards increasing a sense of a person's ability to act.

Lucia: We are talking about experiences of listening collectively. But in what way can listening be considered a political action? Or in fact lead to political action?

Claudia: It seems difficult to pinpoint exactly what political action means.

Lucia: Yes, but if we could start from the transformative power of listening. How would you define change in relation to listening?

Claudia: I would say it is the process of becoming aware of the conditions of your everyday life and being in a position where you can then act on them to change them...

Lucia: This is what feminist consciousness-raising was about...

Claudia: Exactly, C-R was about effecting change on both a personal and a social level. This is related to many examples we will discuss with PWB, Ultra-red, and Ayreen and Rene.

Lucia: It is fascinating to look back at those political practices of the 70s and to think about what is happening now! Is there the same willingness, anger, or simple desire to change the world we live in?

Claudia: It's just a very different time.

Lucia: It seems that there are at least two ways of thinking of listening in terms of political action: listening together with others in order to become aware of your own conditions... and listening as a willingness to change them through a collective effort. This willingness can be actualised in terms of political organising, protesting, or simply getting involved in some kind of social struggle...

Claudia: I think we can go further and think of listening as a method or technique of social change, a practice for creating potential political spaces, changing decision making processes and organisational processes and

therefore transforming power relations in a very direct and concrete way.

On a more metaphysical note, listening can also be thought of as an endeavour, and this evokes a journey, something to be embarked upon, perhaps even with trepidation. It is also to give heed to, to allow oneself to be persuaded by something, and I think this is interesting in terms of the possibility for opening the self to something other. We could think of listening as creating a path to travel on, as a passage or bridge that we need to construct together through acts of exchange. A journey that we cannot go on alone. Listening is risky, in that it might require change from us. Change that can be painful, frightening or difficult.

Lucia: *The Force of Listening* might be a good title for our book. This could be presented as an imagined bridge, a constructed conversation that will bring together diverse voices from art, activism, art theory and political theory. We could construct this by starting with the conversation between the two of us (as we are doing now) and bring all the other voices in by following certain themes and arguments. Presented as a long conversation between us, the people we have interviewed and the authors we have read, it could be simply a montage of the transcripts, the selected quotes and the bits we are writing in between as part of our conversations. (Farinati & Firth, 2017, pp. 19-22)

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Feminist Adult Educators' Guide to Aesthetic, Creative and Disruptive Strategies in Museums and Community

How can we bring about radical gender justice and change? What role do the arts and other creative pedagogies and activist practices play? This *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide to Aesthetic, Creative and Disruptive Strategies in Museums and Community* is a creative, flexible guide to using a variety of feminist aesthetic pedagogical and activist practices in museums, art galleries, libraries, heritage sites, as well as community organisations and sites such as higher education classrooms, schools and more. Grounded in feminist, aesthetic and decolonising theories, the contributions in this Guide are practical and useful for feminist scholars, practitioners, artists, educators, community organisers, students and anyone else!

This Guide is creative and valuable in design and in deed. It includes visuals, images, poems, and step-by-step designs of how, for example, to design photovoice research projects, zines, virtual, pop-up or physical exhibitions (in a community site, library, art gallery, etc.), and how to create or use fiction, métissage, storytelling, theatre or the feminist museum hack, make collages and much, much more. We invite you to dive in, learn and then take the methods and practices in this *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide* into your own work and context.



This *Feminist Adult Educators' Guide to Aesthetic, Creative and Disruptive Strategies in Museums and Community* was published by the Gender Justice, Creative Pedagogies and Arts-Based Research Group at the University of Victoria, BC, Canada.

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