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Beyond Modernist Models of Aesthetic Development: The Shifting Field of Art Museum and Gallery Education in Canada

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Beyond Modernist Models of Aesthetic Development: The Shifting Field of Art Museum and
Gallery Education in Canada

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the experiences and perspectives of educators teaching children and youth about contemporary art in museums and galleries across Canada. Data were collected in semi-structured interviews with six museum and gallery educators. These educators were selected, through purposive sampling, for their professional experience and ability to speak to the role of modernist models of aesthetic development in contemporary art education. This study focused particularly on Michael Parsons' five-stage model of aesthetic development, which was published in 1987.

The findings section explored the participants' goals and values in art education, as well as their teaching strategies. Theories and models of aesthetic development were described by the participants as not aligning with their goals, values, and teaching strategies. The data indicated that the participants did not view modernist models of aesthetic development as relevant to their work with children and youth. It appears that contemporary children are capable of engaging with more diverse types of art than Parsons' model appears to suggest.

The participants described shifts that have taken place in museum and gallery education in Canada over the past three decades. These shifts indicated some possible reasons why modernist theories and models of aesthetic development did not play a significant role in the participants' professional practices. The implications these shifts may have on art education were explored, and the advantages of contemporary approaches to art education were identified.

Key words: art education, museum education, aesthetic development, contemporary art, children and youth

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Margo Smith. The research reported in Chapters 4-5 were covered by Ethics Certificate number REB22-0017, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project “Canadian Educators' Reflections on Children's Aesthetic Development and Contemporary Art Education” on March 5, 2022.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Contemporary art is, in many ways, fundamentally different from the art that came before it, so much so that Arthur Danto (1997) famously declared art to be over in the 1960s. If the art that is being produced today is very different from the art of the past, what does that mean for art education? Are established education practices sufficient for teaching today's children and youth about contemporary art?

In this qualitative, exploratory study, I was interested in exploring these questions with regards to models of aesthetic development, which demonstrate how individuals learn to look at and understand art. The most popular theories of aesthetic development were written in the 1980s, when the world, and art, looked very different. This prompted me to ask if established models of aesthetic development are still sufficient in determining our educational goals and methods. I wondered if these models reflect how contemporary children and youth interact with contemporary art.

This chapter presents an overview of the thesis. I introduce key areas of the literature relevant to this topic. From there, I summarise the purpose of my study, lay out my research questions and the methodology that I used.

Background: Michael Parsons' Theory of Aesthetic Development

Models of aesthetic development lay out a sequential process by which individuals learn to look at and understand art. These explore individuals' aesthetic experiences, those experiences where an individual is perceiving the aesthetic qualities of an object, usually a work of art (Parsons, 2002). Of course, an aesthetic experience is much more complicated than simply cataloguing the observable features of a work of art. How we experience artworks is affected not only by what we see, but also by what meaning we attach to what we see, what feelings or ideas we relate to it, how we compare it to other artworks we have seen in the past, or how we relate it to things we know about art history, etc. These are things that we learn to do. Some educational researchers have sought to understand and describe how we learn to do this over our lives. From this research, theories and models of aesthetic

development arose. It is worth noting that there are also theories about how children's artmaking skills develop, but that is not something this study will examine.

This study specifically examines the role of Michael Parsons' (1987) theory of aesthetic development in contemporary art education (with some additional exploration of Abigail Housen's (1983) theory of aesthetic development, see Chapter 2). These theories describe how individuals develop their ability to understand art, with a specific focus on paintings. Parsons (1987) spent years sitting down with individuals, ranging from preschool children to adults, and asking them to look at paintings and talk about them. In these interviews, patterns emerged where individuals with different levels of experience talked about paintings differently. They focused on different aspects of a work, and sometimes drew very different conclusions about the same work.

For example, Parsons (1987) showed individuals, of a wide variety of ages and experience levels, a reproduction of a Cubist painting of a bust of a woman weeping by Pablo Picasso. He asked them about the work and if they thought it was good. Below is a selection of responses he received from viewers of different levels of aesthetic development:

An 8-year-old (Stage 2): "It would be more sad if it was drawn better with more details and not those weird eyes. It should show real tears, and then you'd know she's really crying." (p. 1).

A 15-year-old (Stage 3): "The artist exaggerated everything, and that gets the feelings over. Her eyes look like they're coming out and she's biting their handkerchief, and that makes it stronger than if it they did it like a photograph." (p. 1).

Unidentified viewer (Stage 4): "See the grief in the tension of the lines, the pulling of on the handkerchief!" (p. 24).

A professor of Art (Stage 5): "I've gone back and forth on Picasso a number of times. At one time I thought he couldn't draw. I went from thinking that to thinking: "Oh! He is a god!" to saying, "I'm tired of Picasso" to, "Hey, wait a minute! Picasso wasn't just one person, he was a whole bunch of people, he was everybody, and you can't get enough of Picasso." (p. 150).

These comments demonstrate how individuals with different developmental levels may look at and understand the same work of art very differently. In the above comments, we can also see how art history intersects with aesthetic development. The painting that is being discussed by these viewers is in a modern, abstract style called Cubism. Figures in this style are not painted realistically, but instead are painted from multiple angles all at once, giving them a fragmented appearance. This Cubist style is very different from the more realistic art of the premodern period. We can see that for the youngest viewer, this abstraction is not appreciated, whereas some of the older/more experienced viewers see it as adding to the painting. This is just one example of the possible relationship between aesthetic development and art from different periods (for more detail, see Chapter 2).

Background: Major Periods in Western Art History Since the 1400s

If art from different periods may be understood differently by viewers of various levels of aesthetic development, it is important to have a general understanding of the differences between major western art periods. This study explores how educators teach children and youth about contemporary art (the art of today). These education practices cannot be understood without looking at how contemporary art has been shaped by major movements in western art over hundreds of years. To understand art in the context of the Western world, we need to understand where the current conversations, values and practices originated.

This history of art can be broken down into 3 major periods in the past 600 years. Art critic and philosopher, Arthur Danto (1997) argued that before the 1400s, art was understood in a very different way than it is now. The mimetic period of art emerged in the 1400s. At that time, art had the primary goal of mimesis, or the realistic representing of subjects (Danto, 1997). This period lasted until the late 1800s. Photography was invented in the early 1800s, and this posed an unprecedented challenge to the role of art. If one could use a camera to create a “perfectly accurate” image of any subject, what was the point of painting? Instead of becoming irrelevant, artist changed the way they were approaching art. In the 1880s, the French Impressionists began painting in a whole new way. Rather than realistic depictions of their subjects, these artists began early abstraction. While paintings were still

representational (they still depicted subjects from the external world), they were no longer required to be realistic.

For Danto (1997), this shift in the 1880s was the beginning of the modern art period. The modern art period coincided with modernism, which impacted all realms of Western society. During the modern art period, abstraction progressed to the point where much of art was entirely nonrepresentational; it did not depict subjects from the external world. Instead of depicting subjects, much of modern art turned inward to an exploration of the philosophical nature of art itself (Danto, 1997).

Eventually, in the 1960s, modern art reached a collapse. The single, master narrative of art that was celebrated by proponents of modern art came to an end (Danto, 1997). Many within and outside of the art world began to challenge and criticise the values celebrated by modern art. These challenges and critiques were not just confined to the art world but were seen across all areas of modern society. The postmodern art period emerged largely as a reaction to modernism. Postmodernism greatly changed art in the Western world. The art that is being made today, contemporary art, exists in this postmodern or post-postmodern context.

Over time, understandings of art have changed. In recent decades, contemporary art has emerged, and this art is yet to be fully defined. Contemporary art has been impacted by what came before it, especially by postmodern art. The changes we have seen in art have significant implications for how we teach art.

The Study

Purpose of the Study

My research aimed to explore the experiences of art educators working with children and youth in Canadian art museums and galleries to see how these might inform an assessment of modernist models of aesthetic developmental and clarify appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education for children and youth.

In my literature review, I delved deeply into Michael Parsons' (1987) theory and model of aesthetic development. I noticed that there seems to be a disconnect between what he described

children and youth (stages 2 to 3) tend to look for in art, and the type of art that is being made today (contemporary art). He described Stage 2 viewers as primarily interested in beauty and realism, and Stage 3 viewers as primarily interested in expression. It appeared that if Parsons' model is fully accurate, contemporary art might be less accessible to children and youth than premodern or modern art (see Chapter 2, Tables 3-7). If this is true, it would present significant challenges to any art educator who endeavours to teach children and youth about contemporary art. Alternatively, it is possible that contemporary art and contemporary children have given rise to new developmental patterns not anticipated by modernist models of aesthetic development. This is possible, as so much has changed in the world and in art since this model was written in the 1980s. Whichever is the case, the question of the accessibility of contemporary art to children and youth has significant implications for art education.

In order to gain a better understanding of the development of contemporary children and youth, and their ability to understand and access contemporary art, I turned to museum and gallery educators. Educators who work in art museums and galleries, especially those with extensive experience in this field, are unique in that they are usually deeply knowledgeable about both art and teaching children/youth about art. This is often not the case with elementary school teachers, who tend to be more generalist teachers. Additionally, in museums and galleries that exhibit contemporary art, the educators will have specific experience working with children and youth looking at this type of art. For these reasons, I decided that museum and gallery educators would be an ideal group to interview.

Exploration into the role these models of aesthetic development play in contemporary art education is necessary because these models were written over 30 years ago and much has changed in the art world, and broader society, since then. Theories of development play a significant role in structuring education and outdated theories, or outdated application of theories, may pose obstacles to teaching and learning. Modernist models of aesthetic development tend to promote modern values and may not account for the perspectives and values seen in postmodern and contemporary art practises. Art education needs to reflect the ever-changing art context, and models may need to be re-examined in light of the changes happening in art.

Research Problem and Questions

This study addresses the topic of how Canadian museum and gallery educators teach children and youth about contemporary art. Specifically, how these educators approach teaching about contemporary art in developmentally appropriate ways with regards to aesthetic development. The research questions this study set out to answer were the following:

1. How does individual aesthetic development affect understanding of art from different periods (pre-modern, modern, and postmodern/contemporary)?
2. What are the experiences of contemporary art educators in teaching about contemporary art to children and youth with different levels of aesthetic development?
3. Are the existing models of aesthetic development consistent with art educator observations of contemporary children interacting with contemporary art?
4. How may the experiences of contemporary art educators inform developmentally appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education?
5. How may the experiences of contemporary art educators inform how developmental theory is used in art education today?

Methodology and Methods

In my study, I conducted exploratory, qualitative research using semi-structured interviews. Even though this study could have been classified as a case study, I chose not to do this because my purpose was explicitly to investigate the participants' thinking and theorising around art education. A case study could have invited additional questions which might have detracted from this purpose.

I conducted two, one-hour semi-structured interviews with each of my six participants. The first of these interviews focused on the participants' experiences of how individual aesthetic development affects understanding of art from different periods, and their experiences of teaching contemporary art to individuals of different developmental levels. Participant responses in this interview helped me to answer my first three research questions. From there, I identified themes among participant responses that informed my second interview. In the second interview, I focused on how the participants' experiences could inform the use of developmental theory, and appropriate goals and methods in contemporary museum and gallery art education. I transcribed all the participant interviews and

conducted a thematic analysis of the findings. I did two cycles of coding, first identifying emerging themes and then creating pattern codes (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2020). This resulted in nine pattern codes (see Chapter 4).

Participants

My interest in quality art education for Canadian children and youth led me to select art museum and gallery educators as the population for my study. I selected this group because they are working in art specific institutions and, by virtue of their jobs, are very likely to be knowledgeable about both art and education. I also selected this group because they do not face the same constraints as teachers in the school system. Museum and gallery educators are only teaching about art, as opposed to teachers in the school system who may be responsible for multiple subjects. Museum and gallery educators can devote all of their work time and resources to art education, and they do so with support from the institution they work at.

Museum and gallery educators certainly face their own constraints and obstacles, and these are in part imposed by the school system who is one of the main audiences for museum and gallery education programs, but they have more freedom in how they teach about art. They also likely have much more experience and specialisation in teaching art than the average, more generalist, schoolteacher.

Thus, I used purposive sampling to select six participants. To find participants with relevant experience, I used a snowball sampling technique. I spoke to educators in museum and gallery education and asked them for their recommendations of who to talk to. This enabled me to gain access to experienced educators with a reputation of excellence in the field. I selected participants who work as art educators in Canadian museums and galleries, and who had experience teaching about contemporary visual art to children and/or youth. I specifically selected participants who had experience teaching about looking at and understanding art, not just making art (although many of my participants also had experience with this). Additionally, I looked for participants that I thought would be able to speak to developmental theory and patterns of how children and youth develop aesthetically.

Ethics

Before initiating my study, I received ethics approval from the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board. All my participants were over the age of 18, gave informed consent in writing, and could withdraw from the study at any time before the data analysis began. Participant names and the institutions they work for will remain confidential, and all participants and institutions have been given a gender-neutral pseudonym for the purpose of this thesis.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This small, qualitative study explored the experiences of six Canadian museum and gallery educators. As such, the results are not intended to be representative of the wider population of art educators. Instead, I delve deeply into these six experts' experiences working with children and youth and contemporary art in order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the accessibility of art from different periods and aesthetic development. The developmental theories I explore are western theories that were based on research with western audiences. The limitations of these theories, and the problems associated with assumptions of western universality are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 to 6.

This study focuses primarily on western visual art, and specifically the mediums of painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, and installation. I did not examine digital art, film, or performance art in depth. My interview questions and discussions with participants were aimed at how children and youth understand art. The topic of how children and youth learn to make art were minimally discussed.

Definitions

Below I discuss several broad and complex art periods and philosophies. To give the reader a clear sense of what I am describing, I have provided some loose definitions. No definition can capture the complexity and diversity of these topics; therefore, these are not all-encompassing definitions, but rather an indication of the general periods and ideas I am discussing. The exact dates and details of these terms are less important than the overall ideas and perspectives that characterise them.

The key themes in this thesis are defined as follows:

“Art museum” and **“Art gallery”**: Refers to public or private organisations that have a physical space to display art to the public for primarily artistic, cultural, and educational purposes. In the content of this

study, I do not be discussing commercial art galleries, whose primary goals are business and profit related. I use both terms, as different institutions have adopted these terms to mean similar things.

“Aesthetics”: The branch of philosophy that addresses beauty and art.

“Aesthetic experience”: Experiences where an individual grasps the aesthetic qualities of an object they are observing, usually an art object (Parsons, 2002).

“Aesthetic development”: The progressive, sequential developmental of how an individual learns how to approach and understand artworks (Parsons, 1987).

“The Mimetic Period”: An art period that lasted from approximately the 1400s to the 1880s and was characterised by the realistic representation of subjects (Danto, 1997). Some of my participants referred to artworks from this period as “historical” artworks.

“The Modern Art Period”: An art period that lasted from approximately the 1880s and the 1960s, which demonstrated modernist approaches and values.

“The Postmodern Art Period”: An Art Period that lasted from the mid to late 1900s and was characterised by reactions to modernism.

“Contemporary art”: Art produced today and in the recent past.

“Modernism”: A broad social movement and philosophy that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century. Modernism was characterised my values of positivism, rationalism, individualism, and progress.

“Postmodernism”: A broad social movement and philosophy that emerged in the mid to late-20th century as a reaction to modernism. Postmodernism was characterised by scepticism, pluralism, relativism, and the rejection of modern values.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. In this chapter, I have laid out an overview of the research study, including relevant concepts and theories, the research context and methodology. In Chapter 2, I discuss the literature related to western art history and major art movements as well as prominent theories of aesthetic development. In Chapter 3, I describe the detailed methods and methodology I

used in this study. In Chapter 4, I present an overview of my findings, which is then analysed in Chapter 5. In the sixth and final Chapter, I present my findings and the implications they have for art education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I examine literature that is relevant to this study, which falls into two major categories. First is an overview of western art history since the 1400s. This is a complex topic with nuances which cannot be captured in this literature review, however, understanding some of the broad shifts in art history was key to the development of my research questions and the analysis of my findings. As such, I provide a brief overview of what I have learned about these periods from the literature, with the understanding that this is by no means a comprehensive history of art. Secondly, I explore the concept of aesthetic development. I provide an overview of two of the most prominent theories of aesthetic development, those by Michael Parsons (1987) and Abigail Housen (1983). While I compare these two theories, this study primarily focuses on Parsons' theory as it deals more with children and youth. I end this chapter with a discussion of some of the correlations I have observed between these two fields of literature, which have led to my research questions.

Periods in Art History Since the 1400s

Art from the Mimetic Period to the Postmodern Period

In this portion of my literature review, I provide an overview of what I have learned about the broad shifts that have taken place in art history since the 1400s. The details of this art history ended up being less important to my findings than I initially expected, but the shifts described in this literature review were key to the development of my research questions. I am not an expert in art history and the actual art that was being made by artists in these periods was much more diverse and complicated than any overview of art history can describe. However, it is important for the understanding of this study, to get a understand some of the narratives and major shifts that have taken place in western art history.

The "Era of Art". Arthur Danto (1997) wrote about the history of western visual art as having three major periods since the 1400s. The first two periods make up what he calls the "Era of Art," which

lasted from the 1400s until the 1960s, and represented a time where art was structured around a master narrative.

The Mimetic Period and the Emergence of the Concept of the Artist. Danto sees the 1400s as the beginning of the Mimetic Period. This mimetic period was characterised by “the progressive conquest of visual appearances” and a “mastering of strategies” to realistically replicate the world in art (Danto, 1997, p. 48). The term “mimesis” refers to the realistic representation of reality in art, which was the goal of art in this period, according to Danto. In this context, the terms “reality” and the “real world” are used by Danto to describe the world that exists outside of art (as opposed to the representations of that world that can be found in painting, sculptures, etc.). Danto described this period as the beginning of the “Era of Art” because he argued that it was in this period that the current concept of “the artist” emerged. Before this period, images played a different role than they do now. Danto said that “it was not that those images were not art in some large sense, but their being art did not figure in their production, since the concept of art had not as yet really emerged in general consciousness” (p. 3). These images “played quite a different role in the lives of people than works of art came to play when the concept at last emerged” (Danto, 1997, p. 3).

Danto (1997) argued that before the 1400’s the concept of “the artist” as we currently understand it did not exist. Prior to the 1400s, artists were organised into guilds and were viewed as artisans and craftsman (Holt, 2001). It was only in the Renaissance that the concept of the artists became important, and this was partially influenced by the writings of Giorgio Vasari about the lives of artists (Danto, 1997). Around this time, artists could sometimes work independently and the image of the artists as an educated individual emerged (Holt, 2001). Previously, visual arts were viewed as the product of industry and knowledge, something rational and pre-planned. In Vasari’s time artistic creation was associated with inspiration and divine intelligence (Holt, 2001). The image of the artist was that of an “individual genius possessing divine mania” (p.26) and creating through inspiration and grace (Holt, 2001). Before Vasari’s time, it was believed that great art could be produced by study and effort. In Vasari’s time, training was still important, but the element of transcendent, divine grace and intuition was deemed necessary and could not be taught (Holt, 2001).

In the early 1800s, photography was invented. This posed a serious question about what the role of art was in society now that photographs could “perfectly” capture their subjects. Photography set the standard for what visual truth was, even though cameras capture images very differently than the human eye (Danto, 2013). The goal of mimesis no longer made sense after the invention of photography and art had to change to remain relevant. Some saw photography as the end of painting, as photos could perfectly capture a subject in a way a painting could not. Instead, painting adapted to this new context. The Mimetic Period ended in the 1880s with the emergence of the Modern Period in the 1880s.

The Modern Period. In the Mimetic Period, a painting acted like a window through which the subject was viewed (Danto, 1997). The physicality of the paintings, its surface, and brushstrokes, were looked past. When mimesis was no longer the defining theory of art, the brushstroke became important (Danto, 1997). At this point, a painting became an end rather than a means, and the painting was now *looked at* rather than *looked through* (Danto, 1997). In Impressionism, the first modern art movement, the brushstroke became visible in the sense that they were now looked at rather than looked through.

Clement Greenberg, an American art critic, was one of the most influential thinkers in the Modern Period. He believed that art should exhibit what was “unique and irreducible” (Greenberg, 1993, p. 86) to itself and its medium, rendering each type of art (painting, sculpture, etc.) “pure.” For example, modern painting embraced the flat surface of the canvas (Greenberg, 1993). Photography of the day, with flattened images and shortened depth, was something that artists like Manet imitated in their work (Danto, 2013). Greenberg (1993) believed that paintings should reject anything it might share with sculpture, anything that was not unique to painting itself, including the representation or illusion of three-dimensional space. Greenberg saw Manet (in the Impressionist movement) as the first to embrace this flatness in painting. Danto (2013) described the history of modernism as “the history of narrowing the space between background and foreground” (p. 111). This flattening was not just an aesthetic choice, it was also a philosophical one.

With these changes, the narrative of art “moved forward not in terms of increasingly adequate representations, but rather in terms of increasingly adequate philosophical representations of the nature

of art” (Danto, 1997, p. 66). Art turned inward and began to examine its own nature. It moved from “the eye to the psyche, and from mimesis to expression” (Danto, 1997, p. 65). In Modernism, the subject became art itself. Modernism was made up of many art movements and each was interested in the philosophical truth of art and in defining what art was (Danto, 1997). This need to define art was new, because before Modernism, the goal of art was clear: mimesis.

The End of the “Era of Art”. Under Modernism, art became an end, something valid on its own terms (Greenberg, 1961), rather than a means of representing reality. Danto (1997) described this goal of modern art as if artists were trying to collapse the distinction between art and reality. Art was not a representation of reality; it was its own reality. This was an “impossible theory” that “became manifest in the 1960s when artists produced objects so like real objects [...] that it became clear that the real philosophical question was how to prevent them from simply collapsing into reality” (Danto, 1997, p. 71).

Abstraction had abandoned representation, but it still was connected to the art before it through its mediums (oil, watercolour, etc.). Eventually artists also turned away from traditional mediums (Danto, 2013). This further brought art into reality. According to Danto (2013), “bringing reality into art, when reality had been what art was to represent, changed the way people thought of art” (p. 20).

