

Through the project, museums became more intelligible, personal, and approachable, and participants developed capacities to fully engage as museum visitors.

## **The Other White Cube Project: Finding Museums Among Us**

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Content and context intersect to produce works of art, and visitors must have an awareness of both halves to be truly informed, engaged, and included. In 2013, I created the Other White Cube Project (OWCP) to deterritorialize curatorial practices and search for ways to disrupt divisions found in art museums—content/context, curator/viewer, cultural/personal. For the study, I concentrated on three constructivist keys to learning in museums—comfort, relevance, and intelligibility—and the project proceeded from the following premise: if visitors knew about curatorial strategies (comfort) and performed and personalized them (relevance), art museums would be more engaging, transparent, and comprehensible (intelligibility). For the study, participants engaged with curatorial practices through their refrigerator, one of the most common, curated spaces. Based on the findings, I argue that context-based programs, such as the OWCP, help visitors to interpret relationships, themes, and other curatorial elements that add intellectual depth to the museum experience.

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In 1989, Peter Vergo's *The New Museology* ushered in an era of critical museum studies. In the book, Vergo and other contributors put museum theory, history, and practices under the lenses of post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and other critical theories. In the years that followed, researchers identified and analyzed institutional issues related to dichotomies of knowledge/power, colonizer/colonized, and active/passive learning (Karp & Lavine, 1991; Marstine, 2009; Villeneuve, 2007). In response, museums have turned up their educational dials to meet new institutional aims. Changes have included adding more explanatory text and installing educational stations (Stapp, 1992); providing open-ended tours (Housen & Yenawine, 2000); embracing technology (Proctor, 2011); and featuring pop-friendly, blockbuster exhibitions (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992).

Even after such improvements, visitor studies have revealed lingering concerns. Visitors have reported feelings of intimidation and inadequacy (Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1992; PLB Consulting, 2001). They have continued to feel neither smart enough nor comfortable enough to have an optimal learning experience in museums. Furthermore, despite nearly three decades of critical museology, a recent study funded by Tate Britain concluded that most museums have not adequately restructured their organizational and knowledge hierarchies (Dewdney, Dibosa, & Walsh, 2013). Issues of exclusivity, accountability, legitimacy, and power remain.

Museum educators have shouldered the burden of dissolving barriers and initiating resolutions. When institutions committed themselves to becoming more inclusive, transparent, culturally responsive, and considerate of diverse learning styles, then museum educators, who act as intermediaries between institutions and constituents and who represent the interests and needs of visitors, seemed best equipped to retool museum practices (Willumson, 2007). Despite colossal changes and estimable efforts, old challenges have proven to be hard to eradicate.

To counteract the issue of visitor engagement, I argue for a significant switch in the focus of museum education. Over the last three decades, museum educators have created new ways to engage viewers with

works of art, yet studies have not indicated substantial improvements in museum learning. The surprise of those results has led me to believe that, in addition to current practices, museum educators must formulate methods to engage viewers with the curatorial choices that determine the look of museum spaces and the artworks shown within them. I contend that, to effectively redress the issue of visitor engagement, museum educators must draw attention to display strategies and the politics of presentation.

Over seven years, I worked in the education departments of art museums, and I encountered a particular dichotomy between content and context. As an educator in an experimental, contemporary art center, I frequently faced the question, "how is this [object, video, performance, installation, effect, or mixed-media assemblage] art?" I learned over time that I had two approaches to take—one that addressed content and one that addressed context. To explain content, I informed visitors of the intentions, interpretations, formal properties, and art historical information around the artwork, but I typically stopped there. A more complete, holistic response would have also given attention to space, framing devices, the site, and other contextual elements. A context-based answer would have saluted relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002), site-specificity (Kwon, 2005), or curatorial concepts, all of which warrant incorporation and application in the field of museum education.

Content and context intersect to produce works of art (Bourriaud, 1998/2002), but the latter has been neglected when it comes to educating visitors. To be truly informed and engaged, visitors must have an awareness of both halves. Museum researchers John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000) observed:

Experienced visitors are able to take in more of the content of exhibitions and can readily see relationships and appreciate concepts... [Visitors not as experienced] are less likely to have gleaned relationships, appreciated the conceptual underpinning of the exhibition, or personally connected with it. (p. 120)

To get to the intellectual depth described above, viewers must think as curators as well as artists, critics, and historians. They must see relationships, make connections, interpret themes, and question display strategies.