Eventually, art and reality did collapse, as seen with Andy Warhol’s 1964 *Brillo Box*, which were recreations of a commercial soap box that were visually indistinguishable from the real-life soap boxes sold in stores (Danto 1997). Modernism ended when the distinction between works of art and real objects could no longer be determined visually, and “when it became imperative to quit a materialist aesthetic in favour of an aesthetic of meaning” (Danto, 1997, p. 77). For Danto, this was not only the end of modernism, but also the end of the Era of Art, with its master narrative. Danto (1997) stated that, with the end of modernism:

“There is no single direction. There are indeed no directions. And that is what I meant by the end of art when I began to write about it in the mid-1980’s. Not that art died or that painters stopped painting, but that the history of art, structured narratively, had come to an end.” (p. 126)

The Postmodern Period

Postmodern art was the art that emerged after modern art. With this art, art history no longer seems like a “stream” that moves in a discernible direction (at least in retrospect). Instead, it is like a mosaic or jigsaw puzzle (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). There are simultaneous theories and movements, but these have something in common: their criticisms of what has gone before (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). Postmodern art was largely a reaction to modernism, or a “split” (Emery, 2002) with modernism. By the end of the modern period, the institutions and practices of modern art had begun to be criticised for being exclusionary and elitist. The master narrative of modernism, once seen as an objective truth, was now seen as a western, patriarchal narrative that promoted racist and sexist ideas about art. In the modern period, the art world was organised into movements. In the postmodern period, there was more of an interest in emerging artists (Danto, 2013). Danto (2013) explained that multiculturalism and Feminism were not movements (in art) so much as results of a curatorial decision to feature the art of more diverse artists.

In postmodernism, objective truth was replaced with more nuanced and diverse perspectives that could exist simultaneously. In postmodernism, theories were seen “less in terms of truth or falsity than in terms of power and oppression” (Danto, 1997, p. 145). These broad shifts happened across society, not just in art. While the postmodern period has ended, its legacy has impacted how artists and art educators think about art in the contemporary period.

The history of the image of the artist, as it emerged in the 1400s, was further shaped by the narrative of Clement Greenberg. With Greenberg, the artist was even more materialistic, with the inspiration coming from the materials themselves, rather than divine inspiration (Holt, 2001). Many of Greenberg’s views were rejected by Postmodernism. Greenberg’s artist was inwardly and aesthetically focused, whereas the postmodern artist was “predominantly outwardly focused and concerned with contributing to the social and artistic rather than the aesthetic dialogue of the time” (Holt, 2001, p. 34).

Contemporary Art

The term contemporary art refers to the art being made today and in the recent past. It is not a period, like modern art or postmodern art, because the art of any time is contemporary during that time. Contemporary art is always contemporary to something; it is a “relational condition” (Meyer, 2013, p.

35). Meyer (2013) described our present contemporary art as emerging in the 1960s and being fully present by the 1980s. He noted some factors that have influenced contemporary art: the collapse of the Soviet Union, globalisation, the emergence of digital media and culture, neoliberalism, capitalism, and spectator culture. There are, of course, many other influences, but these give us a sense of the context in which contemporary art emerged.

Shifting Approaches to Education: Modernism to Postmodernism

As a society’s values shift, so do educational practices. Gardener (1990) discussed the way art education has evolved over time. Historically, much of art education took place in the studio (Gardener, 1990). More formal art education, in the West, began in the mid to late 19th century, and largely focused on mastering realistic drawing and skills, rather than perception and reflection (Gardener, 1990). Prior to World War Two, schools tended to take a mimetic approach to art production (Emery, 2002). After World War Two, the teaching of art aligned with modernist tenets (Emery, 2002). In the 20th century, in the United States, art education shifted away from a focus on realistic drawing skills, giving students more choices in how they make art (Gardener, 1990).

During the modern period, art education aligned with modern values. With the rise of Postmodernism, these values were challenged. Some saw postmodernism as an opportunity to address “elitist and alienating elements of modernism,” while others saw postmodernism as a threat to “long-held standards in the arts and education” (Emery, 2002, p. 6). Many modern values have persisted past the modern period and are still present in education today. Parsons and Blocker (1993) contrast the central assumptions of modernism with those of postmodernism (see Table 1), which impact how we view art education.

Table 1

A Summary of the Central Assumptions of Modernism and Postmodernism According to Parsons and Blocker (1993)

Assumptions of Modernism	Assumptions of Postmodernism
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art history as progressive • The role of art in social progress • Traditional canon • Objectivity and universality • The autonomy of the artwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plurality of art history • Art history as politics • The traditional art canon as social dominance • Objectivity and individual meaning • The artwork as the reader's construction
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Similarly to Parsons and Blocker's assumptions, Emery (2002) described 9 key modernist and postmodernist orientations in art education. These are described in the Table 2. Emery (2002) noted that postmodernism challenged many of the practices that were viewed as fundamental in art education. However, she argued that modernist principles "still prevail" (Emery, 2002, p. 2) in most art programs and have not been challenged in education to the extent that they have been in the wider art world.

Table 2

Key Modernist and Postmodernist Orientations in Art Education According to Emery (2002, p. 34-35 and 70-71)

Key Modernist Orientations in Art Education	Key Postmodernist Orientations in Art Education
The key drive in modern art is " <u>individualism</u> , attained through self-expression and creativity" (p. 43).	Individualism is understood as a western concept and <u>the individual is understood in context</u> , as participants in their culture.

<p><u>Originality</u> is highly valued and Avant Garde artists are seen as role models.</p>	<p>There is an embrace of <u>aesthetic pluralism</u> and a denial of dominant styles or movements.</p>
<p><u>Art is valued for “art’s sake”</u> and need not serve any purpose other than self-expression. Students are encouraged to explore visual imagery without the need for realism or narrative.</p>	<p>Postmodernists are concerned with <u>meaning</u> in art, over formalism.</p>
<p><u>Fine art</u> is valued above low art or kitsch, which are discouraged.</p>	<p>The modernist <u>divisions between fine and popular art are challenged</u> and may be deliberately fused</p>
<p>There is an assumption of the <u>universality</u> of western skills and content.</p>	<p>A more <u>multicultural</u> approach is taken, and previously marginalised groups are given a voice.</p>
<p><u>Art criticism</u> is taught, and students are encouraged to read the writings of critics as well respond to artworks through similar methods of analysis.</p>	<p>The privileged <u>role of critics is challenged</u>, and students are encouraged to read diverse criticism and write with their own voice.</p>
<p><u>Art history is understood as progressive</u> and is focused on western art history.</p>	<p>Meta-narratives are replaced with “mini-narratives” and students are encouraged to question how knowledge is constructed. Art knowledge is acknowledged to be <u>non-linear</u>.</p>

<p>Artists discussed are <u>predominantly male</u>, with the female nude being a common subject matter.</p>	<p>Representations of people are understood as “statements of positioning.” Issues of <u>gender</u> and identity are explored, and female artists are more represented.</p>
<p>Modernists are <u>optimistic</u> and “look ahead to a bright future and see the past as a stepping stone to the present” (p. 35). There is the optimistic belief that like can be improved through the search for a pure aesthetic. Art is a method to find identity and autonomy.</p>	<p>Assumptions and hierarchical values are challenged, and <u>meaning is deconstructed</u>. Knowledge is not viewed as fixed or stable. Rather than an optimistic outlook, there is more <u>scepticism and postmodern doubt</u>.</p>

In Alberta specifically, the 1985 art curriculum (which is still in use) was shaped by the conflicting art movements of the time, modernism, and postmodernism, and reacted against certain postmodern ideas (Wallin, 2007). Wallin (2007) believed that this curriculum “stage[d] the recuperation of skill development and focused analysis” (p. 4) that had been abandoned by conceptual and postmodern art. It pushed back against postmodernism’s anti-aesthetics and its tasteless and incomprehensible works, with an “advocacy for a return to aesthetics and ‘good sense’” (Wallin, 2007, p. 2). Wallin (2007) described how this curriculum demonstrates modernist values by:

- Focusing on the organisation of visual materials
- Privileging of “relation of the eye to the mental process of meaning making” (pp. 2-3)
- Conceiving of students as “dis-embodied” (p. 3)
- An intellectualised approach that places the body at a distance
- Inserting art into the discourse of rationality
- Equating systemic instruction with artistic proficiency

According to Wallin, these modern values were observed at the postsecondary level as well. In response to postmodern movements and conceptual art, “the art education institution enacted a return to art fundamentals, orienting the classroom to the transmission model of skill development and rage for technical mastery. At heart, it was a strategic recuperation of modernism” (Wallin, 2007, pp. 4-5).

Concluding Thoughts on Modernism and Postmodernism

Modernism and Postmodernism not only affect the art that can be taught in art education, but they also impact how educators approach art education itself. In many ways, art education is more complex than it has been in the past. Postmodern art defies definition, offers no clear directions, and lacks central theories (Emery, 2002). With the end of the “Era of Art,” as Danto described it, postmodern art is more difficult to teach than the art of the past. Emery (2002) described the “loss of centre” in the art world as providing “many complexities for art educators teaching students about contemporary art” (p. 9). Some authors have suggested that, in education, the question is not whether we adopt a modernist or postmodernist approach, rather it is how we navigate both approaches in the classroom and strike a balance between them (Emery, 2002, Parsons & Blocker, 1993).

Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Development

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy which deals with beauty and art. Parsons and Blocker (1993) take an approachable view of aesthetics, describing aesthetics as “thinking hard about some of the questions that occur to us in our interactions with art” (p. 2). They believe that topics of aesthetics arise naturally as we make, enjoy, and discuss art and that children are naturally inclined to such philosophical questioning. They believe that aesthetics should be included in discussions about art with children.

Aesthetic Experience

According to Parsons (2002), an aesthetic experience is “the grasp of aesthetic qualities of [an] object” (p. 26). Aesthetic experience is different from other experiences because it is enjoyed “for its own sake, it has no motive other than itself” (Parsons & Blocker, 1993, p. 29). An aesthetic experience includes “a sense of heightened awareness and of control that allows us to contemplate the qualities of

the object” (Parsons, 2002, p. 26) even if they are adverse qualities like pain or tragedy. Although this is sometimes described as emotional detachment, “it is accompanied by a sense of intense engagement with the object” (Parsons, 2002, p. 26). In an aesthetic experience, there is often “a sense of freedom, of release from the preoccupations of the self, and of insight into the world” (Parsons, 2002, p. 26).

Greenberg (1999) described aesthetics as a type of intuition. He contrasted aesthetic intuition with “ordinary” intuition, which “informs, appraises, orients you, and in doing that always points to other things than itself, to other things than the act of intuition itself” (Greenberg, 1999, p. 3). In contrast, aesthetic intuition is an end rather than a means. He demonstrated the difference between these two types of intuition by describing what happens when you look at the sky: “the intuition that gives you the colour of the sky turns into an aesthetic intuition when it stops telling you what the weather is like and becomes purely an experience of the colour” (p. 4). Aesthetic intuition and experience are personal, according to Greenberg, but we can learn from others. For example, another person can draw your attention to aspects of an artwork that you may not have otherwise noticed. Because of this, others can help us to develop aesthetic intuition.

Models of Aesthetic Development

This section explores the models of aesthetic development by Michael Parsons (1987) and Abigail Housen (1983) as they are considered the two most structured theories of aesthetic development (Almeida-Rocha et al., 2020). Aesthetic development is the sequence of development of aesthetic experience and understanding of art (Parsons, 1997). Both models describe five sequential stages of aesthetic development. Abigail Housen’s 1983 model of aesthetic development described the individual development of adults. She used stream-of-consciousness interviews where participants voiced their responses while looking at reproductions of works of art. Her research included over 200 participants, in several studies. Michael Parsons’ 1987 model of aesthetic development described how individuals develop from preschool aged children to adults. He used semi-structured interviews to elicit participant responses to reproductions of artworks. His study included over 300 participants over a span of 10 years. I chose to focus my research on Parsons’ model as his addresses the development of children and youth.

Michael Parsons' 1987 Model of Aesthetic Experience

Methodology. Michael Parsons (1987) conceptualised a developmental model of understanding art and aesthetic experience. This model was based on interviews he and his colleagues conducted with over 300 participants. The participants ranged from preschool aged children to art professors and the study was conducted over a span of 10 years. The participants were chosen largely based on convenience and were not a representative sample of any population.

In each semi-structured interview, Parsons presented the participant with reproductions of five-six paintings. This included works made between the early 1880s and the mid-1900s. Parsons asked the participants questions to elicit their responses to the works. His questions included:

1. Describe this painting to me.
2. What is it about? Is that a good subject for a painting?
3. What feelings do you see in the painting?
4. What about the colours? Are they good colours?
5. What about the form (things that repeat)? What about texture?
6. Was this a difficult painting to do? What would be difficult?
7. Is this a good painting? Why?

Parsons would probe the participants to elaborate on their responses and give examples from the paintings. He developed a scoring system to identify the stage of the participant. From these interviews, Parsons created a 5-stage model of aesthetic development.

Stages of Aesthetic Development. Parsons' five-stage model described how individuals develop in a sequential order.

Stage 1: Favouritism (Preschool Aged Children). The first stage, Favouritism, is seen in preschool aged children. At this age, children are unable to take the perspective of others, whether that be other viewers or the artist. Children's response to paintings are characterised by egocentrism and free associations to the work. Children associate the painting with things from their own experience. They do not distinguish between liking a painting and judging it as good.

Stage 2: Beauty and Realism (Elementary School Aged Children). In stage two, Beauty and Realism, the dominant idea that shapes our understanding of a painting is its subject. Beautiful and realistic subjects are preferred, and a beautiful painting must have a beautiful subject. We take for granted what is to be considered beautiful, based on our socialisation, and we assume others will agree with us. Our judgements of a painting are based on its beauty, realism, and the skill it took to make it. This stage represents an advance on the previous one because an understanding of realism requires us to be able to understand the viewpoint of others and distinguish between what is there for any viewer to see, and what we are personally reminded of. Our judgements are now based on aspects of the painting, rather than our personal taste and favourites.

Stage 3: Expressiveness (Some Adolescents). In stage three, Expressiveness, the dominant idea that shapes our understanding of a work is its expressiveness. This includes the expression of the artist's experience and the experience the work produces in the viewer. The expression is seen as subjective and hard to define. We may be uncertain of how to search a painting for meaning. We find the expression in a painting "in a global way" (Parsons, 1987, p. 98) and if we are pressed for details on the meaning, we will look at the subject and colour. We now appreciate creativity, originality, and depth of feeling in a work. Realism is no longer required and is simply seen as a means to express something. The subject of a painting is now seen as more of a theme than a concrete object.

There is a new awareness of the interiority of others' experiences and the inward nature of our own experience. At this stage we do not tend to see the value in discussing works of art because we are more focused on our individual gut reactions and "we have an internal, nonverbal, and infallible sense of the painting's meaning" (Parsons, 1987, p. 71). Questions of technique are a topic of discussion for critics, but we have little understanding of this and see little value in it.

Parsons argued that possibly the most fundamental feature of Stage 3 is that we now conceive of the meaning of paintings in individual terms. We are concerned with the experience of one person, on one occasion. The meaning of a painting can only be determined by the experience of the viewer and the artist. We are now aware that we interpret paintings and grasp meaning in our own subjectivity.

We can see that different people have different experiences of a painting, and we can see these experiences as valid and genuine. What is important is the genuineness of the response, more than if it correlates with the artist's intention. We know that there is a technical side to paintings, and that experts use this as a basis of their judgements, however this has little meaning to us. We have the sense that our feelings give us more genuine access to the painting than the opinions of experts do.

Stage 4: Style and Form (No Longer Correlated With Age). In stage four, Style and Form, our understandings of paintings are dominated by ideas of style, form and medium. Medium has its own character; it can affect the expression of a work in ways that the artist may not be aware of. In Stage 4, medium is no longer a means to an end, something that is looked through in order to see the subject (as seen in Stage 2), or a means of expressing ideas and emotions (Stage 3), but as important on its own. It cannot be separated from the painting.

Medium can be combined through elements like composition and texture to produce form. Medium and form make up style. Style is no longer just realism (as seen in Stage 2) or seen as characteristic of an artist (Stage 3), or the "mysterious" idea of technique (Stage 3). Now, "style is characteristic of an attitude held in a time and place" (Parsons, 1987, p. 88).

A major shift from Stage 3 is that we now understand the significance of a painting as a social achievement, rather than an individual one. Parsons stated, "a painting is significant because it is related to other paintings and to ideas about paintings" (Parsons, 1987, p. 87). Paintings are seen as a part of the art world, not existing in isolation. A painting's "meaning is constituted by what can be discursively said by the group about it, and this is more than what is grasped inwardly by an individual at one time" (Parsons, 1987, p. 24). We see that paintings exist within a tradition. Styles have a history to their interpretations and knowledge about styles can reveal relationships between paintings.

We are able to take the perspective of the tradition as a whole, rather than just the perspective of other individuals. We can point to aspects of a painting (medium, style, form) in a newly intersubjective way. Interpretations can now be corrected and improved, and we are able to see the value in art criticism. Aesthetic judgements are seen as having the possibility to be reasonable and

objective. These judgements and interpretations are based on aspects of the painting that are public and there for anyone to see. We can point to them to make reasoned arguments about the painting.

At Stage 3, we understand the artist as a “free and individual agent, doing what she wanted in her paintings. She is not understood as a product of a culture, of a time and place, having problems and tendencies specific to a time and generation” (Parsons, 1987, p. 116). In Stage 4, we now understand that “an artist inevitably speaks for her time, expressing often more than she knows” (Parsons, 1987, p. 116).

Stage 5: *Autonomy*. In Stage 5, Autonomy, understandings of art are shaped by judgement. Judgement occurs at all stages but becomes a dominant area in Stage 5. In Stage 1, judgement is not distinguished from liking a painting. In Stage 2, judgements are based on beauty and realism, and these are taken for granted as facts. In stages 3 and 4, we are aware that we interpret paintings. We are able to distinguish interpretation from perception, but we do not distinguish interpretation from judgement. The difference is that “interpretation is the reconstruction of meaning; judgement is the evaluation of the worth of the meaning” (Parsons, 1987, p. 151).

In Stage 5 we can distinguish interpretation from judgement “because we can question the ideals used in the interpretive phase” (Parsons, 1987, p. 123). As such, judgement becomes explicit and individually responsible (Parsons, 1987). Stage 5 is postconventional and we no longer accept the authority of tradition in making judgements, we make them on our own authority. We critique the social constructed norms that form the ideals by which we make interpretations. We are now able to question established views and take a perspective on culture itself.

Our judgments are reasoned in that they refer to aspects of the painting that anyone can see. At Stage 5, judgement “is the self-conscious articulation of the meanings we find in the painting and of our sense of their value” (Parsons, 1987, p. 123). Our judgments tend to be more complex than simply judging what is good or bad.

In this context, Parsons described judgement as a cyclical process that involves reflection on ourselves and our experiences, in conversation with others. We question our experiences and try to determine which aspects of them are only private. We continually re-examine our response. Whereas,

at Stage 4, we saw the meaning of a work as finished, at Stage 5 we understand that the significance of a painting can change over time and context. A work had a significance when it was created and this significance changes as society and the artworld change. This means that we need to continue to re-examine our judgements to determine if they continue to be valid.

Judgement is tied to preference, as our judgements are “ultimately based on what we like” (Parsons, 1987, p. 124), but we are able to distinguish what aspects of our response are based on the character of the painting we are looking at. The connection between judgement and preference ties the question of judgement to the self. Parsons explained, “as we clarify our response to a painting, we also clarify our self— our own feelings, meanings, ideals” (Parsons, 1987, p. 124). Articulating our judgements, and the reasons behind them, is a way of understanding ourselves better and clarifying our experiences.

At Stage 3, we found paintings valuable if they were meaningful. At Stage 5, we consider the worth of the meaning itself. At Stage 4, we judged a painting as good if it was a good example of its style. At Stage 5 we judge the value of the style itself: what it can express, what it can do for us. We do not have time to explore all styles in detail, so we must choose between them. Parsons stated that “it is as if a style is a direction to move in, a possible self, and we must ask whether that self is worth becoming” (Parsons, 1987, p. 151). In this way, “the experience of art at the postconventional level is a constant exploration of our experience, a trying-out of the self that we might be, and a continuing conversation with others about both” (Parsons, 1987, p. 152).

Abigail Housen’s 1983 Model of Aesthetic Development

Methodology. Housen’s model (1983) explained how viewers move from naive to sophisticated in a series of 5 developmental stages. Her research involved over 200 participants across several studies. Housen’s research used an unstructured, stream-of-consciousness interview where participants spoke out loud as they looked a reproduction of an artwork. She chose this technique, rather than asking participants questions, as she did not want to interfere with or distort their responses. Housen felt that this technique “can capture the spontaneous thought and natural feelings of an observer as he views a work of art” (p. 48).

During the interviews, the participant was given three reproductions of paintings and asked to select their least and most favourite. The participant looks at the reproductions, one at a time, and is asked to “talk out loud as he looks at one of his selections, verbalizing anything that comes to mind” (p. 50). The interviewer does not interfere with the process, other than to nod or ask, “What are you looking at now?” (p. 51) or “Is that all?” (p. 51). The stream-of-consciousness interviews were analysed with a scoring manual. The artworks she showed the participants were all Western paintings from the 20th century and she specifically chose transitional pieces that bridged realism and abstraction.

Housen’s model focused on older participants in comparison to Parsons’ model. She found that with the participants, Stage 3 was not attained before age 21, Stage 4 was not attained before age 25, and Stage 5 was not attained before age 52.

Stages of Aesthetic Development. Housen’s five-stage model described how individuals develop in a sequential order.

Stage 1: Accountative Viewer. The Accountative viewer lacks a framework to organise their responses to artwork. They use “sense perceptions of the subject matter” (p. 142) to find meaning in the work and do not question things outside of the appearances of the work. Often comments focus on shapes and colours. The viewer looks at the work in a cursory and unsystematic way, randomly focusing on some details but not others. These brief encounters with the works do not allow for the development of emotional involvement or full exploration, interpretation, or reflection upon the works. The comments made lack complexity. Despite this, the experience of looking at the work leaves a lasting impact on the viewer and will affect how they view artworks in the future.