As early as the mid-twentieth century, museums professionals began calling attention to the disuse of space in museums. In 1964, architect A.E. Parr characterized museum fatigue as “the consequent creation of meaningless [context]” (p. 138). By the end of the century, museum professionals were advocating for education departments to make public the process of exhibition design and curatorial choices (Communications Design Team, Royal Ontario Museum, 1999; Dean, 1999), but context-based programming has not emerged prominently in museum education in the 21st century. Left as unexplained voids, museum spaces have continued to be described as stiff and sterile (Boon, 1991; Carrier, 2006).

In 2013, I created the Other White Cube Project (OWCP) to redress the disparity between content- and context-based programming in museum education. Furthermore, I saw the project as a way to disrupt traditional divisions found in art museums—content/context, curator/viewer, cultural/personal—and as a means to better understand the issue of visitor engagement. The project proceeded from the following premise: people are curators of some kind and of some site, and they collect, arrange, and display items in fashions similar to museum professionals. I intended to exploit that assumption in order to connect everyday curatorial habits with institutional practices occurring at large. The OWCP placed participants in the role of curators and replaced the white galleries of museums with the white surfaces of refrigerators.

For the conceptualization of the project, I superimposed Brian O’Doherty’s “white cube” theory over another, more literal white cube—the refrigerator. O’Doherty (1976) argued that the history of art had not adequately accounted for changes in presentation and display, which he described as artistic feats on par with stylistic developments. He wrote that, “It is imperative for every artist to know context and what it does to his/her work” (p. 80). Likewise, it is equally crucial for art viewers to understand context, what it

does to perception, how it contributes to the making of meaning, and how it connotes significance.

For the OWCP, participants curated the stuff on their refrigerators at home. In the process, they implemented and apprehended curatorial concepts, analyzed and reflected on their experience, and reported educational information through an online questionnaire at [theotherwhitecube.com](http://theotherwhitecube.com). From the study, I concluded that context-based programming has great import to museum education because it makes museum practices more transparent, adds intellectual and aesthetic depth to the interpretation of displays, and imparts to visitors something beyond informational content. It passes on the power of the curatorial process in the construction of knowledge, and, as the OWCP found, that exchange initiates a connection through which to rectify the issue of visitor engagement.

### The Project

Since hitting mass markets in the U.S. in the 1920s, refrigerators have occupied a lovable corner not just in kitchens, but also in culture. When the U.S. transitioned to industrial, mechanical convenience in the mid-twentieth century, refrigerators replaced hearths as household communication centers (Busch, 2004). Henceforth, they have become surfaces on which to construct and curate narratives through the arrangement of meaningful photographs, keepsakes, and other items of material culture. Even seemingly unimportant items, such take-out menus and appointment reminders, allude to one’s obligations and interests. As is true of most representations, refrigerator displays have captured tensions between who we are, what we would like to be, how we would like to be seen, and, in some cases, how we choose to display other people—collectively known as the politics of presentation (Karp & Lavine, 1991). In the process of presentation, quite a lot is revealed and quite a lot can be learned.

French theorist Michel Foucault (1980) wrote, “A whole history remains to be written on spaces...from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of habitat” (p. 149). Inspired by Foucault, the OWCP examined a little tactic of habitat, the phenomenon

of placing, arranging, and displaying items on refrigerator surfaces. Foucault argued that even the tiniest behaviors revealed relationships between power and knowledge. Similarly, studies in visual culture have looked at non-traditional sites, such as television, comic books, and public sculpture, to observe how individuals come into contact with and construct cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values (Duncum, 2000). Visual culture forefather Nicholas Mirzoeff (1998) wrote, "Visual culture directs our attention away from structured, formal viewing settings like the cinema and art gallery to the centrality of visual experience in everyday life" (p. 7).

Visual culture research on learning at home, however, has not materialized substantially. Cultural critics Henry Giroux and David Purpel (1983) initiated one of the earliest calls for visual culture studies related to homes and families in 1983, but few have apprehended the subjects intimately (Schubert, 2010). Instead, many studies have taken remote, cosmetic approaches by analyzing popular forms of home entertainment (Ehrenreich, 2010; Tavin & Anderson, 2003; Wright, 2010). With a tighter scope, other studies have focused on niche topics, such as home decorating magazines (Lackey, 2005) or domestic crafts (Cruickshank & Mason, 2003).

Other studies have revealed innovative approaches to studying private spaces and personal belongings. Researchers have focused on general objects, such as toys (McClure, 2006) and cereal boxes (Barrett, 2003), which have cultural prevalence. Another approach has concentrated on common learning events that occur at home, such as toilet training, riding a bike, and tying one's shoes (Luke, 2010).

With 99.5% of households in the United States owning at least one refrigerator (U.S. Department of Energy, 2009), it is certainly a common object, and, to explore its uses as a site of learning, I investigated the curatorial and cultural dimensions of refrigerator displays by considering: What do people display? For whom are these displays intended? What beliefs, attitudes, and values lie therein? How is meaning constructed and communicated? Furthermore, I reflected on how such information connects to concerns in museum education.

To recruit participants and gather data, the OWCP operated almost entirely online at [theotherwhitecube.com](http://theotherwhitecube.com) from January to June of 2013. I used project-specific social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and other online platforms to announce the project, build interest, and attract participants. Furthermore, comprising the only physical undertaking, in April of 2013 I installed a month-long exhibition at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library in Tucson, Arizona (see Figure 1), and I used images, newspapers clippings, and online coverage of the show to promote the project online.

The installation actualized the conceptual idea and provided a visual statement for the treatment of refrigerator displays as subjects of contemplation. For the installation, I salvaged six refrigerator doors from junkyards and used appliance stores, and I decorated them with children's drawings, post cards, photographs, tickets, handwritten notes, birthday cards, and other items that were either donated by friends or found at thrift stores. I constructed refrigerator displays from these materials and, interspersed among the items, I filled empty spaces with notes from my research on refrigerators. I featured poems on refrigerators, consumer statistics, Isaac Newton's laws of thermodynamics, copies of the Refrigerator Safety Act of 1956, Albert Einstein's U.S. patent for a refrigerator, and other information. On clip-in plastic shelves next to each door, I also curated a selection of related books, including repair manuals, appliance catalogs, the children's story *The Pink Refrigerator* by Tim Egan (2007), the novel *Life on the Refrigerator Door* by Alice Kuipers (2007), Michael Fratti's (1977) Cold War parody play *The Refrigerators*, and other literature from the library's collection. Lastly, I also curated 60 photographs of refrigerator displays that had at that point been submitted to the project. I displayed the photographs in three-by-four arrangements and secured them with white electrical tape to give each group the shape, color, and sheen of a refrigerator. The installation highlighted scientific, legal, and, most importantly, sociocultural developments related to the refrigerator.

Images of the installation successfully contributed to the promotion of the project online, and partici-



Figure 1. *The Other White Cube* installation in Tucson, AZ.

pation rose sharply after the exhibition. The month of April accounted for 38% of the project's total web traffic, and May resulted in 18%. Those months also had the highest number of submissions. In total, from January to June 2013, the project garnered over 3,000 views online and collected 200 submissions from across 27 states and the District of Columbia.

Participants uploaded photographs of their refrigerator displays and filled out a questionnaire online, thus contributing data. Before submission, participants encountered background information on the concept, explanations on how it connected to issues in museum education, and instructions on how to participate. Online research offered many forms of creative and educational flexibility. Clickable features guided visitors through the project, from introduction to participation to submission. Not only was there easy access to explanatory content, but the website also tailored information to different learning levels.

The "About" page outlined the premise and packaged the concept concisely. From there, according to user data collected by the website, visitors likely navigated to the "Participate" pages where I broke content down for three audiences: Little Curators, Big Curators, and Artist-Curators. For each group, the project kept language at a suitable level and drew on relevant ideas. Little Curators reached out to children and adolescents, and it featured discussions on organizational skills, thematic arrangements, and how display communicates significance. Adults and

teens comprised the Big Curators group, and the content carried a different tone. The Big Curators section focused on the effort to balance personal and professional matters—while finding meaning in both—and how refrigerator displays reveal many dimensions of life, from work to leisure to family values. The Artist-Curators section pertained to art enthusiasts. The section explained the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the project, and it contained specialized language. Nevertheless, all sections asked for the same actions—participate, analyze, submit.