The Accountative viewer’s comments are like those of “a narrator of an action-filled movie” (p. 142). The viewer relates details of the work to their own memories, whether these be common experiences or personal memories. These memories form the basis of the story the viewer tells. The viewers’ comments have an “egocentric and Idiosyncratic tone” (p. 143) and may lack generalisability. Comments may show preferences based on personal rules and take for granted that others will agree.

Stage 2: Constructive Viewer. Rather than jumping from detail to detail randomly, as a Stage 1 viewer does, the Constructive viewer explores details one at a time. Comments are based on

experience, memory, and perception. Memory now expands beyond personal memory to include communal or societal information. The viewer wants to separate themselves from the art object and move away from egotistical valuations. They link their opinions to formal properties of the artwork. There is an awareness that there are existing standards for judging artworks, which are understood by well-informed viewers.

The viewer begins to consider rudimentary aesthetic traditions, principles, and values. A concern for the formal properties of the work emerges. The Stage 2 viewer constructs a framework for viewing and classifying the artwork. They now see an artwork as the product of an artist and a time. Because of this new awareness of the context of an artwork, the viewer “becomes cautious of the personal, the associative, the emotional, and the subjective” (p. 148). Their emotional reaction “goes somewhat underground” (p. 148). The viewer distances themselves from the object, now viewing it as having “a life of its own” (p. 150).

The constructive viewer looks at the medium of the work and notes the technique used and how well the work is done. This evaluation is based on the accuracy of the representation of the subject, rather than on personal rules as was done in Stage 1. The Stage 2 viewer believes that there is a right way of doing and seeing things and has their own definition of what that is. They assume others will agree with them. The viewer also judges the work based on hard work, technical proficiency, craftsmanship and the time it took to make. They expect artworks to replicate the natural world. The Stage 2 viewer sees artwork as having a utilitarian role, whether that role is moral, didactic, or practical.

Stage 3: Classifying Viewer. The Stage 3 viewer looks at artworks diagnostically, searching for clues to the artworks hidden message. This viewer knows that an artwork may have more than one message. The goal of looking at an artwork is to analyse the work, and this is done systematically. The viewer engages with the artwork in an iterative process, constantly reviewing the work to confirm their hypotheses.

The Stage 3 viewer believes that the artworks meaning can be decoded from both the information present in the work as well as information not present, such as art history. They connect what they find in the work to their knowledge of art history and other works they have seen.

Comparisons are made. The viewer tries to place the work into an aesthetic, historical or formal context. Attention is particularly paid to details of the subject matter, formal elements and artists and art schools.

Similar to Stage 2, the viewer buries their emotions, not wanting them to interfere with the search for a message in the artwork. They need to be objective and get it right. They may note expressive aspects of a work, but they conceal or justify the impact these aspects have on them. All personal likes and dislikes are tied to formal statements about the work, and they refer to conventional rules.

Stage 4: Interpretive Viewer. A Stage 4 viewer focuses on the expressive aspect of an artwork and has “a resurgence of the emotional, sensual response” (p. 155). This viewer relies on and cultivates their intuitive reading of artworks. Rigorous analysis is no longer the focus of this viewer, but analysis is not rejected. Instead, it is used to serve the emotional encounter with the artwork. Skills such as distancing, objectivity, and flexibility of perspective are redirected with this new goal. Rather than distancing from emotions, the viewer responds to, accepts, and then reflects in their own emotional reactions.

Associations at this stage are less personal and relate to broader ideas and themes that have meaning for many people. The viewer does not assume that everyone will see what they see, but they also are comfortable assuming that anyone could see what they see. The Stage 4 viewer assumes they can justify their remarks in a way that allows others to see their perspective. This includes pointing to what the artist put in the artwork as well as common aspects of the human experience.

While the Stage 4 viewer understands that there are many themes within a work, they prefer to delve into one. This helps them create a personal bond with the artwork. The viewer is immersed in the work, making subtle distinctions and “weaving theories as [they] notice how the art work's nuances manifest some vision” (p. 158). They are aware that there are many responses to a work, even within one viewer.

The Stage 4 viewer appears less rigorous than a Stage 3 viewer as they build their case for the work’s meaning. This viewer still gives justifications, qualifications, and explanations, but these no

longer control the response. The viewer supports their emotional reactions, while leaving them intact. Emotions are what give meaning to the encounter with a work. The viewers comments convey a sense of pleasure and satisfaction.

The expressive qualities of the work engage the viewers emotions and give meanings to the encounter with the artwork. The viewer tries to comment on these meanings, searching for symbols that suggest these invisible feelings. The viewer described their reactions in metaphors. They focus on how the expressive features of the work signify meaning, more than what meaning they signify. The viewer synthesises many, contrasting or complimentary impressions of the work. A comparative model is a way for the viewer to analyse the subtleties and reflect “the paradoxical, transient nature of the artwork” (p. 159).

Stage 5: Re-creative Viewer. The Stage 5 viewer approaches artworks with general knowledge about art, and often information about the specific work they are viewing. This knowledge is a point of departure for the encounter. They willingly transcend standards, rules, and theories, like the artist does in making a work of art. They also understand that a work brings with it a rich history which must be recognised.

The Stage 5 viewer playfully encounters the work as they would encounter a friend. The artwork becomes the guide as the viewer responds, and lets the work speak. The Stage 5 viewer has an “almost childlike stance” (p. 162) which is complemented by their trained eye. This descending vision and the proven standards the viewer know about help them to comprehend the work. Emotional responses and feelings are seen as only part of the response to an artwork. Emotions are “alluded to rather than trumpeted” (p. 165).

The viewer tries to discover the problems, choices, and solutions of the artist. They view details in the artwork as intentional. The viewer briefly dwells on the how and what of the artwork, then moves beyond this into the suggestions, possibilities and transformations encoded into the work.

The Stage 5 viewer “must move freely from past memories to timeless insights, contemplating as well as inquiring into the meaning embedded in and transcendent of the work’s material elements” (p. 163). By reflecting on the artwork, the viewer gains insight into themselves, culture, and the human

condition. In order to do this, the viewer responds knowingly and feelingly. Housen stated “as the viewer re-creates the object, the object, too, transforms the viewer” (p. 166). The viewer gains, by recreation of the artwork, a “momentary vision” (p. 167) of the artistic process which allows them to “penetrate life’s meaning” (p. 167).

Comparing Parsons’ and Housen’s Models

Parsons and Housen’s models are two of the most recent models (Lachapelle, 1991) and offer the most structured theories of aesthetic development (Almeida-Rocha, et al., 2020). Parsons’ model is heavily influenced by the work of Kohlberg and Piaget, whereas Housen’s is based on the work of Baldwin (Almeida-Rocha, et al., 2020). Parsons and Housen’s models share the belief that age is a relevant determinant of aesthetic development (Almeida-Rocha, et al., 2020). However, both authors view experience looking at art as the most important factor in aesthetic development (Lachapelle, 1991).

Methodology. Parsons’ methodology involved semi-structured interviews with the interviewer asking questions and giving prompts. Housen’s methodology, on the other hand, involved the use of stream of consciousness interviews without the interference of the interviewer. Her goal with this was to avoid influencing the participants responses. Parsons commented that Housen’s stream of consciousness method did not seem useful to him because “it seems to assume that anything we say while standing in front of a painting is part of an aesthetic response” (1988, p. 115).

Stages. Almeida-Rocha, et al. (2020) compare Parsons and Housen’s models. The 5 stages each author laid out have both similarities and differences (Almeida-Rocha, et al., 2020):

1. Both authors describe Stage 1 as being characterised by free associations, where they start with the artwork they are viewing and move to discussions of their personal experiences.
2. Both authors describe Stage 2 as departing from personal experience and seeing art as a form of communication which values the artist’s intentions.
3. In Stage 3, Housen described the viewer as a “classifier” who analysis and critiques based on knowledge such as art movements and styles. Parsons’ Stage 3 focuses instead on expression.

4. Parsons and Housen define Stage 4 quite differently. There are similarities between Parsons' Stage 4, which described viewers as focused on art history to help understand artworks, and Housen's Stage 3, which described viewers as interpretive.
5. At Stage 5, Housen and Parsons both describe the viewer as using theoretical knowledge as well as a personal critique of the artwork. They both describe the viewer as moving away from traditional or established ways of thinking.

Correlations, Gaps and Questions

Developing my Questions

In conducting my literature review, I identified some apparent gaps in what Parsons' model described children and youth as being capable of understanding, and the type of art that was made in the modern, postmodern, and contemporary periods. My exploration of the literature in these two fields (art history and aesthetic development) raised questions for me. The identification of these apparent gaps were how I formed my research questions. In Chapter 6 I discuss my findings, which reveal that I had incorrect assumptions about aesthetic development and accessibility of art from different periods. But for now, I will lay out the gaps I identified that led to my research questions as this was part of my learning process.

Apparent Correlations and Gaps

In this literature review, I explored an overview of periods of art history since the 1400s, as well as Parsons' model of aesthetic development. While reading about these two topics, some interesting correlations emerged. These apparent correlations were not stated in the literature but were my own observations when looking at the two topics together. It appears that there is a correlation between the art that viewers of different levels of aesthetic development find accessible and interesting, and the types of art that were produced in different art periods. This raises some interesting questions about how children and youth with different levels of aesthetic development understand art from different periods.

Parsons described viewers of different levels of development as being interested in specific aspects of art. Stage 2 is interested in the subject of a work (with a preference for beauty and realism),

Stage 3 is interested in the expression of a work, Stage 4 is interested in the medium, form and style of a work, and Stage 5 is interested in judgements of artworks. Individuals at each of these stages of development look for different things in the art they consider to be good, and they are interested in different aspects of an artwork. They may be aware of the existence of other aspects, but these are not their focus.

Many of these foci sound like the goals of different art periods. In the Mimetic period, the goal of art was understood as the accurate representation of reality. This was the realistic representation of the subjects of art (similar to Stage 2's preference for realistic art). In the Modern period, the goal of art moved from the realistic representations of subjects to the philosophical representations of the nature of art (Danto, 1997) (similar to Stage 3's interest in expression, and Stage 4's interest in style and medium). In the postmodern period goals became more fragmented and diverse, with common themes of challenging modernism and drawing attention to issues of power and oppression (similar to Stage 5's critiques of culture and judgement of meaning).

These correlations seem to indicate that younger children, who are at earlier stages of development, may be less able to understand and access artworks from the modern, postmodern, and contemporary periods. In the figures below I map out trends in individual development, as described by Parsons, and connect these to the types of art that were created in different art periods. These correlations are initial observations that require further exploration.

Table 3

Possible Strengths and Gaps in Understanding in Parsons' (1987) Stage 1

Stage 1: Favouritism		
	Probable Strengths in Understanding	Possible Gaps in Understanding
Art from the Mimetic		

Period	Parsons' first stage of development (preschool children) is characterised by egocentrism and free associations. Children at this stage do not distinguish between what others can see in an artwork and what they are personally reminded of by the artwork. I suspect that individuals in the first stage may not be more adept at understanding art from any specific period because their experience of an artwork is not strongly tied to what is present in the artwork itself (as opposed to what it reminds them of).
Art from the Modern Period	
Art from the Postmodern Period	

Table 4

Possible Strengths and Gaps in Understanding in Parsons' (1987) Stage 2

Stage 2: Beauty and Realism		
	Probable Strengths in Understanding	Possible Gaps in Understanding
Art from the Mimetic Period	Stage 2 values realism, which aligns with the goals of the mimetic period (the accurate representation of reality). It appears that mimetic works that are beautiful and depict beautiful subjects would be appreciated at Stage 2. Stage 2 viewers would likely appreciate the technical skill required by mimetic techniques such as linear perspective.	Mimetic works that depict "ugly" subjects (war, violence, etc.) may be less accessible or interesting to Stage 2 viewers.

<p>Art from the Modern Period</p>	<p>Early modern art (ex: Impressionism) that is still representational, and depicts beautiful subjects (still lives, nature scenes, figures, etc.) would likely be interesting and accessible to Stage 2 viewers.</p>	<p>Abstract, and especially non-representational works (which make up much of modern art), may be less accessible to Stage 2 viewers. The lack of realism and beauty in these works may pose barriers to Stage 2 understanding.</p>
<p>Art from the Postmodern Period</p>	<p>Postmodern art that is beautiful and realistic would likely be accessible to Stage 2 viewers.</p>	<p>While Stage 2 viewers can take the perspective of others, they lack an awareness of the interiority of others' experiences (the artist and other viewers). This may pose a barrier to art that explores social issues through the lens of personal experience, identity, power, oppression, etc.</p> <p>Stage 2 viewers take for granted what is beautiful and expect all other viewers to agree with them. This appears to indicate a lack of awareness of the social construction of values and knowledge, which is a key topic in much postmodern art.</p> <p>Stage 2 viewers place a high value on</p>

		and artist's skill and would likely not appreciate art that lacks technical skill or focuses on meaning over skilful technique (ex: conceptual art)
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Table 5

Possible Strengths and Gaps in Understanding in Parsons' (1987) Stage 3

Stage 3: Expressiveness		
	Probable Strengths in Understanding	Possible Gaps in Understanding
Art from the Mimetic Period	Stage 3 viewers would likely view the realism of mimetic art as having expressive potential (although realism is no longer believed to be the only style with this potential).	Stage 3 viewers do not yet see the value in art criticism or discussions about art and are instead interested in gut reactions and direct communication between artist and viewer. This may reduce interest in learning about the context of historical works of art, including those from the mimetic period.
Art from the Modern Period	Stage 3 viewers could see the expressive potential of non-realistic and abstract art, which makes up much of modern art.	Stage 3 viewers are interested in their own gut reactions to artworks. These viewers do not yet see the value in art criticism or discussions about art, which were important in the modern

	<p>Stage 3 viewers would likely be interested in the modern values of individual creativity, originality, and expression through art. They may also be interested in the modernist focus on the formalist experience of viewing the art object itself, and the corresponding belief that the depiction of an external subject is unnecessary.</p>	<p>period. Stage 3 viewers do not yet see art criticism as a useful guide, and they do not see aesthetic judgement as something that is reasonable and capable of objectivity. This may make the theory and philosophy of modern art inaccessible and uninteresting to them.</p>
<p>Art from the Postmodern Period</p>	<p>Stage 3 viewers would likely be interested in the expressiveness of certain works of postmodern art. They may not find non-traditional mediums to be a barrier, so long as an artwork has expressive potential.</p> <p>Stage 3 viewers could likely find value in postmodern artworks that did not require technical skill to make, but that express an impactful message.</p> <p>The newfound awareness of the</p>	<p>Stage 3 viewers conceive of the meaning of artworks in individual terms, as a communication between the viewer and the artist. At this stage, they conceive of the artists as a “free and individual agent” rather than a “product of a culture, of a time and place” (Parsons, 1987, p. 116). This may pose a barrier to understanding postmodern art, which tends to view individuals as a product of their socialisation and context. Art that examines structural issues in society, rather than individual issues, may be less accessible.</p>

	<p>interiority of others' experiences, at Stage 3, may make these viewers interested in the emotional aspects of works that address oppression and struggle, or liberation and empowerment.</p>	
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Table 6

Possible Strengths and Gaps in Understanding in Parsons' (1987) Stage 4

Stage 4: Style and Form		
	Probable Strengths in Understanding	Possible Gaps in Understanding
Art from the Mimetic Period	<p>Stage 4 viewers would likely be able to understand artworks from the mimetic period as existing within the mimetic tradition and being a product of the artist's time.</p> <p>Stage 4 viewers could likely interpret, and judge mimetic artworks works based on the criteria of the period and take the perspective of that period as a whole. They could likely find</p>	<p>There do not appear to be gaps or barriers to a Stage 4 viewer's ability to understand art from the mimetic period.</p>

	<p>significance in the historical interpretations of artworks from the mimetic period.</p>	
<p>Art from the Modern Period</p>	<p>Like with artworks from the mimetic period, Stage 4 viewers would likely be able to understand modern artworks within the modern tradition. They could likely interpret and judge these artworks based on the criteria of the modern period.</p> <p>Stage 4 viewers could likely see the value in art criticism, which was very important in the modern period. Stage 4 viewers tend to view judgements about artworks as something that can be discussed and improved. This belief would make art criticism a worthwhile field of study for the Stage 4 viewer.</p> <p>Stage 4 viewers understand judgements to be reasonable and objective, which is in line with</p>	<p>There do not appear to be gaps or barriers to a Stage 4 viewer's ability to understand art from the modern period.</p>

	<p>modern values and would likely make them able to engage with the theory and art criticism of modern art.</p> <p>Stage 4 viewers are interested in medium, style and form. These were also key philosophical concepts for modern artists, and Stage 4 viewers would likely be interested in discussions about these.</p>	
<p>Art from the Postmodern Period</p>	<p>The newfound Stage 4 understanding of art as a social achievement would likely make Stage 4 viewers better equipped to understand postmodern art that explores topics of socialisation and the construction of knowledge.</p> <p>Stage 4 viewers are knowledgeable about art history, and would likely be able to appreciate, or at least understand, the postmodern practice of referring to (and pulling</p>	<p>Stage 4 viewers still accept the authority of art traditions, and they use these as the basis for their judgments about artworks. This may conflict with the postmodern practice of questioning traditional, power-based institutions and practices.</p> <p>The Stage 4 values of reason and objectivity are also modern values, and these were rejected under postmodernism. This may pose a barrier to Stage 4 viewers'</p>

	from) artworks from the past.	<p>understanding of postmodern art.</p> <p>Stage 4 viewers see the meaning of an artwork as finished rather than ongoing, which may pose a barrier to understanding the shifting meaning of works in new contexts (a postmodern value).</p> <p>The Stage 4 focus on style and form may pose a barrier to idea-based or conceptual art. Or perhaps the viewer may simply see this as a new style to be interpreted based on new criteria.</p>
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Table 7

Possible Strengths and Gaps in Understanding in Parsons' (1987) Stage 5

Stage 5: Autonomy		
	Probable Strengths in Understanding	Possible Gaps in Understanding
Art from the Mimetic Period	Stage 5 viewers would likely be able to examine the historical and contemporary meanings of mimetic artworks. They would see the	There do not appear to be gaps or barriers to a Stage 5 viewer's ability to understand art from the mimetic period.

	<p>meaning of these artworks as ongoing and changing with context.</p> <p>Stage 5 viewers can distinguish between interpretation and judgement and assess the worth of the meanings of a mimetic artwork or style. These viewers would likely be able to apply this to artworks from the mimetic period.</p>	
<p>Art from the Modern Period</p>	<p>Like with artworks from the mimetic period, Stage 5 viewers would likely be able to examine the historical and contemporary meanings of modern artworks.</p> <p>Like with artworks from the mimetic period, Stage 5 viewers could likely apply their ability to assess the worth of the meanings of an artwork or style to artworks from the modern period.</p> <p>Stage 5 viewers can take a perspective on culture and</p>	<p>There do not appear to be gaps or barriers to a Stage 5 viewer's ability to understand art from the modern period.</p>

	<p>challenge the authority of traditions. Additionally, Stage 5 viewers understand judgement as a cyclical, ongoing process. These factors may make them adept at understanding postmodern critiques of modernism.</p>	
<p>Art from the Postmodern Period</p>	<p>Like with artworks from the modern period, Stage 5 viewers would likely be able to understand postmodern critiques of modernism. In many ways postmodernism was a reaction against modernist so understanding these critiques appears to be central to understanding postmodern art.</p> <p>Stage 5 viewers question the authority of tradition and do not accept tradition as the basis on which judgements must be made. This appears to align with the postmodern practice of questioning traditional, power-based institutions</p>	<p>There do not appear to be gaps or barriers to a Stage 5 viewer's ability to understand art from the postmodern period.</p>

	<p>and practices.</p> <p>The Stage 5 ability to take a perspective on culture would likely equip Stage 5 viewers to understand and participate in deconstructions of power, which are important in postmodern art.</p> <p>Stage 5 viewers understand that context changes the meaning of artworks. This appears to align with the postmodern understanding of knowledge as socially produced.</p> <p>At Stage 5, judgements are connected to our understanding of ourselves. They enable us to better understand ourselves and to make choices on the values and ideals that we will pursue. This appears to be in line with postmodern art that tries to effect social change.</p>	
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In the above tables (Tables 3-7) I described my initial observations about the correlations between periods of art history and Parsons' (1987) 5-Stage model of aesthetic development. It appears

that viewers with lower stages of development (which includes children and youth) may struggle more to understand and access artworks from the modern and postmodern periods. It seems reasonable to infer that these viewers may also struggle with contemporary art, which is difficult to define while it is emerging, but which is impacted by the legacy of postmodern art. If these observations are similar to how contemporary children actually interact with contemporary art, this may pose some barriers for art educators that are trying to teach children about contemporary art.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I presented key literature relevant to my study. I presented an overview of major periods in art history from the mimetic period to contemporary art. I then presented a brief introduction to the field of aesthetics, and the concept of aesthetic experience. I summarised two of the most influential theories and models of aesthetic development, those by Michael Parsons (1987) and Abigail Housen (1983). My exploration of art history and models of aesthetic development led to the identification of some potential gaps in children and youth's ability to understand and engage with contemporary art. Questions about these gaps will form the basis for my study, the methodology of which is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I present the methods and methodology used in this study. I am approaching this research from an interpretive epistemological perspective as described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013). in their methods text. I selected participants who specialise in teaching children and youth about contemporary art. My intention was to inquire about my participants' subjective experiences, in their specific contexts, in an attempt to understand their varied perspectives and interpretations of aesthetic development.

Purpose and Objectives

This study explored the experiences of educators working with contemporary children and youth in order to gain a clearer understanding of how theories of aesthetic development are being used today. The two most prominent models of aesthetic development are those by Michael Parsons and Abigail Housen. I have chosen to largely focus on Michael Parsons' model of development in my research, as

it described development from preschool to adulthood. Housen's model focuses more on the development of adolescents and adults. Parsons' model is more effective than Housen's for discussion of younger age groups (Almeida-Rocha, et al., 2020), which is the focus of my study.

Michael Parsons' (1987) model appears to suggest that contemporary art is largely inaccessible to children and youth who have yet to reach higher levels of aesthetic development. If this model is representative of what children and youth can understand, this would pose significant challenges to any art educator who endeavours to teach children and youth about contemporary art. Alternatively, it is possible that contemporary culture and contemporary children have given rise to new developmental patterns not anticipated by modernist models of aesthetic development. Whichever the case may be, the question of the accessibility of contemporary art to children and youth has significant implications for art education.