Dividing content into three sections allowed for the unpacking of theoretical and conceptual elements in appropriate, relevant ways. If participants remained unsure of how to go about the project, they had the opportunity to practice online. The "Practice" page showed examples of refrigerator displays and explained possible ways to analyze them. The website

also featured weekly blog posts that developed aspects of the project in further detail.

On the “Submit” page, participants uploaded up to five photographs each, filled out demographic information, and completed a questionnaire. Demographic information allowed me to track locations, ages, and types of participants, i.e., single-person, multi-person, and family submissions. Photographs documented the phenomenon and captured curatorial dimensions while answers to the questionnaire provided qualitative data for the assessment of attitudes, preconceptions, and interpretations.

### Data Analysis

Curators make meaning by arranging objects into thematic patterns or groups. For art museums, common arrangements include time, place, subject, and media, for example, nineteenth-century French landscape painting. Other categories include gender and identity, such as women artists or African–American artists, although such qualifiers present problems of their own. Of course, museums also construct meaning through associations, also known as intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980). Artworks create interplay by being next to one another or in the same vicinity. In this manner, museums construct narratives and forms of knowledge. On a refrigerator, the themes and collections may not be as grand, but people nevertheless undertake the curatorial process of selecting, arranging, and sharing displays.

In the photographs, the intertextuality between items offered insight into a living situation: a matrix of personal memories, life histories, social networks, responsibilities, attitudes, and systems of value. As seen in Figure 2, the refrigerator display shows a strong sense of spacing and order. Personal photographs exist as separate units from textual content. The organi-



Figure 2. Submission #45 from Cincinnati, OH.

zation allows for easy reading of informational material while visuals (e.g., pictures, comics, cards, funny magnets, other ephemera) intermingle to produce layered, organic arrangements. The visuals are messier but perhaps more meaningful in that way. In other displays, I observed purposeful placement through grouping, isolation, chronological series, and height levels that indicated different audiences. I also spotted themes suggestive of lifestyles and value systems.

On the website, I used photographs to build an online store of images to visualize and substantiate

the phenomenon (Robinson, 2013). The online portfolio seemed to encourage visitors to engage with the project through investigating and interpreting the refrigerators of others. As Participant A, a 28 year old from Charleston, SC exclaimed, "I can't look at refrigerators the same after browsing your website. I keep judging people and wondering what their refrigerator says about them" (personal communication, January, 2013). Participant B, a 40 year old from Knoxville, TN, concurred, "[This project] is like Facebook for refrigerators" (personal communication, February, 2013). Despite the rich subject matter found in the photographs, the online questionnaire comprised the bulk of data and therefore received the most analysis. The questionnaire asked:

- What items are on your refrigerator?
- What do these items say about you and/or your family?
- How has this project changed what you think about your refrigerator?
- How has this project changed what you think about art museums?
- How has this project changed your understanding of collecting and curating?

Through the questionnaire, participants analyzed their refrigerator displays, indicated preconceptions, and reported intellectual and attitudinal changes around art, art museums, and curatorial concepts.

After the research period, I read through the questionnaire data, interpreted and coded each answer into descriptors, compiled the descriptors into themes, and used the themes to draw conclusions through the lenses of the following theories. To support, design, and interpret the project, I drew from critical museology, public pedagogy, post-museum theory, and the concept of de/re/territorializing. Emerging in the 1980s, critical museology analyzes the traditions, structures, and power of cultural institutions, and it investigates issues of elitism, the status of education in museums and institutional missions, and the politics of presentation (Karp & Lavine, 1991; Marstine, 2009; Villeneuve, 2007). Findings in critical museology led to the formulation of post-museum

theory, which encourages museums to become more transparent, participatory, and socially and culturally responsive (Anderson, 2004; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Marstine, 2009). To make post-museum theory workable, I employed deterritorialization, which liberates an activity or power from a specific means of production (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 1987). For the OWCP, I examined the refrigerator as a site of cultural activity where individuals or groups embed meaning in and draw meaning from a collection and, thus, complete curatorial actions apart from yet connected to museum practices. Through the project, I provided a lens for participants to better understand their actions while also exploring the effects of such post-museum gestures. The project included the domains of cultural education, popular culture, and political theory, the intersections of which comprise the field of public pedagogy (Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2009).

### Findings

To address issues of engagement, I concentrated on three keys to learning in museums: comfort, relevance, and intelligibility (Falk & Dierking, 2000), and I carefully worded the questionnaire to engender responses that would address those fundamental components. The impetus for this study comes from post-museum theory, which has implored museums to share power with constituents and communities. Post-museum theory has encouraged museums to clearly articulate "agendas, strategies, and decision-making processes and to continually re-evaluate them in a way that acknowledges the politics of presentation" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007, p. 1). As a means to construct and control knowledge, curatorial strategies form the crux of institutional power (Karp & Lavine, 1991; McClellan, 2008; Putnam, 2009). Therefore, if visitors knew about curatorial strategies (comfort) and performed and personalized them (relevance), art museums would be more engaging, transparent, and comprehensible (intelligibility). In that sense, the three keys to learning are not simply aspects of visitor engagement—they are expectations in post-museum theory.

Studies on learning in art museums have taken cognitive, sociological, and aesthetic approaches

(Luke & Adams, 2007), and each approach presupposes an epistemological perspective of what knowledge is and how it is formed. The OWCP incorporated elements of all three approaches to appropriately and holistically measure levels of comfort, relevance, and intelligibility. Cognitive studies have focused on thoughts, ideas, and prior knowledge, which contribute to comfort levels. Sociological studies have explored how individuals personalize information through socio-cultural filters and how socio-cultural contexts influence the interpretive process. Finally, aesthetic studies have examined underlying attitudes, beliefs, and systems of value that shape the construction of meaning.

To assess comfort levels, I asked participants to answer two cognitive-based questions: "How has this project changed what you think about your refrigerator? How has this project changed what you think about art museums?" In cognitive studies in museums (Twiss-Garrity, 1995; Wetzl-Fairchild, Dufresne-Tasse, & Dube, 1997), researchers have investigated how preconceptions—which are comprised of prior impressions, expectations, and conventions—affect the reception, integration, and retention of information: the cognitive components of learning. It is important to understand and, henceforth, influence preconceptions of museums because they determine comfort levels.

Answering the questions above required participants to comment on change, to articulate how something was and how it became. In that way, the questions assessed perspectival shifts related to cognitive changes in preconceptions. To achieve that objective, the OWCP used *poetic substance*, an imaginative layering over reality to inspire new ways of seeing and thinking (Bachelard, 1958/1994). Novel, imaginative, and absurd ideas affect cognition because they challenge prior definitions, structures, and other mental frameworks. The OWCP employed *poetic substance* to re-imagine refrigerators as something museum-like.

One sentimental response from Participant C, a 53 year old from Durham, NC, captured the cognitive aspects of the project at work:

I loved my grandmother's refrigerator when I was a kid. When I saw this project I immediately thought

of her. She once put two dog magnets side by side so it looked like they were sniffing butts. She was funny like that. I never thought about the refrigerator as a part of her personality but it sure was. It is pretty obvious looking back on it.

I don't go to museums very often because I live in the country and there aren't many around. Don't think I've been to one since I was little, maybe in middle school. Like I said, I can see how refrigerators say things about people, just like museums say something about culture. I don't have a lot of experience going to museums so I'm not sure how I would feel. This project makes me think of them less of a school-type place though. (personal communication, March, 2013)

The mental image of his grandmother's refrigerator helped Participant C understand how museums function as sites of expression. Foremost, he wrote, museums "say something about culture" just as refrigerators say something about the people who curate them. Participant C also addressed how the project influenced his preconception of museums. He thought of them differently, as "less of a school-type place." As indicated in his response, museum concepts became less intimidating because they became associated with more positive and personal memories. His level of comfort had risen.