My research aims to explore the experiences of art educators working with children and youth in Canadian art museums and galleries to learn how these might inform the role of models of aesthetic development and clarify appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education for children. Exploration into the role these models of aesthetic development play in contemporary art education is necessary because these models were written over 30 years ago and much has changed in the art world, and society in general, since then. Theories of development of all kinds play a significant role in the structuring of education and outdated theories, or outdated application of theories, may pose obstacles to teaching and learning. Art education needs to reflect the ever-changing art context, and models need to be re-examined in light of the changes happening in art.

Role of the Researcher

As a researcher, I believe that art is important to society. Humans have made art for tens of thousands of years, and it is a method through which we make sense of the world. As such, I believe that art education is very important. Unfortunately, in many schools, there is not enough funding, time, or specialist teachers for proper art education. I selected art museums and galleries as the context to conduct this research because specialist museum educators are able to devote their entire practice to art education, with the support of the institution they work for.

In this study, I went in with the understanding that art is an inherently interpretive field that explicitly deals with interpretation. As such, I approached this research from an interpretive paradigm. Through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, I discussed topics of aesthetic development and understanding art with my participants. My own beliefs, as well as what I have learned from the literature, impacted the questions I asked.

Methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach to research, which is in line with the topic of art education. Both art and education are fields that deal with people, their experiences, their interpretations, and their perspectives. A quantitative approach to research would be at odds with the realities of these topics. As such, I chose to explore the experiences and perspectives of my participants through qualitative interviews.

Sampling

In much qualitative research, there are no clear rules on the ideal sample size and the researcher must consider the “fitness of purpose” as a guide (Cohen, et al., p. 224, 2018). For my qualitative study, a small group of participants made sense, so I selected six participants for this study. With my qualitative approach, I was not interested in a randomised group of participants that could lead to generalisable findings. Instead, I wanted to talk to educators who had specific knowledge and experience to be able to speak to my research topic and interview questions. With my small number of participants, it was especially important that I selected participants with relevant experience and expertise in my research topic. My goal was to explore my topic with educators who have a wealth of knowledge and experience in teaching children about contemporary art. I looked for participants who had enough experience to speak to patterns of development and students’ understanding of contemporary art. Participants also needed to be knowledgeable of, and reflective on, different goals and methods of art education and how these vary depending on the age and level of development of the students they are teaching.

In order to find these participants, I used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enabled me to gather in-depth knowledge on my topic from educators who were in the position to be able to provide that knowledge (Cohen, et al., 2018).

Using reputational case sampling or snowball sampling allowed me to gather recommendations, from those in the field of museum education, on potential participants who have a reputation of excellence and could speak to my research topic (Cohen, et al., 2018). I conducted this sampling by connecting with professionals working in museums and galleries that had an education program. I asked these professionals for recommended of educators that I should speak to. This enabled me to gain access to experienced educators with a reputation of excellence in the field. My participant selection criteria included:

- Experience working as an educator in a Canadian museum or gallery.
- Experience teaching children and/or youth.
- Experience teaching about contemporary visual art.
- Experience teaching about art appreciation, looking at and understanding art (as opposed to solely art making).
- Knowledge and experience to be able to speak to aesthetic development.

I invited seven participants to take part in this study, and six agreed to participate. From there, I received informed consent according to the ethics approval of my study by the University of Calgary Research Ethics Board.

Who Were My Participants?

My participants included six museum and gallery educators working across Canada. The experiences of these educators ranged from educators new to museum and gallery education, to those with 35+ years experiences in the field. They work in small to large institutions, with various types of collections and programs. Below (Table 8) is an overview of the participants, their backgrounds, and their contexts.

Table 8

Overview of Study Participants

Participant	Years in Museum and Gallery Education	Museum/Gallery Context	Province	Age Group(s) They Work With
Participant 1: Corrie	35 years	A large institution with a collection of historical, modern, and contemporary artworks.	British Columbia	Children and youth
Participant 2: Charlie	20 years	A mid-sized institution with a collection of historical, modern, and contemporary art.	Saskatchewan	Preschool to adult
Participant 3: Taylor	20 years	A large institution with a collection of historical, modern, and contemporary art.	Ontario	Ages 4 to adult
Participant 4: Riley	20 years	A small institution with a collection of historical, modern, and contemporary art.	Ontario	Babies to youth
Participant 5: Ryan	6 years (plus, experience working in	A mid-sized institution that exhibits exclusively contemporary art.	Ontario	Ages 6-30, with a focus on teens and young adults

	schools and post-secondary institutions)			
Participant 6: Avery	2 years (plus, experience in curation)	A mid-sized institution that exhibits modern and contemporary art.	Alberta	Ages 14-24

Qualitative Interviews

In this study, I collected data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2018). Cohen, et al. (2018) described the choice of structured vs unstructured interviews as being a question of a researcher’s purpose; whether they are looking to fill a specific gap in their knowledge, or whether they are still unsure what gap exists in their knowledge. I was looking for a mix of these. I knew that I was looking for information on what educators are currently observing when contemporary children and youth are interacting with contemporary art. I did not know if models of aesthetic development were being used, if they were still accurate or relevant, or if something else had replaced these models. I was relying on my participants to share their understanding of the complex factors and realities of museum education and how aesthetic development fits into these.

In my interviews, I provided open-ended interview questions, and tailored probing questions to the participants’ responses (Cohen et al., 2018). My goal was to create an environment where participants could speak about their work, goals, approaches, values, and observations. Cohen, et al. (2018) describe interviews as a method that “sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasises the social situatedness of research data” (p. 506). This was particularly applicable to this study as I was looking at how people (children and youth) learn to understand art. Art is not an objective reality that exists outside ourselves, but rather a conversation, a social achievement. Human interaction is at the heart of the type of knowledge that art produces.

It was important to me that the knowledge that resulted from this study was situated in the context of the research participants: the museum or gallery. Reviewing literature had provided me a theoretical knowledge about aesthetic development, but what I was really interested in was the experiences children and youth have in the gallery space, whilst looking at artworks. Qualitative interviews were a way for me to learn about the real-world application of educational theories through the specialist knowledge my participants were generous enough to share.

In my data collection, I was hoping to “acquire unique, non-standardized, personalised information” about my participants’ experiences (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 509). I was not looking to generalise their experiences to all museum and gallery educators in Canada. Instead, I wanted to speak to educators who were uniquely specialised in both education and contemporary art, to gain a deeper understanding of the intersection of the two.

Data Collection

My data collection consisted of two, 1-hour interviews with each of my six participants. These interviews were conducted over zoom to accommodate uncertainties during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions as well as the widespread geographical location of my participants. I recorded the audio and video of my interviews to allow for more detailed and accurate data analysis.

In the first of the two interviews, my interview questions focused on topics related to my first three research questions. These topics included the relationship between aesthetic development and understanding of art from different periods, as well as the consistency of participant observations with the models. This interview explored participants' experiences teaching about art to children of different ages. I attempted to identify any patterns they have observed around the accessibility of art from different periods to children of different levels of aesthetic development. In the second interview, I focused on topics that address my last two research questions. This interview explored participant perspectives on the application of developmental theory in contemporary art education and how participant experiences may inform goals and methods in art education.

Data Presentation and Analysis

After collecting my data, I transcribed the interviews. I sent the transcripts to the participants for them to review and make edits if needed. This member checking enabled me to verify that the transcripts were reflective of what the participants had said and that any moments where they may have misspoken could be clarified. Minimal edits were requested by my participants and all of these edits were small changes to the phrasing of their responses, not the general content of the interview.

Once I had transcribed each interview and verified the transcripts, I began my data analysis. I began this process after each interview, analysing as I continued data collection. In their methods sourcebook, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) suggest this concurrent data collection and analysis as this allows the researcher to “cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data” (p. 62). What I learned in my data analysis informed the prompts and probing questions I asked participants in their second interview. It gave me the opportunity to clarify points with participants in the second interview, as well as to delve more deeply into emerging topics. My process of data analysis involved two levels of coding: first cycle coding and second cycle, or pattern, coding.

First Cycle Coding

Once I had the revised transcripts for the first round of interviews, I began my First Cycle coding, which involved “the codes initially assigned to the data units” (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2020, p. 64). In my first cycle of coding, I reviewed the transcripts, and identified themes. This process of coding allowed me to detect patterns in the data (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2020). I did not go into this coding process with a-priori codes, but, instead, identified themes that emerged in the interviews. The themes I identified included ones that related to my research questions, as well as themes that had emerged and were not anticipated by my research questions. I did this in an attempt to limit projecting my preconceived notions of what I might find onto the data.

I completed their first cycle coding for the first and second interviews with each participant. In my coding of the second interview, I did not use the codes from the first interview, but instead continued to identify emerging themes, some of which were similar in the first and second interviews and some of which were different. I did this because the first interview with each participant was focused largely on

my first three research questions and the second interview was focused on my last two research questions.

I identified emerging themes with each participant separately and did not use the themes that emerged with one participant as a template for the themes of another participant. The interviews were semi-structured and therefore the conversation in the interviews varied based on the participant's experience and responses. At the end of this first cycle coding, I had identified dozens of themes. From there, I moved into second cycle coding.

Second Cycle Coding

Once I had sorted the responses by theme, I began my Second Cycle coding or Pattern Codes, which worked "with the resulting First Cycle codes themselves" ((Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2020, p. 64). These second cycle codes are explanatory codes that "identify a bigger picture configuration" (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2020, p. 79).

Many of the first cycle codes overlapped and were interrelated, so during this second cycle I identified patterns and condensed the codes into a more manageable number of codes that captured the sum of the participants' responses. Some of the emerging themes in the second interviews were similar to themes in the first interviews and I combined these themes, within each participant. Looking across participants, I condensed similar codes (such as "student ages," "developmental levels" and "learner backgrounds") under umbrella terms (such as "Age, Development and Learner Background").

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) stated that "patterning happens quickly because it is the way we instinctively and naturally process information" (p. 80) but that we need to avoid naming patterns too quickly and assuming we understand them. They recommend having "loosely held units of meaning" (p. 80) that we are ready to reconfigure as needed. This involves cross checking the most compelling themes and laying aside others until they have a better empirical grounding. As I coded the data, overarching themes quickly emerged. Some of themes were expected, based on the questions I asked in the interviews. I asked all of the participants about what approaches they use in their programs and teaching. Naturally, the theme "Strategies and Approaches" emerged. Other more

unexpected themes also emerged, such as the theme of “Shifting Values and Practices” in museum education. At the end of my coding, I had nine pattern codes or themes, which were as follows:

- Goals and Values
- Strategies and Approaches
- Age, Development and Learner Background
- Accessibility of Art from Different Periods
- Accessibility and Diversity in Museums
- Shifting Values and Practices
- Context and Constraints
- The Role of Developmental Theory Today
- Educator Experience and Comfort

From there, I condensed the content within each theme and identified key quotes. This data condensation, as Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) called it, allowed me to “retrieve the most meaningful material, assemble units of data that go together, and further condense the bulk into readily analysable units” (p. 64).

Describing the Pattern Codes and Generating Meaning

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022), once you have the pattern codes, they can be used in narrative description or visual displays. I used both of these in the presentation of my findings (see Chapters 4 and 5). I created descriptive profiles of each participant in order to give the reader a sense of their context and where they are coming from. I then provided a summary of the key points that each participant discussed in each theme. I used several of the tactics Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) identified for generating meaning from the data. I clustered the data and noted patterns and themes in the data, including similarities and differences between participants (see Chapter 5). I also made contrasts and comparisons across participants. This created a clearer picture of where there was consensus and divergence or disagreement amongst the participants.

I also presented a visual display (see Chapter 4) for each participant. This demonstrated which of the nine total themes the participants discussed and how frequent or important each of those themes

were to them. This was important in the analysis of my findings, as it allowed me to compare how frequent and important each of the nine themes was to the participants. Some themes were as important as I had expected, but others were surprising. These observations were central to my analysis of the findings and the implications of the study.

While this was a qualitative study, I used some amount of what Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) call counting to support my qualitative analysis. They note that, while qualitative research is primarily focused on the qualities of a topic, some counting goes on in the background (2022). When I was determining which themes were most important to the participants, I did so by comparing how often and in how much depth participants spoke about a theme. This was done on a simple scale. For each participant, I sorted their themes into one of four categories: “Not Discussed,” “Minor Theme,” “Secondary Theme” and “Key Theme.” These categories were determined by comparing which topics were discussed more often.

When it comes to making conceptual coherence of the data, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) say that we connect discrete facts and group them into comprehensible and more abstract patterns. From there, we move into discussion concepts and theories (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2022). This is included in Chapter 5 and 6, where I examine my participants’ observations and comments across the group and in relation to the literature. This enabled me to make connections and to draw conclusions.

Trustworthiness

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022), the issue of “objectivity” can be framed, in qualitative research, as “one of relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher bias” (p. 305). As such, they argue that researchers should be explicit about inevitable bias. I have presented my personal assumptions, values, and biases and how these come into play in the study (see Assumptions section below). Additionally, I have followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldana’s advice to clearly lay out my methods and procedures, link my conclusions to the condensed data, and provide a record of my procedures so that the reader can audit that procedure (see Appendix A). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) discuss the importance of a study being consistent and done with

reasonable care. In my study, I have aligned my objectives, research questions, and methodology. I chose an interpretive, qualitative approach that is in line with my topic and what I learned from the literature.

It is important that the findings of a study make sense, that the research has a resonance with the readers (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2022). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022), in order to achieve this, the descriptions should be context-rich and meaningful. The account presented should ring true or make sense. The data should be linked to prior or emerging theory. The findings should be clear and coherent. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present a summary of my data in a narrative and visual display. In Chapter 5, I analyse the findings by looking across the participants and making comparisons and contrasts. I link these findings to the literature and fit the participants' responses into the context of shifts in society and art (as described in the literature) as well as the shifts in art education (as described in the literature and by my participants).

The conclusions I drew in my data analysis were based on patterns that I observed across my six participants. Separate from each other, my participants raised the same issues about shifts in the field of art education. They mentioned many of the same strategies and approaches. Each participant was working in a slightly different context, and had their own values and goals, but they were speaking to observations of the same phenomenon: the shifts that are taking place in the field. The two participants that were newer to the field could not speak to observations over a long career, but what they discussed was in line with what the other participants described as the direction the field is going.

Importantly, the shifts that were described by multiple participants were not something I was expecting to find. This supports the idea that the conclusions I drew were not those that I went into the study expecting to find. As I describe in Chapter 6, many of the key findings from were not topics that were included in my interview questions. These unexpected topics were raised by all of the participants, supporting the idea that they are important to explore. Some of the topics included in my interview questions were not described as very relevant by my participants. When looking at what was and was not relevant to my participants' work, parallels emerged. It made sense that certain ideas (such as models of aesthetic development) were not very relevant, while others were (such as issues of

accessibility and inclusion), because of the shifts that my participants were describing. As Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) recommend, the conclusions made sense and the data aligned with the theory in the literature.

Transferability

Qualitative research seeks to explore the particulars of the participants, rather than to generalise, although it is a bonus if other groups are able to apply the issues raised in the study to their context (Cohen et al., 2018). This was a small, exploratory study that was not attempting to represent the entire field of museum and gallery educators or produce generalisable findings. Instead, I explored my research questions with a small number of expert participants to gain a better understanding from their experiences and perspectives. My goal was to learn how some experienced museum and gallery educators approach teaching children and youth about contemporary art in developmentally appropriate ways.

When considering questions of transferability in qualitative research (as opposed to generalisability), Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2022) suggest some useful criteria. They recommend that participant contexts are described in enough detail to permit comparisons with other samples or contexts. In Chapter 4, I describe the contexts of each of my 6 participants to give the reader a sense of their background and the type of institution/setting they are working in. Additionally, in the presentation findings, I present a rich description of the data in order to allow readers to assess the potential transferability of these findings to their own context (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2022). This study's findings are connected to the literature on shifts between modern art and postmodern art, and how these have affected art education.

This study's findings may resonate with other educators or inspire them to consider new approaches to art education. In Chapter 6, I present some of my participants' practical advice for art educators. This advice comes from their experience and specialist knowledge and may prove useful to other educators.

Delimitations of the Study

Art education is a large field, and, as such, I needed to set some boundaries for this study. This study specifically looked at art education in Canadian museums and galleries. The participants in this study all have experience working at Canadian art museums and galleries. Some participants were able to speak to other educational settings (such as the school system), but this was discussed in comparison to the gallery and museum context. The students my participants work with often come to galleries or museums through school programs, and occasionally my participants visit schools, but they are not classroom teachers or primarily working in schools.

The study focused on children and youth. My participants largely work with students ranging from preschool aged to teens. Some discussion of adults took place, but this generally happened when comparing and contrasting children and youth to adults. I explored how children and youth learn to look at and understand art. I did not attempt to determine how age and development are related to expression, art production or technical art making skills. The one exception to this was when participants discussed art making as a tool through which students can explore works of art and art concepts.

This study primarily focused on the exploration of artworks by western artists, or artists working in the western context. The work of some Indigenous artists was also discussed. The focus on western artists was impacted by the works the educators had access to in their collections. In their work, my participants make many efforts to present works by diverse artists, but this study was not an exploration of the art of all cultures.

Additionally, this study focused specifically on visual art, and mostly on mediums such as painting, drawing, printing, sculpture, and installation. Digital art, video art, sound art, photography, and performance art were minimally discussed. This study did not cover any of the performing arts such as music, dance, or drama. The reasons for this focus were partly because this is the majority of the artworks my participants work with, with students, and these are the types of artworks that Parsons' model discusses.

Limitations of the Study

I selected my small number of participants through non-probability, snowball sampling. The participants included in the study were not representative of the larger population of Canadian museum and gallery art educators. My goal with this study was to learn from experienced educators who have specialised in contemporary art education. Due to the participants' expertise in the field, it is reasonable to expect that their observations and perspectives would echo the greater population of museum educators; however, the generalisation of the findings was not a goal of this study. As such, I used purposive sampling to find participants with experience and expertise in gallery and museum education, as well as participants who I thought would be able to speak on topics of aesthetic development. Four of the six participants have worked in museum and gallery education for over 20 years, and two of the participants are newer to the field.

Assumptions

For this study, I selected participants who were educators in art museums and galleries because I believed that these educators would have more specialisation in art education than the average elementary school art teacher. This is because many generalist teachers have to teach art in elementary school regardless of whether they are experienced in art education or not. I believed that museum educators' specialisation in art education would give them an expertise in the topic of art education. Through snowball sampling, I selected educators who had years of experience teaching about art.

This study presumes that people learn to understand art through exposure and experience, rather than being born with this ability. This is supported by literature (Parsons, 1987; Housen, 1983). This assumption would mean that some formal education or informal learning is required to develop one's ability to understand art. I intended to explore this process through the lens of theories of aesthetic development and the models that came out of these.

I went into this study with the assumption that theories of aesthetic development have some role to play in museum and gallery art education. I did not know what that role was, but my interview questions were designed to gather my participants' perspectives on this role. What I ended up finding

was that the participants did not see theories of aesthetic development as having much of a useful role in their work.

Ethics

This study was approved by the University of Calgary Research Ethics Board. All participants were over the age of 18 and signed consent forms. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection. None of the participants chose to withdraw.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out the methodology I used in this study. In the following chapters I present my findings (Chapter 4), analyse the findings (Chapter 5), and discuss the implication the findings (Chapter 6).

Chapter 4: Findings

From my First Cycle Codes, I produced Second Cycle or Pattern Codes. Each pattern code was discussed by multiple participants, but not every participant discussed each pattern code. A detailed breakdown of how I produced these pattern codes can be found in appendix A.

There were 9 Pattern Codes in total, which consisted of:

1. Goals and Values
2. Strategies and Approaches
3. Age, Development and Learner Background
4. Accessibility of Art from Different Periods
5. Accessibility and Diversity in Museums
6. Shifting Values and Practices
7. Context and Constraints
8. The Role of Developmental Theory Today
9. Educator Experience and Comfort

In this chapter, I present the findings from my interviews with the six participants. I present an introduction to each participant and their gallery/museum context. From there I present a table summarising which of the nine themes they discussed and how frequently they discussed each theme.

I summarise what they said about each theme, starting with their key themes, followed by their secondary themes, and their minor themes.

Participant 1: Corrie

“Conversation leads to critical thinking and critical thinking leads to an awareness of the world around us.” - Corrie

Corrie has worked at the British Columbia Gallery for almost 35 years and is currently the gallery’s Program Coordinator for Schools and Youth. The British Columbia Gallery is a large institution with a collection of historical and contemporary art. Corrie’s work focuses on school tours and workshops for children and youth.

In our interviews, Corrie delved deeply into their values and educational goals and how the approaches they uses enable them to achieve these. They have a wealth of experience working with children and youth in the gallery setting and they draw from this experience to find ways to make a variety of artworks accessible to their students. They use multiple teaching strategies, such as VTS and the 5 Entry Points Approach, to find different ways into all kinds of artworks.

When I asked Corrie about the accessibility of different types of artworks, they talked about examples of when they had seen students engaged with, and able to understand, almost any kind of artwork. They focused on how to get students looking at a work, rather than any perceived barriers that exist to that process. They came across as an educator who has faith in what children and youth are capable of and sees it as their role to find ways to help them think critically about artworks and the ideas that are associated with them.

Overview of Themes

Table 9

Summary of Corrie’s Interview Themes

Themes	Frequency
Goals and Values	***

Context and Constraints	
Shifting Values and Practices	**
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	*
Strategies and Approaches	***
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	***
Age, Development and Learner Background	**
Educator Experience and Comfort	*
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	*

Key Themes

Goals and Values. Corrie discussed their goals at length. their focus is not on the specific work of art they are showing the students, but on the ideas, they are discussing. their goals are:

- To show students how to “look slower, closer and deeper” and to develop their visual literacy skills
- To inspire students’ curiosity and help them to “see different ways of looking at the world”
- To have a conversation with students to develop their critical thinking skills and broaden their awareness of the world around them

Strategies and Approaches. Corrie is knowledgeable on a variety of museum education strategies and approaches. They combine these in different ways, depending on the work they are showing students. The two main approaches Corrie discussed were Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and the 5 Entry Points Approach.