With a visible counterpart in daily life, museums no longer seemed impersonal. Participant D, a 29 year old from Blacksburg, VA, wrote, "Your project was fun and it made us see museums in a fun way" (personal communication, January, 2013). Participant E, 36 and 38 year olds from Seattle, WA, agreed, "It made me think of museums differently" (personal communication, April, 2013). Participant F, a 19 year old from Harrisonburg, VA, observed, "Art museums don't seem so serious now" (personal communication, April, 2013), and Participant G, a 32 year old from Wilmington, NC, wrote, "I like knowing that what I do at home relates to museums. There's something empowering about that" (personal communication, January, 2013). Through the study, participants indicated higher levels of comfort with art museums,



and new perspectives seemed to give art museums more positive associations. For most participants, the OWCP brought art museums and curatorial concepts closer to the comfort of home.

Secondly, the project looked at relevance. In order to integrate new information, learners create commonalities. To make mental leaps, find meaning, and build relevance, the brain most notably constructs metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In sociological studies in museums, researchers have noted that is important for viewers to personalize information (Gay, Boehner, & Panella, 1997; Knutson, 2002; Stainton, 2002). By connecting unfamiliar museum concepts to an ordinary object and a familiar habit, the project created common ground on which to build relevance.

To assess relevance, the questionnaire asked, "How has this project changed your understanding of collecting and curating?" The question gauged how participants incorporated information about museums into existing concepts. For example, Participant H, a 64 year old from Fairfax, VA, wrote:

I really like the idea that everyone is a collector and a curator. My dad kept old soda bottles in his garage. I just thought they were junk, but I guess he liked their different shapes and colors. He told me how special it was to drink a soda when he was young. Not having much money, it was a really special event. I think maybe that factored into why he chose to collect bottles. This project helped me reflect on that and maybe even understand it a little. (personal communication, April, 2013)

For Participant H, soda bottles provided a means to understand and engage with curatorial concepts. Other examples of relevance were just as insightful. Participant I, an 18 year old from Colorado Springs, CO, acknowledged:

These were new terms for me since I haven't had a lot of chances to go to museums. It's cool to think that I do the same things as museums. I don't have many things on my refrigerator but I see how it applies to other things like [how I arrange] my

clothes, shoes, posters. (personal communication, April, 2013)

Similarly, Participant J, a 26 year old from Miami, FL, observed, "I work at [a retail store] and we are constantly told to straighten things up and put up displays. I know it's not directly related to refrigerators but I feel like it's the same thing, arranging and organizing" (personal communication, April 2013). Most participants effectively connected collecting and curating to their lives. They established a relationship between curatorial concepts and choices, memories, and activities of their own. They built relevance, making the strangeness of the museum familiar, and familiar at-home activities strange.

Finally, the project examined what people put on their refrigerators and why they do it. In aesthetic studies in museums (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Housen & Yenawine, 2000; Soren, 2001), researchers have investigated how viewers make meaning. In the questionnaire, I asked: "What items are on your refrigerator? What do these items say about you and/or your family?" Through the interpretation of their refrigerator displays, participants proved that they were capable of perceiving and constructing relationships, themes, associations, and narratives from the intertextual play of items.

Four themes emerged most prominently from the data: joy, love, family, and duty, with responses coded for multiple themes. For most participants, refrigerator displays contained stories of joy—what they like to do, where they like to go, whom they like to be with, and what makes them happy. Participant K, two 27 year olds from Austin, TX, wrote:

We are simple people. [My partner] and I don't need much. We lean on each other to get by. For that reason we are content with a few simple pictures of ourselves, family and some magnets that remind us of the things we love. (personal communication, January, 2013)

The most common theme, joy, was featured in 69% of submissions, and 59% of submissions commented on

love, the second most popular theme. For example, Participant B observed:

My refrigerator says how much I love my family. My mother passed away last year so I've added a lot of pictures of her to my fridge. It's like she's always here with us. I see her every time I get food out of the fridge to cook.