Visual Thinking Strategies is an approach designed by researchers Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine, based on their large body of work and research (Visual Thinking Strategies, 2023). The basic process involves asking students three key questions while looking at artworks: “what is going on in this picture?”, “what do you see that makes you say that?” and “what more can you find?” (Yenawine, 2013). Corrie employs this approach in their work. After asking these three questions and allowing the students to talk for a while, Corrie will provide some “nuggets” of information about the artwork, the artist, the context the work was made in, etc. to create context for the work. They then ask the students how that information affects how they understand the work.

The 5 Entry Points Approach came out of the Harvard Project Zero and was based in Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences. This approach was published in Jessica Davis’ 1996 book titled *The MUSE Book*. The 5 Entry Points into a work of art are:

1. The Aesthetic entry point (aspects of a work such as the colours, etc.)
2. The Narrative entry point (the story of the work)
3. The Logical entry point (the materials and processes used to make the work)
4. The Foundational entry point (philosophical questions about the importance of the piece, etc.)
5. The Experiential entry point (drawing or embodying a work, etc.)

Corrie also uses other strategies such as providing the students with prompts which give the students a jumping off point to respond to the works. These include the prompts “I see...”, “I think...” and “I wonder...”, from the See / Think / Wonder thinking routine developed by Project Zero (Project Zero Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2022). Another prompt involved cards the students can place in front of works, which say “I want to take this work home”, “I have questions about this work”, “this excited me”, “this work confuses me”, “this work is about an idea or gives me an idea.”

Corrie also uses embodiment to get students to act out or embody works. They have young students individually act out the shape of a work, or collectively form a tableau of the work. Corrie believes that this type of activity helps the students’ learning become embodied.

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. I asked Corrie if they find art from certain periods (i.e.: historical/mimetic art, modern art, or contemporary art) to be more or less accessible to children and youth. They said that they do not find the period an artwork is from to be a deciding factor in how difficult a work is to access. Instead, Corrie 1 talked about the medium of the work playing a role in its accessibility. For example, they find photography and video art to be difficult to look at with children in the gallery. Corrie finds that contemporary art is typically the “most relevant, most interesting and most engaging” for children and youth.

Corrie discussed the difference between narrative and abstract works. They said that non-contemporary works tend to be narrative works, where the viewer can identify what is going on in the painting or sculpture. Corrie said that “everybody’s interested in narrative.” However, Corrie does believe that children are able to understand abstraction at a very early age. They will also discuss conceptual art with young children.

Secondary Themes

Shifting Values and Practices. Corrie discussed several types of shifts they has seen in their career. The first included changes in the language and approaches used in museum education. Words like “education” and “teaching” have been replaced with “learning.” This represents a shift away from “antiquated” and “art historically based” teaching towards a “more participatory, interactive model.” Along with this shift in language, Corrie has seen a shift in the approaches educators are using. Older approaches like Feldman’s Analysis (Feldman, 1981) and Discipline Based Art Education (Dobbs, 1992) have been replaced with VTS and Howard Gardner’s 5 Entry Points Approach. Corrie described VTS as being “democratising” and “changing that hierarchy of power” that has existed in museums and education.

The second shift they talked about was in curation and programming. After Black Lives Matter and the death of George Floyd, they saw the gallery curation shift. Exhibitions of historically underrepresented artists has increased, such as Artists of Colour. The gallery has been working to increase the diversity in both the gallery and their exhibitions.

Age, Development and Learner Background. Corrie does not use developmental theory in their practice, and as such they did not say much about learners' developmental level. They did make observations based on how different age groups respond in the gallery. They describe elementary school aged children as being "really open" and "really imaginative." They have a lack of preconceived notions. They also said that adolescents are more hesitant than younger children to be the first one to speak up. They do not want to "risk the cool factor."

Corrie finds that adults often come into the gallery with "preconceived notions of being able to understand art." When they are looking at some contemporary works, their response might be "what am I supposed to make of this?" They do not want to feel like they do not "get it." Corrie believes that understanding artworks, and especially contemporary art works, requires "willingness to engage" and an "openness" on the part of the viewer, which they sometimes see more of in children than adults.

Minor Themes

Educator Experience and Comfort. Corrie described how new and experienced docents often differ in their approach. They frequently see that new docents want to share all the information they know about a work or an exhibit, which can inadvertently turn into a lecture. More experienced docents have learned the value of asking their audience questions, and providing background information in a more sparing manner when it will be helpful for the discussion.

Corrie also discussed classroom teachers and their varying levels of comfort teaching art. Many teachers are only required to take one course about art in their preservice training, and then they are forced to teach art because it is in the curriculum. They see many classroom teachers that remember art from when they were in grade 5 and "a lot of them get stuck there and never move on."

Corrie finds that many teachers are especially "intimidated" by teaching about contemporary art. Many teachers are more comfortable teaching about the same historical artists each year. These artists seem more accessible, whereas some contemporary art can be "hard to try to figure out." Corrie provides PD for teachers to show them how to enter a contemporary work and start to make sense of it through strategies like the 5 Entry Points Approach.

Accessibility in Museums. Corrie discussed the accessibility of labels and didactic text in the gallery. In the past 15-20 years, they have seen a trend away from posting descriptive labels (wall didactics) in exhibitions because they “interfere” with the artworks. This is something Corrie strongly disagrees with. Curators have spent years studying artworks and figuring out what they are about, and Corrie sees it as “disrespectful” to the public to expect them to come in and figure out what a work is about without any “clues.” Sometimes the information included in didactic texts written by curators “gets too lofty.” Even though Corrie has a master’s degree and is the educator at the gallery, even they sometimes do not know what these lofty texts mean. Corrie argued that didactic texts should prioritise accessibility.

The Role of Developmental Theory Today. Corrie does not use developmental theory much in their practice. They see potential uses for learning about developmental theory, such as an increased understanding of the approaches that came out of these theories (like VTS), but they say that a strict adherence to them can create a “limited” way of looking at the world.

Themes Not Discussed

Context and Constraints

Participant 2: Charlie

“I think we're at a really important place right now where there is a lot of willingness to have really generative and healing conversations and I do see the gallery as a place to for that; there is a lot of potential to do that with artwork at the heart of those conversations.” - Charlie

Charlie has worked at the Saskatchewan Gallery for 20 years and is currently their Curator of Education. The Saskatchewan Gallery is a mid-sized institution with a collection of historical and contemporary art.

Charlie spoke a lot about the shifts in both artistic practice and education they have seen in the field over their career. They see a need for many of these changes and wants to be a part of them. They come across as a self-reflective educator who is constantly questioning their own practice to improve it. Much of this reflection revolves around accessibility and issues of decolonisation.

Charlie described herself as an educator with a high comfort level with challenging content in art. They see most art as accessible to children and youth, if you can find a “backdoor” in. Rather than the content or medium of artworks, they talk about the constructs around the work, and the art gallery itself, as places for potential barriers to accessibility.

Charlie discussed the strategies they use in their practice and how they align with their goals of accessibility and social justice. They think critically about accepted theories and strategies, like VTS, and questions their appropriateness in today’s context. They do not use developmental theory in their work and was critical of these theories.

Summary of Themes

Table 10

Summary of Charlie’s Interview Themes

Themes	Frequency
Goals and Values	***
Context and Constraints	**
Shifting Values and Practices	***
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	***
Strategies and Approaches	***
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	**
Age, Development and Learner Background	*
Educator Experience and Comfort	
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	***

Key Themes

Goals and Values. Charlie described their general goal as providing students with experiences of “delight, curiosity, joy and discovery.” they commented that these are not age-specific or developmental goals; they can apply to all visitors. Within a gallery context, which tends to be short in duration, their goal is to nurture the relationship the students have with the artwork(s) they are experiencing and to get them excited to come back. They are facilitating an experience, one that is multi-sensory and active, rather than based solely on talking. Charlie believes in the importance of storytelling, sharing perspectives, questioning things and being comfortable saying “I don’t know.” Accessibility and social justice are also central values in their work.

Shifting Values and Practices. Charlie has seen museum and gallery education as well as artistic practice shift dramatically over their career. They identified several areas where these shifts have occurred.

Shifts in Art. Charlie discussed shifts happening in the kind of art that is being made today. They compare contemporary art to the art of the 1970’s, when it was “coming off the brink of modernist thinking.” they say when compared to the art of today “we’re just talking about completely different things.” Charlie has observed that the “content of art” and what artists are currently talking about is “more heart-centred” than it used to be. The content of this work is the “heaviest” it has ever been.

Shifts in Museum Education. Charlie discussed how museum education is also shifting. They said that it is not an educator’s job to “spoon feed” information to students. Educators need to recognise that students can teach them too. In order for museums to survive, they need to learn and listen to students. At the Saskatchewan Gallery, they do not want their educators to be “talking heads” or to “talk at” students. They want them to “facilitate an experience.”

Charlie talked about the need to balance “understanding something with our minds vs our hearts.” For her, the goals of delight, joy, curiosity, and discovery pair these two well. They want to balance the “cognitive understanding” of what is happening in an artwork with the “emotional or visceral relationship to the work.”

Shifting Concepts of Teaching. Charlie sees learning as an “exchange,” something that is “reciprocated.” Students and visitors are bringing their own knowledge in with them when they come to the gallery. They see teaching as something that involves sitting together and sharing rather than a more traditional, power-based form of teaching. This type of teaching can be difficult to do in institutions, but they say it is not impossible.

Trauma Informed Practice. Charlie sees a need for a trauma informed approach to their practice. They said that the word “trauma” was not even “in their vocabulary” as an educator ten years ago but now it is a huge part of their work. This goes beyond the educational programs they run with students and extends to the way the gallery structures the experience for all its visitors.

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums. Charlie discussed several issues when it comes to accessibility in museums. They brought up different types of accessibility, barriers that exist within and outside of artworks, and the need for fluidity when addressing accessibility.

Barriers Within and Outside the Artwork. Accessibility of museums is a central focus in Charlie’s work. Charlie discussed the idea that there are barriers that exist within a work of art and barriers in the constructs around the art and in the gallery. Barriers within a work of art might include its medium or subject, which may make it more or less accessible. Charlie described herself as having “a very high comfort level with difficult or challenging content within art” and they said it “would take a lot for me to say this work is inaccessible.” The barriers that exist within a work are usually something that can be overcome. In their opinion, “95% of the time it’s the constructs around the work” that make it inaccessible. These constructs are frameworks that are developed by institutions, or they are historical practices and behaviours, ways “we’ve always done it.”

Types of Accessibility. Charlie believes “in the need to prioritise physical access, intellectual access, cultural access, social access, every type of accessibility within that one experience of a work of art.” Charlie discussed the physical accessibility of galleries (wheelchair accessibility, height of labels and artworks, font sizes, etc.). Charlie also discussed intellectual accessibility and the language galleries use. They would like to see “standardised, plain text writing for intellectual access” in gallery didactics and text.

The Need for Fluidity and Re-evaluation. Charlie discussed the need for a fluid approach to accessibility. Ideally there would be a “floating, consistently renegotiated understanding” of accessibility. They see “accessibility as a constantly renegotiated space.” Charlie stressed the need to “consult with community” when it comes to accessibility. They said that with issues like disability justice there needs to be an approach of “nothing for us without us.” Charlie pointed out that this approach to accessibility is difficult to do in institutions and it takes “commitment and capacity on behalf of the institution.”

Strategies and Approaches. Charlie uses a variety of hands-on methods to engage the students in the gallery space, including story circles, writing poetry, doing movement and yoga, listening to music, and incorporating a variety of sensory experience (ex: smell jars). They also see making art as a “strong interpretive strategy,” whether that be copying a work, adding to a work, etc.

The Saskatchewan Gallery Method. One of the methods Charlie uses is the Saskatchewan Gallery Method (SGM). The SGM is a constructivist method, where the content is coming from the viewers. The method involves a 4-part unpacking of an artwork, and these parts are conversational and fluid. Firstly, they have the students look at a work and then they ask them “what is the first word that comes to your mind when you look at this work?” Next, they will ask “what did the artist do to make you think of that word?” This is the analysis stage where they can unpack the work based on the strategies the artist used. The third stage is an interpretive stage, where they ask questions like “based on what we’ve talked about already what do you think is important to the artist?” Here they draw on the strategies the artist used to communicate their ideas and they connect those with their initial impressions. Finally, they will provide some context, or this context can be sprinkled throughout the previous stages.

Charlie discussed how certain methods work better with certain works. For example, with work with Indigenous Voices “there are certain narratives and voices that need to be shared” and there is appropriate information that needs to be shared with the students. In some cases, they will not rely on the SGM. Instead, they might share a story by the artist or something that “helps the students get into the proper mindset to have a conversation about that work.”

The Role of Developmental Theory Today. Charlie does not use developmental theories in their work. They find these theories, and the approaches that originated from them, to be generally problematic. This is not to say that there is “no use” for them, but they want a more fluid approach that balances the “heart and brain.” they say, “how we develop the experience needs to be broader than that one framework.”

Charlie said that with any model or framework there are limitations. These models were written 40-50 years ago and that it is “impossible” for something written that long ago to be “perfectly true” today. We need to be cautious about how much we “honour” historical research, including developmental theories because there are limitations to the narrative and our views have “opened up so much more” now. Art itself has also changed so much since they were written.

Charlie finds the idea of developmental stages to be problematic. The goal of reaching the farthest stage “conflicts with access.” they think it should be good enough for some people to hit the first stage. The premise of these theories is that in order for us to be successful we need to have a lifelong relationship with art. Charlie sees this view as “infused with privilege.” they would prefer to focus on the “tiny victories.” These theories “do not give anybody any credit” and do not acknowledge that people already know something when they come into the gallery space.

Despite their critiques of developmental theories, Charlie does see some room for them in education today. Charlie sees room for “models that are fluid and responsive”. Charlie said that one of the problems with developmental theories is that they are not “revisited or renegotiated”. They were based on observations, and sometimes good research, but they have become dated. They want to see a “willingness to relook at things.”

Secondary Themes

Context and Constraints. Charlie talked about the differences between a school setting and a museum setting. In a museum, the interactions are shorter than they are in schools, and are usually one-off experiences. Charlie sees gallery visits as a way to “help teachers expand on what they are learning in the classroom.” The gallery also serves as a place where teachers can come for support in teaching art.

Charlie talked about the time pressures and challenges that teachers face in schools. They said that there is not the luxury to “really get creative” with how you teach or to do a lot of research into topics. At the gallery they have “more flexibility and agency” to think about innovative ways to have the conversations they are having. Unlike in the school system, Charlie does not have to do assessment of students, which they find “freeing.”

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. Charlie does not find the period a work is from to be an important factor in how accessible it is to children. They say, “I do believe that you can talk about all different types of art with kids of all different ages.” Charlie believes that “some art is just naturally more accessible than others,” but that it is hard to put your finger on why that is.

Minor Themes

Age, Development and Learner Background. Charlie did not discuss the differences between working with children from different age groups or developmental levels. They said they use the same approaches with all ages, from preschool to adult. They did discuss having difficult conversations with the students. This includes conversations about colonisation, discrimination, social justice, and the environment. They focus on how to “level those conversations” so that they meet the students “where they are at with their development.”

Themes Not Discussed

Educator Experience and Comfort

Participant 3: Taylor

“My goal is always: I want [visitors] to feel empowered to interpret art for themselves.”

- Taylor

Taylor has worked at the Ontario 1 Gallery for over 20 years and works with Education and Public Programs. The Ontario Gallery is a large institution with a collection of mimetic, modern, and contemporary art. They have worked with children ages 4 and 5 up to adults.

Taylor has worked in art education for many years and has seen shifts happen over their career. They seem to strike a balance between more traditional approaches and the incorporation of newer approaches. Taylor spoke about strategies and approaches in a very open way. They were able to

explain the value in almost every approach or tool we discussed, without advocating for any one method as *the* method to follow.

Taylor understands gallery teaching approaches from a practical as well as theoretical background. They have experience with some of the theories that are behind the practical approaches and tools commonly used in galleries. They spoke to the role of developmental theory in education today and explained that experience as more important than age in development.

Summary of Themes

Table 11

Summary of Taylor’s Interview Themes

Themes	Frequency
Goals and Values	***
Context and Constraints	*
Shifting Values and Practices	**
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	**
Strategies and Approaches	***
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	***
Age, Development and Learner Background	***
Educator Experience and Comfort	*
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	***

Key Themes

Goals and Values. As an educator, Taylor wants to give people “all the building blocks they need to interpret art.” These building blocks are techniques and strategies to look at art. They want visitors “to feel empowered to interpret art for themselves” and to understand artworks “in a way that is meaningful for them.” they want everyone to feel like they can go to the gallery if they want to; like they have the tools they need for this.

Taylor wants visitors to be engaged. They say that ideally when people are looking at art they are not “passively receiving information” but are “actively engaged in careful looking,” they want visitors to leave knowing they have learned something, rather than them leaving feeling “dumber than when they came in.” they said it is important to “first do no harm.”

Strategies and Approaches. Taylor discusses a number of different approaches their use in their work, including Visual Thinking Strategies and other constructivist approaches, and Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

Visual Thinking Strategies and Constructivist Approaches. Taylor’s approach largely relies on Visual Thinking Strategies and other constructivist approaches. They described these approaches as “questioning strategies designed to get people to interpret works and then ground those interpretations with evidence in the artworks.”

Taylor uses different strategies based on the type of work they are looking at with the students. For a contemporary work with many details, they would use Feldman’s Analysis or Visual Thinking Strategies. They would have the students look at the work and build a narrative. With other works (like a conceptual installation), they might break the students into groups and get each group to respond to one of the prompts “I see..., I think... and I wonder...”. Then they would have the groups share their responses to the prompts with the whole group.

Sometimes the students cannot “find everything in the work.” They can interpret it but sometimes there are key pieces of information about the artist’s intentions, etc. that they need to be able to understand the work. They can provide this information, but they say, “you do not answer a question no one has asked.” Taylor comments that when we see a work in a museum setting, “the questions are basically the same for everyone.” People want to know: “why am I looking at this?”, “why

is it here”, “what is it made of?”, and “why does it matter?” By focusing on the questions, the students ask, Taylor is “starting with the learner and where they're at and what they want to know.”

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Taylor uses approaches inspired by Howard Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences. They use multi-sensory activities that are age appropriate for the students. For example, with young students who are looking at abstract or non-figurative works, they get the students to use their bodies to mimic different types of lines (jagged, wavy, etc.). They might use large swatches of fabric, string and cut out foam shapes to get students comfortable with line, colour, and shape. They describe this as similar to formal analysis of works, but in a tactile way. It integrates play and discovery into the process.

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. Taylor feels that they can show children of any age most styles of work, from narrative historical (mimetic) works, to abstract modern works, to contemporary works. They said, “I do not think that there are works and age groups that work better together.” The only works they does not really show children is video work because of limited time in tours.

Taylor talked about how they show contemporary art to their students. With some contemporary works, they see that viewers are faced with “a bit of cognitive dissonance” when they see a work and it is not what they are expecting. This sometimes happens when a work is not narrative, so the viewer does not see a clear “way in” to the work. This difficulty in finding a “way in” is the challenge with contemporary art, according to Taylor. These works sometimes require some background or contextual information, which Taylor calls a “key” for the work. This is sometimes necessary to give the students because they likely will not be able to figure out the intention or message of the artist from looking at the work alone. They will not be able to make meaning with work. Taylor said that “I have always found if you engage people in conversation around contemporary works of art, even if they are sceptical and not used to looking at works of art, they get it very quickly”.

Age, Development and Learner Background. Taylor talked about wanting people to leave the gallery feeling like art is meaningful and like art matters. They said that to do this, they need to get a sense of where the student is at in their aesthetic development. When trying to gauge if an activity is

developmentally appropriate, they look for students to be engaging in conversations and able to accomplish the tasks set out for them.

Taylor described elementary school children as not being shy about sharing their initial impressions of a work. They are not worried about “sounding or looking foolish.” they say that with young children, “I felt like I could show them almost anything.”

Taylor has observed that around ages 11 or 12 children “start to get more quiet, more reserved.” They start to understand that there is a lot about art making and art history that they do not know. They no longer feel comfortable sharing their observations and initial reactions unless they are very positive or very negative reactions. The trick with this group, Taylor says, is to hook them and say, “you really seem to be having a strong reaction to this, let’s talk a bit more about that.” Taylor has observed that around ages 12-14, where they are spending less time studying art in school, students have a lack of comfort with art. They also commented that around this age they recognise that they do not have expertise and they feel less comfortable sharing and talking about art.

With school tours, Taylor sees adult volunteers, or non-art teachers who do not know much about art coming into the gallery space. They say that frequently with works like Marcel Duchamp’s Ready-mades they get adults responding with things like “what is this, this is terrible.” Some of the children react the same way, but there are usually one or two children that like these works.

Taylor has observed that adults coming into the gallery may already be knowledgeable about art and art history and there to “deepen that knowledge.” In this case, they already have a “framework” that they can fit the experience into, a way of scaffolding the artworks and information they are learning. But for many other people, they do not have this, and they often find the experience overwhelming. When they are not “getting it” they become frustrated.

Taylor brought up that adults may be at a similar developmental level as children when it comes to art, but that they are not comfortable learning in the same way as children. Different approaches are needed with adults. For example, they talk about having children play with fabric and string to explore abstract works of art. They say that this is also developmentally appropriate for some adults, but that

they would not feel comfortable doing it. With adults it is important to find things that are not only developmentally appropriate, but also “culturally appropriate.”

The Role of Developmental Theory Today. Taylor described their perspective on the relevance of developmental theory today. They discussed the helpful takeaways they have found in these theories, as well as the limitations of the theories. Finally, they discussed the accuracy of these theories.

Relevance Today. Taylor said that museum educators tend not to dive too deeply into theory because there is not enough time for them to do so. In the museum field, they say that staff do not get a lot of training in developmental theory. Instead, they find strategies and techniques that are tested and proven to work well. Many of these strategies are based in theory, but the theory is not as important in practice. They see theory as a framework through which you can understand the approaches or strategies. It is “neat to read afterwards” to understand where a technique came from.