With 15% of total submissions coming from family units, it is no surprise that the subject of social cohesion emerged as well. Family, community, or a sense of belonging were topics in 52% of submissions. Participant L, a 25 year old from San Francisco, CA, wrote:

My refrigerator shows how important my family is to me. Even though I live in a different city from my parents and my brothers, these pictures help me keep them in mind and think about our good times together. (personal communication, February, 2013)

Participant M, a 39 year old from Boston, MA, also celebrated, "I love my family and kids and it shows. I have pictures of them everywhere" (personal communication, April, 2013). Lastly, participants expressed their commitment to professional and social activities with 42% of submissions commenting on duty. Participant N, a 29 year old from Washington, DC, reflected:

I keep pictures and other keepsakes of my work from Africa on my refrigerator.... I was in the Peace Corps and now I work in public health. I have done a lot of work in Africa and some of my favorite memories are from helping others. Those pictures remind me of some of the great people I have met around the world. They also keep me from complaining about my life of convenience here in [the United States]. (personal communication, March, 2013)

Joy, love, social relationships, and duty were the most common thematic interpretations in the study.

From the interaction of objects, participants identified themes, and in the expression and description of those themes, many participants suggested personal narratives. In the examples above, motifs included the simple life, love and death, the centrality of family, and humanitarianism. The construction of themes and the expression of narratives indicated that participants were adept at using curatorial concepts to analyze displays. Although the questionnaire did not prod participants to connect interpretations with museum practices, curatorial concepts seemed more intelligible.

The OWCP successfully improved levels of comfort, relevance, and intelligibility associated with art museums. As participants tapped into prior knowledge to build comfort and engaged with the metaphor to find relevance, participants applied and apprehended curatorial concepts. They keenly described connections, associations, and thematic ideas and used them to construct meaning. From the submissions, I found that the OWCP positively affected all three keys of learning. It achieved those results by executing post-museum principles through the deterritorialization of curatorial concepts. The OWCP provided a participatory, public platform through which to make transparent the relationship between knowledge and power inherent in the curatorial process. The OWCP brought attention to the contextual elements of and curatorial strategies behind museum displays, and it made them relevant and intelligible through the appropriation of the refrigerator as a site of public pedagogy. Through the project, museums became more intelligible, personal, and approachable, and participants developed capacities to fully engage as museum visitors.

Based on the findings, I argue that museum education may begin to rectify issues found in recent visitor studies by instituting context-based programs. Since the inception of critical museology, educators have attempted to help visitors feel more comfortable with and connected to the museum, but their efforts have focused disproportionately on repackaging content and information. In contrast, I argue that context-based programming better addresses the lingering, long-standing issue of visitor engagement, which

corresponds to levels of comfort, relevance, and intelligibility. As argued by Falk & Dierking (2000), knowledge of curatorial concepts allows visitors to tap into deeper intellectual insights such as the relationships, associations, and themes that underpin exhibitions.

### Conclusion

For the OWCP, I deterritorialized curatorial concepts, but the act made me wonder who would territorialize them and how museums would reterritorialize through the reassignment of space, energy, or power in response to deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 1987). Responses to the OWCP alluded to the importance of social, cultural, and intellectual satisfaction. Participants gave attention to the fulfillment of partaking in activities, attending events, contributing to communities, and expressing themselves through travel or other means. Participants emphasized contentment, meaningfulness, and self-efficacy.

To form my conclusion, I looked to post-materialism. Post-materialist scholars have charted the development of values in industrialized societies from physical and economical needs, such as security, sustenance, and shelter, to ones with social, cultural, and political orientations (Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Inglehart, 2008). In the OWCP, participants identified and placed a high value on autonomy, self-expression, and intellectual satisfaction—qualities that

define post-materialism. For that reason, I conclude that museum education has an opportunity to deterritorialize curatorial concepts in order to achieve post-museum principles while also reterritorializing an identity that aligns with the post-materialist needs of a new constituency that has come to be characterized by the agency and autonomy brought on by personal technology and global communication—the desire for transparency, decentralization, and sharing; and the aim for social justice, inclusion, diversity, and equity. By instituting post-museum theory, museums work to share institutional power with autonomous individuals who have come to expect it; they publicize museum practices to embolden self-expression; and they provide context-based programming to add depth to the museum experience for intellectual, not simply informational, ends.

Finally, I argue that museum professionals must continue disrupting divisions, decentering forms of power, and deterritorializing museum practices. Most importantly, museum professionals must continue searching for ways to reterritorialize in a manner that achieves post-museum transparency, legitimacy, and cultural responsiveness while also considering the social, cultural, and political shifts that are shaping the lifestyles and values of the visitors they seek to engage.

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