Taylor saw developmental theories as still having relevance today. They called them “helpful frameworks” and a “good place to start.” they said that they “help you cut through all that trial and error” that you would have to do on your own when designing a learning activity.

Taylor talked about why certain theories become popular. When a credible institution presents a strategy that they have developed and tested over time, it “tends to gain wide acceptance.” Educators and teachers tend to be “very practical and hands on” and focused on strategies and approaches. According to Taylor, VTS became widely accepted because there was formal hands-on training that was accessible and quick to do.

Taylor believed that education can be like a pendulum. They see a constructivist paradigm for learning aligning with today, but this may change in the future. They see the strategies they have used over their career as still being relevant, but they might fall out of fashion at some point.

Helpful Takeaways. They were less concerned with the theories being completely accurate than they were with what can be learned from them. For example, with Abigail Housen’s theory of development (which VTS came out of), Taylor’s takeaway is that it is not just age, but also experience, that affects how people look at art. Another example of important takeaways came from Howard

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Taylor said they liked this idea of multiple intelligences. They were less concerned with how accurately the theory described these intelligences, but they found the idea that different people have different kinds of intelligences and can be stronger in some than others to be helpful. Taylor described theories as "different tools, different parts of the toolbox."

Limitations of Developmental Theories. In addition to the valuable takeaways from these theories, Taylor pointed out some of their limitations. They discussed the limited perspectives that are included in these theories. They are "all western ways of understanding knowledge." Taylor also commented on the fact that theories like Housen's (and Parsons') were developed based on looking at well-known works from western art at the time. These works tended to be figurative and narrative. They said the theories do not "pretend" to apply to other types of art. This is a limitation to the theory.

Theories that we based on interviews with participants also run into the issues that in meetings and interviews, people do not always say everything they are thinking. The researcher cannot know what people are thinking, they can only talk about what they can observe, which is "only ever part of the story."

Although VTS was developed from a constructivist perspective, Taylor said it can be "a prescriptive way of getting people to understand" a work. All theories try to describe the world, but they do so from "a particular perspective at a particular time." The world they are describing is "big, messy and ever changing." Theories try to "impose order" on this "chaos." Theories structure things, and this means "prioritising some types of knowledge" and "filtering out" others.

Accuracy of Developmental Models. Taylor mentioned some aspects of the theories, specifically Housen's theory, that they found generally accurate. They found that people who are new to art tend to read narratives into whatever they are looking at, even if there is not "intended narrative" in the work, like with abstract works. They also found that it is accurate that people who are familiar with art tend to let go of the idea that there is "one fixed meaning or interpretation" to a work. Every time they come to a familiar work; they can find something new in it. There were other aspects of the models that they do not find to be accurate, like the idea that younger or newer viewers only like realism or

narrative in works. Taylor said that with every tour you can find someone who proved to be the exception to the rule but that this did not mean theories are not “not based on lots of observation.”

Secondary Themes

Shifting Values and Practices. Taylor talked about how over time the views around education and the approaches used in galleries shift. As a child, Taylor’s education was structured as “kids in rows, lots of independent work, rote learning, memorising.” This type of learning was founded on the belief that students were a blank slate to be filled with knowledge. This expository approach is often not sufficient anymore. During their career, the dominant theory was Constructivism. Later in their career, there has been a move towards conversations about Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being.

Taylor discussed the way that galleries “tell a story.” This involves choosing what to share. They commented that over their career, the exhibitions of Canadian and Indigenous works have changed. This is because “the story that we want to talk about our history is changing” and more voices are being given a place in the gallery.

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums. One of the barriers Taylor sees is people who have not been to galleries often, or in a long time, and do not know how to behave in that space. They think this lack of comfort comes, in part, from the way art is taught in schools. It is not a core subject and often suffers with budget cuts. Children in grades seven or eight often stop taking art in school. This lack of exposure to art leads to a lack of comfort.

Minor Themes

Context and Constraints. Taylor commented that children are often a captive audience at the gallery. They usually come in with their parents or their school. It is important for children to get this exposure to art galleries. Galleries also provide Professional Development for teachers, especially generalist teachers.

Educator Experience and Comfort. Taylor discussed ways that educator comfort level can affect students. They commented that sometimes what teachers are comfortable with teaching may be more of an indicator of their own imitations than the limitations of what their students can handle.

Themes Not Discussed

Taylor discussed all the themes.

Participant 4: Riley

“We take a holistic approach to teaching, we encourage self-discovery, self-expression, we want the children to investigate and experiment and observed.” - Riley

Riley has worked with the Ontario 2 Gallery for 20 years and is currently their Head of Education. The Ontario 2 Gallery is a small institution with a collection of mimetic, modern, and contemporary art.

Riley 4 is practical in their approach to art education. They have a wealth of experience of what works with students, and they have created a system for their programs. They were less concerned with the theories behind certain practices and more concerned with what works for students.

Riley spoke about facing challenges from teachers and the community at large not understanding or fully valuing the work the gallery does. They see the gallery as a valuable part of the community and works to educate all about the importance of art. Riley cares deeply about their work and the importance of making art accessible to all.

They are focused on the student experience and what they get out of their time at the gallery. They value the individual development of students and promotes giving them the time and space to explore and discover.

Summary of Themes

Table 12

Summary of Riley’s Interview Themes

Themes	Frequency
Goals and Values	***
Context and Constraints	**
Shifting Values and Practices	

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	
Strategies and Approaches	***
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	*
Age, Development and Learner Background	***
Educator Experience and Comfort	***
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	

Key Themes

Strategies and Approaches. Riley described students as “explorers,” ready to use their imaginations. They want to play and have fun and “that’s where all the answers are for them”. Riley said that “every child is unique and learns differently” and that educators need to meet students where they are at. This involves listening to what the students are saying and what questions they are asking. It also involves figuring out what they already know.

In the gallery space, Riley asked the students open ended questions, drawing from VTS, about what they see and what they think is going on in the works. They used many “what” and “how” questions to get them thinking and using their imaginations. They described this process as free flowing where they must be adaptable and flexible and base their questions on the what the students are saying. They thought it was important to give the students space and listen to their responses. They commented that some students were more willing to talk in this group conversation, but their responses were “contagious”, and you could see a “spark” happening in the students who were listening. They may see the work in a way they had not thought of before.

Riley provided some background information about the works of art if there was something the students wanted to know or something they thought they needed to know about the work. In general, they preferred not to tell the students things right away, but to “ask them questions to see what they

know first, before we teach them anything.” Rather than focusing on telling the students things, they described their role as to “observe, listen and then adapt.”

Educator Experience and Comfort. Riley discussed how educators’ comfort level influences their students, and how professional development can be helpful for educators.

Educators’ Influence on Children. Riley said that adults need to “be mindful” of what they are “projecting” onto students because children are very impressionable. They will often remember the negatives more than the positives, so adults and educators need to be careful. Educators have an impact on children when it comes to how they feel about themselves as artist. Riley also spoke about the influence educators, and parents, have on children’s views of art. They hear students repeating things that they do not really understand but they have heard adults say about art.

Educator Comfort and Professional Development. Riley said that a teacher’s comfort level teaching about art really makes a difference in students’ experiences with art. They found that a lot of teachers were “so afraid of doing art” and that their students could sense that fear. They noticed students being influenced by this lack of a “growth mindset.” “Delving into the unknown” can be too risky for some teachers and they may stick to teaching more “concrete” and “tangible” things or hard skills. Art is a soft skill that involves “critical thinking, analysing situations, being curious and tolerating change and not staying with the status quo.” Teachers may be hesitant to take risks and explore and this diminishes the value of art and culture for their students.

The gallery offers professional development for teachers. They use this as an opportunity to remind them that they are all creative and artists. It is an opportunity for teachers to not have to be “all-knowing.” Riley gives teachers guidance on assessing art projects. They get teachers to experience the gallery from a student’s perspective.

Riley found that many teachers who bring their classes into the gallery were “blown away” by what the children are doing in the gallery. They can be surprised by what their students are capable of.

Goals and Values. Riley works to make the gallery collection as accessible as possible to the public. They feel it is important for art to be accessible for everyone. Riley said that with younger

children, their goals are simpler. They want them to respond to their environment and ask questions. They want to inspire their curiosity. They want them to learn to connect to themselves on an emotional level. As they get older, the goal is to have them inquire and to challenge the skills they have already experimented with. They build on a knowledge of history or the story behind a work.

Riley takes a holistic approach to learning and encourages self-discovery and self-expression. They want the students to discover, investigate, experiment, and observe. They are focused on the growth and development of the individual and “using their creativity to explore what’s already inside them.” they see their role as one to nurture and support. Riley does not see the education they provide as being just about the art itself. They said, “it does not have to be about the art, it is most often not about the art, it is about the individual and self-discovery and self-development and self-growth.”

Age, Development and Learner Background. Riley works with a lot of pre-schoolers at the gallery. They said that with babies, “you can see the wonderment on their eyes when they walk into the space because there is a lot visually going on.” they see babies exploring the environment and the artworks through all of their senses and they call the gallery space “a whole different world for them.” they see physical responses in their body movements as well as smiling and laughing. They say that many works lure them in with the “vibrations” of their colours and the “movement” in the works. They also discussed the social element of being in the gallery space. They have seen babies “observing other people’s reaction with wonderment.” They are establishing relationships. Riley believes that the gallery experience deeply affects these very young children in their gut, their intuition, their heart-centre, and their mind.

Riley uses roughly the same approach with preschool children as all their other students. With younger children they have “simpler goals.” they say that these young children are “just responding to themselves and perhaps to the tools and materials” they are working with during art making. Riley said that young children are experimenting when making art because they don’t know what is going to happen. They describe their decisions as being based on “total creativity, total open-mindedness.” They experience “that wonderment of exploring.” they believe that it is very important to expose preschool children to art because their brains are developing so much during this time. Being exposed to art at

this age is “like opening up another world of possibilities.” they compare it to learning a different language or form of communication.

Riley finds that young children are eager to answer questions about what is going on in a work; “they don’t have a problem telling you, especially at a young age.” they find that this is especially true in a group situation, where younger students are “more apt to talk and tell you what they see”. This age is “instinctively ready to use their imagination” and they want to play and have fun; “that’s where all the answers are for them.”

They said that “kids come in with no preconceived notions, no pressure, no expectations, no judgements.” As they get older, they become more set in their ways and what they like and dislike. In contrast, adults tend to be very set in their ways. They find that adults have a set idea of what they think art is and they are resistant to things that do not fit into that idea.

Secondary Themes

Context and Constraints. Riley discussed a number of educational contexts and the constraints that impact these contexts.

Political and Financial Contexts. Riley commented that the conservative politics of the area they are in affects the gallery. In general, the gallery team is free to do the work they want but they do need to balance “fitting into society” with “spreading the good news” of art. The gallery receives their funding from the city, which enables their programs, but the fact that they are funded by taxpayers factors into how they are perceived in the community. Often, the community is not aware of the positive impacts the gallery has.

School Contexts and Constraints. The gallery runs school programs and must deal with the constraints that come along with the school system. Teachers that bring the students in need to do assessments and Riley demonstrated their approach to assessments to the teachers. Riley was very specific in their view of how assessment should work. In their view, students who “put forth an effort to work with the tools and materials provided” should get a “B.” For grades higher than that, they considered how far students take things, how they add on, how they finish or present their final work, the technique and skill that went into it.

She finds many teachers are critical of student work, even work they are just starting. They see a lot of censoring of what students are doing because it is seen as “inappropriate,” which can be a problem. Riley’s approach to this is to ask students about their work and to get them to “justify” their ideas. They say this always works with students, and often something an adult thinks is inappropriate is actually a very innocent idea.

Minor Themes

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. Riley thinks that the period a work is from is not a significant factor in how accessible it is. They say that children easily understand art “no matter what age they are, no matter what period of art they are looking at.” With historical (mimetic) and representational works, they find that children “come up with a story fairly quickly about what they think is going on.” With abstract works they go to their imagination, or refer to their dreams, and the “see something in [the work] immediately.” they find that children are interested in and “captivated” by new media and video too.

Themes Not Discussed

Shifting Values and Practices

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums

The Role of Developmental Theory Today

Participant 5: Ryan

“Art is a good tool for teaching people how to critically engage with the visual, auditory, etc. world around them. That is one of the most poignant things about art education, especially in contemporary art.” -Ryan

Ryan has worked in museums for 6 years and is currently the Learning Coordinator at the Ontario 3 Gallery. The Ontario 3 Gallery is a mid-sized institution and exhibits exclusively contemporary art. They have worked with people from ages 6-30, with a focus on teens and young adults.

He has worked in schools, postsecondary institutions, and gallery contexts and this has given him different perspectives on art education. They understand the teachers who are visiting the gallery and where they are coming from. They are also a practising artist and brings this knowledge into their

work at the gallery. While they are relatively new to the field, their variety of experiences inform their work and they spoke about many different aspects of art and education.

Ryan spoke about their practice from a theoretical as well as practical place. They are interested in art theory and, to a lesser extent, educational theory. They come across as reflective and constantly thinking about their practice from an intellectual as well as practical side. They talked a lot about the why behind education, as well as the what and how.

Summary of Themes

Table 13

Summary of Ryan’s Interview Themes

Themes	Frequency
Goals and Values	***
Context and Constraints	***
Shifting Values and Practices	**
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	*
Strategies and Approaches	***
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	***
Age, Development and Learner Background	***
Educator Experience and Comfort	*
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	

Key Themes

Goals and Values. Ryan's goals are impacted by their values and socially engaged pedagogy. They have worked in different educational contexts and poke to how their goals shift based on the context.

Socially Engaged Pedagogy. Ryan has studied the relationship between social justice and art education, and this is something they works to incorporate into their pedagogy. A "socially engaged pedagogy" is important to how they present work to students. They incorporate social themes into their teaching and explores how art can be more than just a "formal experience" (as in exploring the formal elements of the art). They explore the social contexts that inform the works.

Ryan said contemporary art can be a "vehicle for exploring and discussing other issues." It is a useful tool for teaching people how to "critically engage with the visual world around them." Oftentimes contemporary art deals with ideas about how we see and think about the world. Art can help us understand complex social issues. Ryan sees contemporary art as a tool for "developing social engagement or developing oneself as a political subject."

Ryan says, "there is a lot of power in how art can open up how we perceive issues." For him "a successful artwork is one that can communicate something but also gives enough space for a viewer to still have agency in how they enter the work." Other types of images may do this too, but art has an opportunity for "a different kind of complexity." Contemporary art asks the viewer to think about things like the media they consume. It might not be trying to directly communicate a message, or make a demand, so much as it is trying to get us to think about how things are represented and how we understand what we are looking at.

Goals in Different Learning Contexts. Ryan has worked as an educator in museum, school, and university contexts. They explained how their goals change based on these different contexts. In the museum context, they are usually with the students for one session and therefore their goals are more condensed. In this context they want the students to understand the work they are looking at and to have a discussion. In a high school context, educators can look at how the students develop their understanding over many months. The goals might vary based on the high school. In a high school focused on the arts the goals might be more similar to those at a university level. There may be a focus

on students developing “technical skills” in art. At a high school that does not value art as highly, they may be focused more on developing critical visual skills than technical ones. In a university course, the focus may be more on writing skills or art making skills, with the goal of developing a critical understanding.

Strategies and Approaches. Ryan described the questioning strategies they use in their work, as well as how they incorporate art making as a strategy for understanding art.

Questioning Strategies. Ryan’s strategies vary based on the type of work they are looking at with the students. Some of the works in the gallery are things you can touch or use, so then that sensory element is used in addition to the visual. With many works, they use open-ended, guided questions to set up discussion, similar to VTS. Often, they will start with “immediate” questions like “what do you see?” and “is there anything you relate to?” they see student responses as “an invitation for other people to also jump in [to the conversation].” their role as an educator is to affirm student responses and keep the discussion moving. They find that the group starts to have its own dynamics and will take the conversation in certain directions. This depends on how much are willing or feel permission to engage. After they has asked a number of questions and received some responses, they will give some background information. They like to start with questions to get the students’ “immediate read” of the work before providing them with more information.

Making Art. Ryan uses artmaking as “another level of understanding, through material exploration.” Artmaking is “a great way to pose a question visually or materially and have the students think through making something.” This visual question may “hit home” in a different way than a discussion does.

Artmaking can be framed as “playing” with the materials, or it can be approached with “conceptual concerns.” While they do see value in the former, the latter can be an opportunity to pose questions through visual activities and think about something conceptually. They believe that the hands on making “can give you another layer of understanding of what it actually means to represent something, or how we actually depict or visualise social issues that we care about, or how we depict or visualise ourselves.”

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. Ryan mostly works with contemporary art. They say that there are “lots of points of access” in contemporary art that they do not always find in modern art. For example, they find modern abstract painting to be less accessible to some students. They feel that one challenge with looking at historical (mimetic) works is the need to unpack the social and historical context of when the work was made. This is not always “as interesting or accessible to younger learners.” Historical work may be less “immediate” than a contemporary work. Contemporary art it is “grounded in a more immediate visual” that we can more easily associate with because these visuals are contemporary to our lives.

With contemporary art they see more opportunities for making “personal connections in terms of lived experience.” Contemporary art can also have a “wider range of sensory activation” for students. This contrasts with modern and historical (mimetic) art which has “a more visually oriented experience.” they see the “multisensory dimension” of contemporary art as helpful because not all students learn by looking; some need tactile or sonic experiences. Contemporary art also allows the audience to discuss “more expansive things than just the art itself.” There is potential to have conversations about a wide variety of issues and to make personal connections.

Ryan discusses the meta-aspects of contemporary art and the need to “tailor down” the discussion from “art language” to make it appropriate for the educational context. For certain ages, these conversations may be too complex. For example, many contemporary artworks involve a “meta-discourse about art itself.” they work to frame this in ways that are appropriate for the age they are working with.

Context and Constraints. Ryan noted assessment as a key difference between the school and gallery context. In schools and postsecondary institutions, assessment is something educators must do. However, in the gallery context, Ryan is not doing formal assessment. Instead, they are seeing if students can “identify something in the work that they can make a connection to themselves.” they say that “if they can articulate a connection, I think that's a moment of understanding in relationship to the artwork.” When students can respond to open-ended questions in the gallery, that is another “moment of understanding,” as is when they can produce a piece of art in response to another piece of art.

Age, Development and Learner Background. Ryan talked about “lived experience”, rather than age, as a factor when it comes to understanding art. They say, “I think it boils down to lived experience and some kids have a lot of lived experience.” In general, younger children have less experience than older children and adults, but it varies from person to person. Ryan also talked about the need to tailor the level at which they discuss concepts to the age of the children they are talking to.

Ryan talks about teens being more self-conscious than younger students. They specifically talk about this as it relates to their art making. They say that teens feel pressure for the art they make to be good. They do not want to spend time doing things they are not good at. They contrast this with the attitude of younger children, which they describe as an attitude of “give me some paper, I just want to do, I just want to make.”

Contemporary Children and Youth. Ryan speculated that there may be a “temporal difference” between contemporary children and youth and those from a few decades ago. They were clear that this is not something they has concrete evidence for, or has studied, and is more of an intuitive speculation. They do think that children and youth are exposed to a lot more today. This is partially because of the media they consume and their access to the internet. Because of this they think they know about a lot of topics, not in great complexity, but they have been exposed to a lot. They talk about how so much media geared towards children and youth “delves into questions of identity, questions of representation, complex lived experiences of migration or displacement.” This media did not exist in the same scale and was not as accessible 10-20 years ago.

Ryan described adolescents as knowing more than they did when they were a teen. They think this is great and can make talking about art easier but does not assume all youth are equally knowledgeable. They speculate that the internet may play a role in this as people now have more access to conversations about diverse experiences. They clarify that this is different from having access to those experiences but thinks that exposure is significant. For example, they think:

“There's a lot of young people who have some understanding of the complexity of gender in a way that I had no idea as a child growing up and it's because it's there, it's visible in the media they consume.”

Secondary Themes

Shifting Values and Practices. Ryan was in a unique position within the shifting field of museum and galleries because the gallery they were at did not have permanent collection. Ryan contrasted this with institutions that are museums “in the more traditional, historical and colonial sense of the word.” Many museums have problematic, and often stolen, collections. Ryan talked about the “dance” many museums do to show their collections in appropriate ways. They often end up bringing in other artists to contextualise the collection. They have to “justify the problematic material with something “contemporary”.”

In Ryan’s gallery, they did not have to deal with this in the same way because of their lack of collection. With the art they were showing being entirely contemporary, these discourses and “already at hand.” Issues like the decolonization of museums were often explicitly discussed with contemporary art and cannot be “dodged.” Ryan talked about their gallery having the desire to show more diverse artists. There was a “conscious effort” to include Indigenous Voices in “an expanded sense.”

Minor Themes

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums. Ryan brought up how school visits to museums can make people more comfortable in these spaces as they get older. Museums “can be extremely inaccessible and uninviting.” If students visit museums through school multiple times, they can develop the feeling that they “have the right to be there.” Educators need to affirm that students’ opinions matter in this space, that they can ask questions, and that this is a space to discuss and think. They need to affirm that the students have a right to be there.

Educator Experience and Comfort. Ryan finds that teachers who come to the gallery appreciate that the staff has training in delivering art activities. One of the roles of the gallery is to provide those services to teachers and schools. Although Ryan clarifies that the gallery does not replace trained teachers and that the government should still provide more funding for teachers and the arts.

Themes Not Discussed

The Role of Developmental Theory Today

Participant 6: Avery

“Human beings are innately creative. We make things, we communicate our experiences through art, and we understand mystery through art. We are able to use art in so many different forms, such as therapy, self-expression, connecting with other people, and connecting with ourselves. There are so many things that art allows us to do, that to deny somebody the ability to interact with art is like denying them a component of life.” - Avery

Avery has worked at the Alberta Gallery for 2 years in both Curation and Education and is fairly new to the field. The Alberta Gallery is a new, mid-sized institution and exhibits contemporary art. Avery focuses on working with ages 14-24.

Avery has experience curating and is on the gallery curatorial team. They are interested in how language, culture and identity intersect with art and art education. They bring in approaches from art therapy. Avery is focused on what art making and art experiences can do for individuals and groups. For their this includes connections, community, and the healing aspects of making art in community.

Avery spoke extensively about accessibility and how they and their team work to make the gallery accessible to as many people as possible. This included the physical and financial accessibility of the gallery. It also included thinking critically about how the gallery includes diverse perspectives and approaches its interactions with visitors in an empathetic way. They work with visitors from a variety of backgrounds and identities, and they are very aware of the challenges, as well as the opportunities, that this brings.

Avery has worked more as a coordinator and facilitator, than an educator. They oversee the gallery education programs and is focused on the higher-level goals and vision for these programs. They have worked with educators from a partner organisation who implement the programs at the gallery.

Summary of Themes

Table 14

Summary of Avery's Interview Themes

Themes	Frequency
Goals and Values	***
Context and Constraints	
Shifting Values and Practices	
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	***
Strategies and Approaches	**
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	**
Age, Development and Learner Background	***
Educator Experience and Comfort	
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	

Key Themes

Goals and Values. Avery values accessibility in the gallery. They do a lot of work to make their programs accessible to as many people as possible. They also talk about wanting to make their approach “empathetic.” their gallery does training for its staff to promote these values of accessibility and empathy. Avery focuses on individual student needs, which they can do more easily because they tend to work with youth over a longer period of time. They look to give youth agency in their learning.

Creating connection and community among participants is another central goal in Avery’s work. They get students to respond to artworks to help them to see how they are related to the world around them and make them feel more connected. This is especially important for adolescents, who often feel disconnected or othered. Avery 6 believes that “in order to understand the artwork, or to understand the world around us, we need to understand who we are in relation to it.”

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums. Avery discussed many factors that impact accessibility in museums. They also brought up the importance of having diverse representations in the gallery and how these representations impact accessibility. Finally, they delved into the ways people communicate with each other and how to support people in having difficult conversations.

Accessibility of the Museum. Avery discussed being on the curatorial team, in addition to being an educator, and how this is an opportunity to increase accessibility. They and their team can think about accessibility “from the beginning.” The exhibition planning and the program planning happen at the same time and accessibility is considered throughout the process. When running programs, the staff play an especially important role in accessibility. Having volunteers and gallery assistants, in addition to facilitators, at events and programs makes it so that no one becomes “lost” in the group. Individual attention and getting to know people’s names and pronouns make them feel more comfortable.

Avery also talked about the barriers that exist in physically getting to the gallery. their gallery is a long drive or transit ride away for a lot of people. It is also expensive to pay for a school bus to bring students to the gallery. Funding for schools would make the gallery more accessible to students.

Diversity of Representation and Perspective. Avery talked a lot about increasing the diversity of representation and perspectives in the museum. They would like to see more staff being hired at the gallery, and more staff with “diverse perspectives and diverse skills.” they want to work towards building a team where any youth can come to their programs and “find a leader that looks like them, is like them, talks like them.” they strongly believe that “who our teachers are teach us who to respect in society.” Avery wants their staff to be “representative of the world around us.”

Avery also talked about the importance of diversity in the exhibitions. The curatorial team works hard to represent different people, not just the “classically represented white man.” It is important to not just represent diverse voices, but to avoid “overused victim narratives of certain demographics.” they want to see “more celebratory stories” as well as stories of what groups of people have gone through. They mentioned the importance of intersectionality and representing the way race, gender, sexuality, etc. intersect in people’s experiences.

Understanding and Communicating with Others. Avery sees the way we understand and communicate with others as central to the accessibility of the gallery and its programs. Staff and facilitator training and in Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-racism, as well as sensitivity training and empathy training are key to their gallery's culture. The goal is to help people with understanding and speaking to visitors who are different than them.

Avery said this is helpful because our "socio-political climate currently is quite aggravated". A lot of people are hurting right now. When the gallery is focused on working with marginalised and disenfranchised individuals, they need to be aware that many people are carrying a lot of hurt, anger and sadness. It is easy for people working in an institution, and those in positions of authority, who might not be a part of a marginalised group to become "a target for lashing out."

The goal of empathy training is to help staff understand that "hurt people hurt other people," and to help them to not to get defensive or angry or hurt back, but to figure out where that hurt, and anger is coming from and then to set up "resolution strategies." Empathy training also helps staff to be aware of their unconscious bias and ways they contribute to these feelings of hurt and anger without meaning to. It is ongoing learning that needs to happen.

Age, Development, and Learner Background. Avery is in a unique position where they tend to have the same students coming to programs repeatedly. This gives them and their team the chance to get to know students individually and to tailor their teaching to the individuals rather than just the age group. They look for what motivates the student and how they can best relate to them.

Avery focuses specifically on working with youth and they delved in more detail into the particular of working with this age. They described youth as being "so impacted by the smallest thing." If they feel threatened, misunderstood, or attacked it can "impact them forever."

Youth from "Distressed Backgrounds". Avery talked a lot about the backgrounds that the youth they work with come from, in addition to their age. They see many youths from what they describe as "distressed backgrounds." This includes youth with experiences of violence, incarceration, and various types of traumas. This is part of why their gallery's programs work with the same youth for an extended period rather than offering one-off programs. Avery's goal with this model is to create a

welcoming, safe space where youth can build trust and relationships. They tailor their programs to what the participating youth want to focus on, for example mental health or addiction. Many of their team members come from social work and art therapy backgrounds and use this background in their work.

Secondary Themes

Strategies and Approaches. Avery did not name specific approaches that they use, instead their approach is highly influenced by the exhibition the students are exploring and their own educational values. Avery works with a team of facilitators from a partnering organisation, who all have their own approaches. Avery's role includes overseeing and coordinating these facilitators and the programs that they lead within the gallery. Avery said that each facilitator approaches teaching in a way "that makes sense for them" and focuses on mediums that they are proficient in.

Questioning Strategies. Avery's does not have a set of questions they use in tours, like VTS does. Instead, the questions change based on the exhibition. Generally, they will take the students through the gallery and ask them questions like: "what do you see?", "did anything come up while looking at the work?", "are you curious about this?", "why do you think the artist might have done this?". In this questioning process, Avery will explain the artist's intentions behind the work, but they also talk to the students about how people interpret works differently and tells them that there are no right or wrong answers. They will ask the students "how do *you* interpret the work?" or "what do *you* feel?"

These questions tend to get the students to the point where they are almost leading the tour. They get the students to relate things back to themselves by asking questions like "if you were the artist what would you have this work mean?" In this conversation, the students begin interacting with each other and they "see how they're related to the people around them."

Responding to Art. Avery often has their students respond to the artworks through mediums like spoken work, poetry, and dance. They have the students come into the gallery to see the works in an exhibition and have conversations about the works. They figure out how they relate to the works or how they can tell a story about the ideas in the work. Then they respond through their chosen medium. This is often done in collaboration with other students and encourages conversations. The students will then often share their responses with the group.

Art Therapy Approach. Avery's approach is influenced by their interest in art therapy. When using an approach inspired by art therapy Avery is often focused on the barriers, such as those created by language. They see art as diverse ways to tell our stories through drawing, colours and patterns, various materials, etc. This helps to understand how tangible materials are related to certain cultures. Allowing people to create with those materials is a way of connecting them back to their culture.

She works to create spaces where people can create culturally significant art without the "worry of destruction." they describe this as a healing process for people who have been "impacted negatively by colonial histories." they talked about a common misconception they see in Canada, which is the idea that everyone is free to express who they are. This is not the case because "those in control of the dominant ideologies often make it difficult for people to express who they are tangibly." Avery said that "when so much of the world is focused on visual culture, creation culture, art culture it is really important to literally just create a safe space for people to create that culture."

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. Avery thinks that "in a way contemporary art is supposed to be a little bit inaccessible because it forces you to break some barriers or become really uncomfortable to fully access it." Much of contemporary work talks about current issues and that can be uncomfortable. It requires "a unique type of empathy" to understand the art and how it relates to us. With historical (from the mimetic period) works, the issues being discussed are in the past and we have generally come to understand them.

Contemporary art also often challenges the idea of what art is and that can make it more difficult to understand if we have a "classical" idea of art. Many contemporary artists are "redefining and renegotiating art practices" which can be overwhelming. Avery described contemporary art as "being so revolutionary at its core and forcing people to think about things differently." Contemporary art requires a type of thinking that we do not often practise and that can be strange and uncomfortable to engage with. Contemporary art evokes emotions and senses and parts of ourselves that we do not normally "sit down and really think about." This is "creates a barrier" to accessibility.

Avery does not talk about this "inaccessibility" as necessarily being a problem. You are not supposed to be able to walk into a gallery and "understand everything immediately." When they have

students and visitors who are “nervous to engage with art” or say that they have no idea what is going on, they tell them “That’s kind of the point, the idea is that if you do not know what is going on you have to think about it.” Avery suspects that many contemporary artists themselves “actually do not want to be understood, they just want to be experienced.” they say, “once you have an experience with something you build a relationship with it and from that relationship you go on to carry that with you.” In the future, it impacts the way you think and perceive other things; “experiences impact us, and that impact is what I think is really important and what I am trying to emphasise with the way we relate to contemporary art.”

Framing it in this way tends to make people more “open to engaging with the artwork.” The “idea that you have to have this intellectual discourse and be able to understand everything” is a method of gatekeeping within the art community. Avery does not agree with this idea, and described contemporary art as being less about understanding, and more about “human experience” than “human discourse.”

One of the key factors in the accessibility of contemporary art, for Avery, is the “inclusion, anti-racism, diversity” work that a gallery does or does not do. Avery and the Alberta Gallery put a large focus on this type of accessibility. Avery pointed out that a lot of contemporary works “tell stories of trauma and of pain.” In Canada specifically, they say that “a lot of Canadian artists are grieving the history that brought us to where we are and that is being translated in artwork right now.” People are coming into the gallery and having to address that shame and the way we are impacted by choices others made in the past. Avery believes that “accessibility is communicating that, and the art is acting as that middle ground to open the conversation.”

Minor Themes

Avery did not have any minor themes.

Themes Not Discussed

Context and Constraints

Shifting Values and Practices

Educator Experience and Comfort

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter I presented the findings from my interviews with the six participants. My initial analysis of the findings resulted in nine themes. For each participant, I presented a table outlining how frequently they discussed each theme. I presented a summary of each theme, by participant, organised into their key themes, secondary themes, and minor themes. In the next chapter, I analyse the themes, across all participants.

Chapter 5: Analysis

In Chapter 4, I presented my findings from the interviews with my six participants. I summarised what each participant said about each of the nine themes that emerged in the data analysis. In this chapter, I analyse these findings, and look at the participants as a group. The chapter is structured around the nine themes that were discussed in Chapter 4. For each theme, I examine the frequency of discussion across participants. From there, I compare the participants’ discussions of the theme and highlight key areas of consensus and any diverging perspectives.

Comparing Themes Across Participants

Table 15

Comparison of the Frequency of Discussion of Interview Themes Across Participants

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Goals and Values (18)	***	***	***	***	***	***
Strategies and Approaches (17)	***	***	***	***	***	**
Age, Development and Learner Background (15)	**	*	***	***	***	***

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods (14)	***	**	***	*	***	**
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums (10)	*	***	**		*	***
Shifting Values and Practices (9)	**	***	**		**	
Context and Constraints (8)		**	*	**	***	
The Role of Developmental Theory Today (7)	*	***	***			
Educator Experience and Comfort (6)	*		*	***	*	
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Analysis of Themes: Goals and Values

Table 16

Frequency of Discussion of the Goals and Values Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Goals and Values	***	***	***	***	***	***

* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly)

** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail)

*** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)

Goals and Values was a key theme for all six participants and was discussed by each participant in both interviews. It was the most discussed of all the nine themes. I have grouped goals and values under one theme, as they are interrelated and an educator's goals stem from their values. What participants had to say on other topics all stemmed from what their values were and what goals they had for their work and their programs.

Analysis Across Participants

Similarities. While each participants' goals and values were slightly different, many similar themes emerged across participants. All the participants are educators, and spoke about the educational goals of exploring and learning about, and through, art. They all value quality art education and want to expose children and youth to art. Other similar goals across participants included:

- Inspiring curiosity (Corrie, Charlie, Riley)
- Developing visual literacy skills (Corrie, Ryan)
- Developing critical thinking skills (Corrie, Ryan)
- Exploring ideas beyond the specific work of art (Corrie, Riley, and Ryan)
- Promoting accessibility (Corrie, Charlie, Taylor, Riley, Avery)
- Exploring social issues and social engagement and exploring the perspectives of others (Corrie, Charlie, Ryan, Avery)
- Self-expression, self-discovery, and individual growth (Charlie, Riley, Ryan)
- Promoting fun and joy (Charlie, Taylor)
- Active engagement and multisensory experiences (Charlie, Taylor)

Differences. Some participants discussed goals and values that were not discussed by the other participants but were likely common goals and values. For example, Taylor's discussion of their goals

and values focused largely on the goals of providing students with tools to interpret art. They want to help students to understand artworks “in a way that is meaningful for them” and for each student to leave the gallery with a wider understanding of art.

Some participants had unique goals and values because of their focus, background, and context. Avery’s goals and values differed the most from the other participants. They did share some similarities to the way Charlie spoke about their goals and values. Avery spoke the most about creating connection and community through art, especially communal art making. Their work involves the incorporation of therapeutic and healing properties of art. This was somewhat similar to Charlie’s discussion of how art can be heart-centred and move the viewer, resulting in a different kind of understanding from cognitive understanding. They both spoke about trauma informed practices in their work.

Concluding Statement. The participants had very similar goals and values. Each participant’s goals were impacted by their context and were consistent with their values in art education.

Analysis of Themes: Strategies and Approaches

Table 17

Frequency of Discussion of the Strategies and Approaches Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Strategies and Approaches	***	***	***	***	***	**
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Strategies and Approaches was a key theme for five of the six participants and was discussed by all participants in both interviews. It was the second most discussed theme of the nine themes.

Avery was the only participant who did not have Strategies and Approaches as a key theme, likely because the programs they oversee are generally taught by facilitators from a partner organisation, and they are not working as hands on with students. Their discussion of the strategies and approaches used in their programs was a higher level and less detailed than the other participants' discussion.

Analysis Across Participants

Participants strategies and approaches were influenced by their values, goals, and contexts. All the participants pulled from a variety of strategies and approaches depending on the students they work with and the artworks they are looking at. They discussed strategies and approaches in a flexible way, and none of them stuck rigidly to one method. Participants spoke about their strategies and approaches as if they were tools in a toolbox, with many options available.

Strategies Used. Participants used similar strategies in all of their work. The most common strategies discussed were:

- Constructivist, open-ended questioning strategies (such as Visual Thinking Strategies and the Saskatchewan Gallery Method)
- Prompts for student responses (ex: I see..., I think..., I wonder...)
- Howard Gardener's 5 Entry Points Approach and other multi-sensory activities (embodiment, storytelling, poetry, dance, etc.)
- Art making (such as a studio component or drawing in the gallery space)

Disagreement about VTS. Charlie was unique in that they were the only participant who was critical of VTS and does not use it. The SGM shares some similarities with VTS, as it is an open-ended questioning strategy that focuses on drawing out student responses. However, the SGM is less visually focused than VTS. Charlie sees problems with what they describe as "the privileging of the visual that exists in our ableist institutions." VTS is an example of this privileging of the visual.

Charlie disagrees with beginning discussions by asking students what they see. They think this question can feel like a "trap." It implies that there is something you might miss or that the question might have a right or wrong answer. Instead of asking students what they see, they begin by asking

them “what is the first word that comes to your mind when you look at this work?” This could be something they see, or it could be a word they think of, or an emotion the work evokes.

Making as Responding. Avery’s strategies and approaches were quite different than the other participants. While all the participants use art making in their work with students, Avery’s approach to art making was slightly different. They generally have their students make artworks in response to the artworks they are seeing, rather than making works with similar mediums, subjects, or techniques to the artwork on display. Avery has their students look at works, or whole exhibitions, and then respond to those through dance, poetry, spoken word, etc. Often these responses are done in groups, and this is done with the guidance of a facilitator who has experience in these mediums. According to Avery, having students respond this way helps them to relate the work to themselves and to connect to others.

Art Therapy Inspired Approaches. Avery was also the only educator who uses art therapy inspired approaches. They are not a therapist and as such does not provide art therapy, but their work is inspired by the therapeutic qualities of art. They use art as a way of healing from colonial trauma as well as a way for participants to make connections with each other and share their stories. In their experience, creating together builds community, breaks down barriers and brings healing.

Concluding Statement. The strategies and approaches discussed by the participants overlapped and appeared to be common approaches in museum and gallery education. The main approaches that were discussed were open-ended questioning strategies (like VTS), the use of prompts, the Five Entry Points Approach and other multisensory activities, and art making. The only point of contradiction between the participants was Charlie’s critiques of VTS and their use of a modified version of this questioning strategy.

Analysis of Themes: Age, Development, and Learner Background

Table 18

Frequency of Discussion of the Age, Development, and Learner Background Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
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Age, Development and Learner Background	**	*	***	***	***	***
<p>* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly)</p> <p>** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail)</p> <p>*** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)</p>						

Age, Development and Learner Background was the third most discussed theme and was discussed by all the participants. It was a major theme for four participants, a secondary theme for one, and a minor theme for one. I chose to group age and development together as Parsons first 3 stages (which are the stages that apply to children and youth) are correlated with age. I also included learner background within this theme as it was discussed as another factor that affects how each individual approaches and understands art.

Analysis Across Participants

There was a consensus by participants on trends that they have observed across age groups. Not all participants worked with all age groups, but as a whole the participants could speak to all age groups. None of their observations seemed to contradict the observations of other participants. These observations are generalisations about these groups, and variety exists from individual to individual.

Participant observations about trends in different learner age groups. The participants brought up some of the trends that they have observed in different age groups. These trends were not true for all individuals but indicated some of the common characteristics of the groups that come into the gallery. The trends that were identified were as follows:

Infants

- Respond to art with physical body movements, smiling and laughing
- Observe the reactions of other to art in a gallery space

Preschool aged children

- Draw from their own experiences when understanding art

- Express “wonderment” when viewing art
- Have an open mind
- Are explorers

Elementary School aged children

- Are open and imaginative
- Lack of preconceived notions about art
- Are not shy or embarrassed about sharing their responses and reactions
- Use their imaginations

Adolescents

- Want active learning as much as children do
- Are more hesitant to be the first to speak or share their reactions
- Are quieter and more reserved than younger children
- Recognise that there is a lot about art that they do not know
- Are concerned about how they are perceived (the “cool factor”) and are more self-conscious than younger children
- Are easily impacted by education experiences, especially negative ones
- Are less likely to be studying art in school and are often less comfortable with art than younger children
- Are more set in their ways, likes and dislikes than younger children
- Feel pressure to make “good” art and do not want to spend time on things they are not good at

Adults

- Come into the gallery with preconceived notions about art
- Are less open than children and more “set in their ways”
- Want to feel they “get” the artworks
- Tend to get frustrated or “shut down” when they do not understand a work
- May already be knowledgeable about art, or may not be comfortable with art and the gallery environment

- Understand that there is something “going on” in a work, something to be understood

Impact of viewer experience and background. Participants discussed characteristics besides age that affected how a person understands and interacts with art. A participant’s level of experience with art impacts their interactions with art, and this level of experience does not necessarily correlate with age. For example, an adult may have a similar level of experience with art as a child, or an adolescent may have more experience with art than an adult. Individuals with more experience looking at art understand and interact with art differently than those with less experience. More experienced viewers are more comfortable and knowledgeable about art. This is supported by Parsons’ (1987) model of development. Parsons indicated that after Stage 3, which is reached by some adolescents, development stops being correlated with age.

Part of this level of experience is impacted by who’s able to visit art galleries the most often. Some demographics are more likely to be exposed to art, and therefore more likely to be comfortable looking at art and visiting galleries. Making art and galleries more accessible, as many participants spoke about, will help more people to become comfortable engaging with art. This is an accessibility issue as well as an educational one.

A viewer’s background was also discussed as a factor when it comes to looking at and learning about art. Avery worked with youth from “distressed” backgrounds and they spoke about how this affects the learning experience. The youth they work with have experiences with violence, incarceration, and trauma. This makes it especially important to build an educational space and culture that is welcoming and fosters relationships and trust.

Ryan and Riley also brought up the idea of what is considered socially appropriate to teach children about. For example, many people in our society see nudity as inappropriate for children and educators must take this into account when planning learning experiences.

Assessing Development vs. Understanding. The participants noted the trends observed within different age groups, but many of them brought up that every student is at a slightly different place, and it is important to “meet them where they are at.” With every tour, someone will prove to be the “exception to the rule.” Using models of development to assess students was generally not seen as

helpful because within a group there will be so much variety that the educator cannot tailor an experience to just one level. Even students of a similar age may have widely varying levels of experience with art.

Instead of assessing the developmental level a student is at, participants spoke about assessing if students are engaging and understanding. Participants mentioned several indicators that students are understanding a work of art: body language, engagement in discussion, providing thought out responses to prompts and questions, articulating connections about artworks, and producing works in response to what they are looking at. Only Riley spoke about doing formal assessment in the gallery, whereas the other participants were only informally assessing students' understanding.

Methods Used with Different Ages. For the most part, participants said that they use similar methods with all age groups. While they may have “simpler” goals or need to “tailor” the discussion to the age group, the educational tools can be used across all ages. For example, questioning strategies remain similar regardless of the age group, although the discussion that students have will be different at different ages.

One exception to this, raised by Taylor, was the fact that many methods used with children would be developmentally appropriate for adults with limited experience with art, but many adults would not be comfortable engaging in activities they view as being for children (ex: playing with string on the gallery floor to explore line). While an adult may have limited aesthetic development, they are more developed in other ways and this needs to be considered when planning learning activities.

Concluding Statement. The participants identified some trends amongst viewers of different age groups. Generally, participants described children as being more open, less set in their ways, and more willing to share their responses than adolescents and adults. The participants identified factors other than age that impact how viewers engage with artworks. These included a viewer's level of experience with art and their background. It was noted that in the gallery context, educators assess viewers understanding more than they assess their developmental level. The participants spoke about using the same methods with all age groups, with the need to tailor these methods based on the audience.

Analysis of Themes: Accessibility of Art from Different Periods

Table 19

Frequency of Discussion of the Accessibility of Art from Different Periods Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	***	**	***	*	***	**
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods was the fourth most discussed theme and was discussed by all the participants. It was a key theme for three participants, a secondary theme for two, and a minor theme for one. This theme dealt with the accessibility of art objects themselves (period, medium, style and subject) as opposed to issues of institutional or social accessibility (which was discussed in the theme Accessibility and Diversity in Museums).

Analysis Across Participants

Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. The consensus across participants was that the time period is not a clear deciding factor in what makes a work accessible. Corrie, Charlie, Taylor, and Riley all very clearly stated that they do not see the period a work of art is from as one of the key determining factors in how accessibly that work will be for certain ages or developmental levels.

“I do believe that you can talk about all different types of art with kids of all different ages.”

- Charlie

“I do not think that there are works and age groups that work better together.”

- Taylor

“We can get kids really engaged in some historical work.”

-Corrie

“Contemporary work is very very accessible to kids.”

- Corrie

“Children easily understand when they see art, no matter what age they are, no matter what period of art they are looking at.”

- Riley

Some work is more accessible than others, but this is not generally determined by when it was made. Part of this may be due to the variety that exists within any period. Each work is different and oftentimes it is hard to describe what makes one work more accessible than another. Charlie believes that “some art is just naturally more accessible than others,” but that it is hard to put your finger on why that is.

While period was not a deciding factor in accessibility, the participants did discuss some differences across work from different time periods. There are aspects of historical (mimetic) works that may make them more difficult to access, but there are also aspects of contemporary works that may make these difficult to access as well.

Historical (mimetic) and Modern Works. Ryan spoke the most about historical and modern works. They said the one challenge with these works is that the viewer needs to “unpack” the social and historical context of the work. In this way, the work may be less “immediate” than a contemporary work and require more discussion of context. Ryan thinks that these discussions are not always “as interesting or accessible to younger learners.” Contemporary art is “grounded in a more immediate visual” that we can more easily associate with because these visuals are contemporary to our lives. This does not mean that all historical or modern works are inaccessible though.

Contemporary Works. The participants spoke about the ways that contemporary art can be both more accessible and less accessible than other works. This shows that comparing the accessibility of types of work is difficult because it varies so much from work to work. Contemporary art is such a broad range that generalisations are difficult.

Corrie called contemporary art typically the “most relevant, most interesting and most engaging.” Similarly, Ryan sees contemporary art as having many more “points of access” than modern art does. Compared to modern art, contemporary art offers more opportunities for making “personal connections” and “wider range of sensory activation” for students.

In contrast to these comments, Avery described contemporary art as something that is sometimes “supposed to be a little bit inaccessible” because it forces the viewer to break barriers, face uncomfortable issues and use empathy. It also challenges traditional ideas of what art is. Taylor echoed this idea of contemporary art challenging traditional ideas of what art is. They said that some viewers face a “cognitive dissonance” when looking at contemporary art that seems strange or “dumb” to them. These works may require more contextual information to “find a way in” to the work. With much of contemporary work, viewers are unable to figure out the message of the work by looking at the work alone. They cannot make meaning with the work without background information about it.

Similar to what Avery and Taylor mentioned, Ryan mentioned the need with contemporary art to “tailor down” the discussion from “art language,” especially with works that involve “meta-discourse about art itself.” When contemporary art challenges traditional ideas about art and deals directly with ideas about art itself, it can be more difficult to access, especially for younger children.

Other Factors in Accessibility: Medium, Style and Subject. Participants discussed other factors that may impact the accessibility of art. According to the participants, medium, style and subject appear to play some role in the accessibility of an artwork.

Medium. The medium (materials) of an artwork can affect how accessible that work is. For example, Corrie described photographs as being one of the more difficult mediums to look at with children. Many of the participants also talked about the challenges of looking at video art with children, although some of that challenge came from the durational nature of video, which is challenging to look at in a short school tour.

Artworks that conform to our traditional understanding of what art looks like or is made of are often easier to access and do not cause the “cognitive dissonance” Taylor described. This can be a question of the medium of a work. Non-traditional mediums can be challenging for viewers. Corrie said

that when the materials are “unusual,” works are more difficult to understand. Taylor commented that they occasionally have visitors asking whether an everyday object like a bench in the gallery is a work of art or a functional piece of furniture.

Style: Narrative vs. Abstract Works. The style of an artwork, such as if it is a narrative or abstract work, may affect the accessibility of that artwork. Narrative artworks tell a story and have recognisable subjects. Abstract works do not represent a subject realistically (they abstract the subject) and non-representational works do not represent a subject at all. Corrie said, “everybody’s interested in narrative.” Narrative works tend to have an obvious way “in.” Taylor said that viewers sometimes do not see a clear way into works that are not narrative. VTS starts by asking “what is going on” in a work. It is geared towards narrative works. Riley finds that children who are looking at representational works “come up with a story fairly quickly about what they think is going on.”

This is not to say that abstract works are not accessible. All the participants disagreed with Parsons’ assertion that children are only interested in beauty and realism. According to Corrie, children understand abstraction at an early age. Riley described how children who are looking at abstract works will “see something in [the work] immediately” and use their imaginations to explore the work. Earlier modernism, which was abstract but not non-representational, is perhaps better suited to this type of viewing. Ryan described this early modernism (such as Claude Monet and the Impressionists) as more accessible than later, less representational modernism (such as Jackson Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists).

Style: Conceptual Works. Corrie discussed conceptual works, which they do look at with children during visits. Corrie takes children through the process of taking an idea and turning it into art. They tell them that with this kind of art, the idea is more important to the artist than the work itself. They get students to try and figure out the idea behind the work of art that they are looking at.

Subject. The subject of a work can also affect its accessibility. Some subjects are more challenging than others. Avery and Charlie both raised this issue. Charlie talked about having “difficult” conversations with students. This is necessary when the subject of a work is a difficult one. For example, works that deal with issues of colonialism necessitate difficult conversations about Canada’s

colonial history. Both Avery and Charlie raised the issue of “inclusion, anti-racism, and diversity” in making these works more accessible. Avery echoed this idea when they talked about contemporary art being challenging because it deals with current issues that can be difficult and upsetting.

Concluding Statement. While there are certain aspects of art from any given art period that affect accessibility, in general, the participants felt that no one period was more accessible than the others. The participants clearly expressed that they find contemporary art to be accessible to children and youth. The diversity of artworks within each art period was highlighted, and the participants discussed how medium, style and subject can all impact accessibility of artworks.

Analysis of Themes: Accessibility and Diversity in Museums

Table 20

Frequency of Discussion of the Accessibility and Diversity in Museums Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	*	***	**		*	***
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Accessibility and Diversity in Museums was discussed by five of the six participants and was the fifth most discussed theme despite not being explicitly included in my interview questions. It was a key theme for two participants, a secondary theme for one and a minor theme for one. Accessibility and Diversity in Museums was a separate theme from Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. The key difference between these two themes was that Accessibility and Diversity dealt with accessibility from an institutional and social perspective, whereas Accessibility of Art from Different Periods dealt with the accessibility of the artworks themselves.

Analysis Across Participants

Corrie discussed accessibility from an educational perspective, with a focus on how didactics and tours can be more accessible to visitors. Riley talked about wanting to make art accessible to all in their goals, but they did not delve further into what that accessibility looks like. Taylor and Ryan both talked about how the gallery can be intimidating to those who are not familiar in that space. They discussed school visits as an important way to get people comfortable and feeling welcome in the gallery from a young age. Charlie and Avery both spoke in depth about accessibility as an institutional and social issue.

Barriers Within and Outside of the Artwork. The distinction of where barriers exist in relation to the artwork came up in Charlie's interview. There are barriers that exist within the artwork and those that exist around it. This idea can help to distinguish between two types of accessibility. There are the barriers that exist within the object of the work itself. These barriers include the subject or the medium of the artwork. For example, an artwork that deals with a difficult or upsetting subject might be more difficult to access than a work that deals with a pleasant or neutral one. When it comes to discussing more difficult themes with children, Charlie described it as having "difficult conversations." Charlie has these difficult conversations with their students and focuses on meeting them where they are at in order to do this in an age-appropriate way.

The other type of barrier exists around or outside the object of the artwork, either in the social and cultural aspects of the institution of the gallery, or in the physical properties of the gallery building. These are separate from the object of the artwork but have a strong impact on if and how people can access the art. Charlie gave the examples of barriers such as institutional constructs/frameworks and historical practices.

Physical, Financial and Intellectual Barriers to Accessibility. Participants discussed physical, financial, and intellectual barriers to accessibility. Participants described several things that need to be considered when looking at accessibility of galleries:

- The accessibility of the gallery in terms of location and available public transportation
- Accessibility of gallery hours (usually daytime and weekends)

- Financial barriers such as cost of entry and cost of programs (for individuals, families, and schools)
- Physical accessibility including wheelchair accessibility, height of art and didactics, and didactic design (font size, colour, etc.)
- Barriers to visually impaired visitors due to providing solely visual activities
- The intellectual accessibility of didactics and information provided to visitors (plain language didactics with standardised reading levels)

Social and Cultural Barriers to Accessibility. In addition to these barriers, participants discussed the social and cultural aspects of the gallery as an institution and how that relates to accessibility. Issues of diversity, inclusivity, anti-racism, and decolonisation were discussed by many of the participants. These were discussed in depth by both Charlie and Avery.

Charlie has been in the field for over 20 years, and they have seen accessibility become a growing issue in galleries. Avery is newer to the field and is an example of how educators today are very cognisant of questions of accessibility. Charlie described cultural and social accessibility in galleries. They spoke about this from a higher level and did not delve particularly deeply into examples. Avery, on the other hand, talked in detail about the role diversity and representation play in accessibility, both the diversity of staff and the diversity of artists and voices on display.

Charlie emphasised the need for communities to be consulted when it comes to accessibility and the need for constant renegotiation of what accessibility means. Similarly, Avery emphasised the challenges and opportunities that come with communicating with, and trying to understand, other people who are different from us. For them, empathy was key to doing this.

Concluding Statement. The participants discussed several different types of accessibility, including physical, financial, intellectual, social, and cultural accessibility. These barriers to accessibility all impact who is able to come to museums and galleries, and how easily it is for them to navigate this space and engage with artworks. It appeared that the barriers surrounding the artworks (in the institution and physical space) are often more significant than the barriers that exist within the actual works of art themselves.

Analysis of Themes: Shifting Values and Practices

Table 21

Frequency of Discussion of the Shifting Values and Practices Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Shifting Values and Practices	**	***	**		**	
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Shifting Values and Practices was the sixth most discussed theme and was discussed by four of the six. It was a key theme for one participant and a secondary theme for three participants. Questions about shifts in the field were not included in my interview questions, so it was significant that so many of the participants discussed them in detail. The reasoning behind participants goals, values, strategies, and approaches are intertwined with the way the field of gallery and museum education is shifting. The Role of Developmental Theory Today, according to the participants, is best understood within the context of the shifts the field is undergoing.

Analysis Across Participants

Shifting Values and Practice was one of the most significant themes that emerged in my study. The participants' discussion of these shifts explained why developmental theory does not play a big role in art education today. These shifts show why the participants are using the strategies and approaches they are using, and why these are different from the strategies and approaches of the past.

Shifts Described by Participants. The shifts in the field of museum and gallery education described by the participants can be categorised into five broad shifts. These shifts align with the shifts between modernism and postmodernism in art:

1. Shifting art
2. Shifting language
3. Shifts in education
4. Shifts in teaching approaches
5. Shifts in curation and representation.

The first shift that was described was the way art itself has shifted. One participant contrasted contemporary art with the art of the 1970s which was “coming off the brink of modernist thinking” and Colour Field painting and Abstract Expressionism. The art of today is so different from the art of the 70s. Contemporary art has “heavier” content and is more “heart centred.” It brings together the body and mind and deals with things like social injustice and trauma. With contemporary art, issues of colonialism, gender, etc. cannot be “dodged.” They are embedded in the work that is being made today. Because of this, gallery educators’ work is now focused on human beings and how we are connected, how we treat each other, how we depend on each other and how we understand each other. It is less focused on the formalist aesthetics of modern art.

The second shift that was described was shifts in the language used in gallery education. The terms “education” and “teaching” have begun to be replaced with words like “learning.” Educators’ titles have changed. This shift in language reflects a shift away from “antiquated” methods of education. Participants described the learning they see in the gallery with terms like “reciprocated,” “exchange,” “participatory,” and “interactive.”

This shifting language reflects the third shift discussed, shifts in views about education. Rather than an expository method that views learners as “empty slates,” more constructivist approaches are being used. More recently, the inclusion of more diverse methods of education, such as Indigenous Ways of Knowing, are being brought into the gallery. In galleries today, student agency is emphasised. Students are seen as already holding knowledge when they enter the gallery. Content is pulled from the students themselves and educators are asking students for their perspectives and listening to their

observations. Educators are often learning alongside students, rather than being viewed as experts who “spoon feed” students. Learning is reciprocal and done in a group through conversation.

These shifts in how to view education have necessitated the fourth shift described, shifts in approaches used in the gallery. Older approaches, such as Feldman’s Analysis and Discipline Based Art Education have largely been replaced with open-ended questioning strategies like Visual Thinking Strategies. Activities in the gallery are more multisensory. The 5 Entry Points Approach and other multisensory activities are common ways to get students to engage with artworks. A cognitive understanding of artworks is being balanced with the desire for understanding with our hearts as well as our minds. Difficult subjects in artworks are navigated through trauma informed practice and there is a need to navigate how to have difficult conversations with students.

The final shift discussed by participants was shifts in curation and representation. Galleries are moving towards increasing the representation of historically underrepresented groups. The “story” galleries tell is changing and different voices are being heard. There is increased diversity in the artists represented in the gallery. There is also the desire for increased diversity in staff and docents. Galleries are having to face the colonial history of museums and their collections. Questions of ownership and the idea of the repatriation of stolen art is being discussed. This is not a sudden shift, and it is ongoing. Museums are not decolonised overnight, and much work still needs to be done, but conversations are shifting. This affects the type of educational programs that are being offered and the art and voices students are exposed to in the gallery.

Modernism and Postmodernism

The shifts in the field that my participants described seem to align with broader shifts in the move from the modern to the postmodern art periods and onto contemporary art practices. Parsons and Blocker (1993) discussed the different central assumptions that characterised modernism and postmodernism in art. According to Parsons and Blocker (1993) the modern period was characterised by the assumptions of:

- Art history as progressive
- The role of art in social progress

- A traditional canon
- Objectivity and universality
- The autonomy of the artwork

In contrast, postmodernism was characterised by the assumptions of:

- The plurality of art history
- Art history as politics
- The traditional art canon as social dominance
- Objectivity and individual meaning
- The artwork as the reader's construction

The legacy of these postmodern assumptions on contemporary art education are reflected in the participants' discussion of what is changing in the field. The increased diversity in museums reflects the belief in the plurality of art history. Galleries are becoming more aware of the story they tell and the politics that have historically gone into whose voices are heard. The traditional canon is questioned because it does not reflect the diversity of the world, and there is a move to representing those artists traditionally excluded from the museum. Educators are promoting students sharing their perspectives and what the works mean to them. The autonomy of the artwork, and the views of the expert, are being replaced with explorations of how students construct meaning with the work.

Concluding Statement. The participants' discussion of the Shifting Values and Practices in museum and gallery education was central to understanding the context that they are working in and why they approach their work in the way they do. They described five shifts that are taking place in the field: shifting art, shifting language, shifts in education, shifts in teaching approaches, and shifts in curation and representation. These shifts appear to align with the broader shifts seen in modernism and postmodernism in art.

Analysis of Themes: Context and Constraints

Table 22

Frequency of Discussion of the Context and Constraints Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Context and Constraints		**	**	**	***	
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Context and Constraints was the seventh most discussed theme and was discussed by four of the six participants. It was a key theme for one participant, a secondary theme for two participants and a minor theme for one participant. Under this theme, the participants discussed their experiences of working in different contexts and the constraints and advantages that come with these contexts.

Analysis Across Participants

The discussion about context and constraints largely fell into two areas: the difference between art education in schools and galleries and the role galleries play in professional development for teachers.

Gallery vs. School Context. The participants spoke about how the educational context affects teaching. The contexts that were discussed were generally the gallery context and the school context, although Ryan also spoke about postsecondary educational contexts.

One of the key differences between schools and galleries is the amount of time an educator has with the students. In school, educators work with students for a semester or a whole school year. In the gallery, the students are generally there for a one-off experience that lasts 1-2 hours. The goals and activities must be more limited than in schools so that they can be achieved within this time frame. In school, you can “nurture and develop” relationships in a way you cannot in a museum.

In contrast to this, the participants also spoke about the “time pressures” that exist in schools. There is often the perception that there is not enough time to do art in schools, let alone to “get really creative” about how you teach art. Galleries do not face this constraint in the same way. They still must

“answer to the constructs” of the school system (class sizes, curriculum, etc.) because it is largely teachers who are bringing in students for tours and programs, but there is more “flexibility and agency” for gallery educators.

Formal assessment was also brought up as a key difference between schools and galleries. Generally, gallery educators are not doing formal assessment. Charlie said that in the gallery they work in, they do not have the “pressure” of doing assessment and that this is “so freeing.” Riley’s workplace was unique in that they do conduct formal assessment of the students. They largely spoke about this to demonstrate to teachers how to do assessment in art. Unlike the other participants, Riley was very specific about how they do formal assessment.

Professional Development for Teachers. The gallery is also a space that provides resources and professional development opportunities for teachers. Teachers, especially generalist elementary school teachers, come to galleries for support on teaching art. These teachers are looking for the knowledge they need to teach the curriculum (colour theory, the colour wheel, etc.). The gallery can “help teachers build their own list of resources and feel like they are more equipped to be able to explore things.”

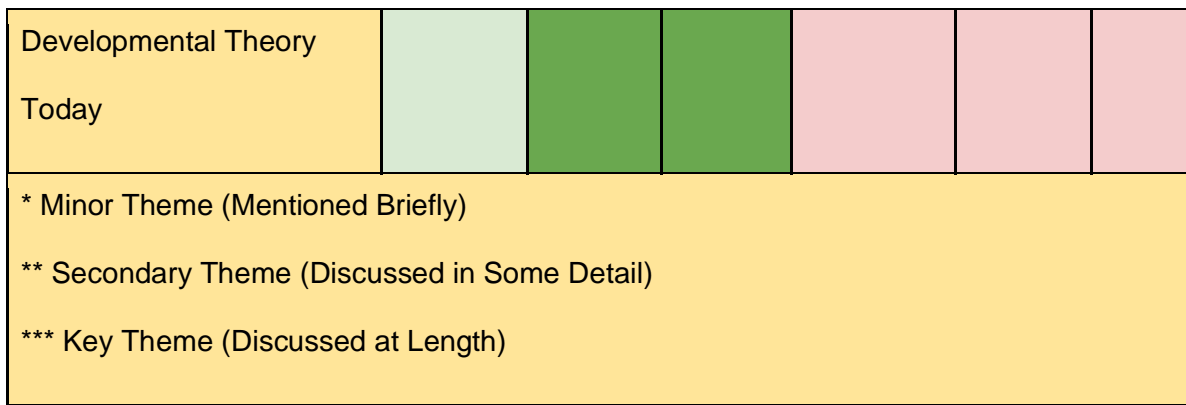
Concluding Statement. Participants’ discussion of the contexts they work in and the constraints that accompany these contexts was important to gaining a clearer understanding of their practices. It appears that these educators often face different challenges than classroom teachers do in the school system. They do, however, still need to align with some of the school system’s priorities, as schools make up a large part of the audience for their programs.

Analysis of Themes: The Role of Developmental Theory Today

Table 23

Frequency of Discussion of the Role of Developmental Theory Today Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
The Role of	*	***	***			



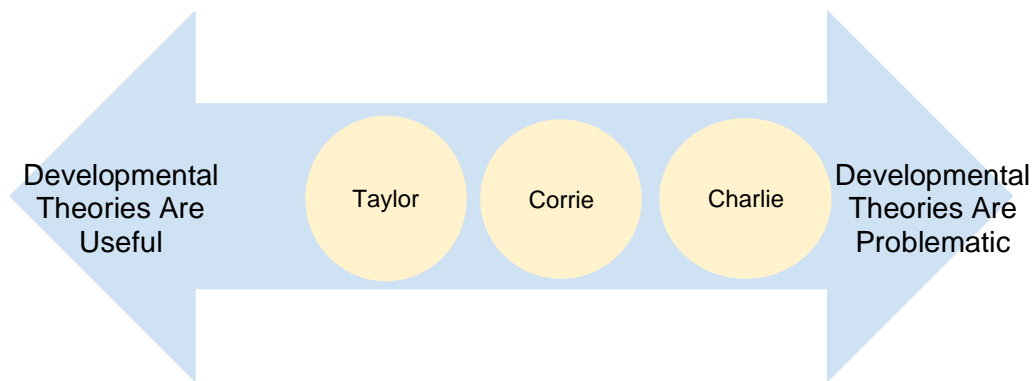
The Role of Developmental Theory Today was the eighth most discussed theme (the second least discussed theme). It was discussed by three participants and was a key theme for two and a minor theme for one. It was significant that this theme was not more important to my participants, as this indicates that developmental theory does not play a large role in museum and gallery education today. What participants did not say about this theme is just as important as what they did say. The lack of discussion of developmental theory needs to be understood alongside the discussion of Shifting Values and Practices in the field. These shifts indicated why developmental theory is not playing a bigger role today.

Analysis Across Participants

Continuum of Perspectives. Three of my participants talked about the role of developmental theory in education today: Corrie, Taylor, and Charlie. Their perspectives seemed to fall on a continuum.

Figure 1

Continuum of Participant Perspectives on the Role of Developmental Theory Today



Of the participants, Taylor saw the most value in developmental theories. Taylor described these theories as one of the “tools” in an educator’s toolbox. They are not without limitations, but they can be helpful, and they do use them in their work. Developmental theories are not core to their practices, but they play a role. Corrie saw these theories as potentially useful, but they also said that they do not play a big role in their work. They do use VTS and the 5 Entry Points Approach extensively and these came out of developmental theory. Charlie was much more critical of these theories than either Taylor or Corrie. While they said that there may be some elements of these theories that are useful, they generally find them to be problematic.

Participants that Did Not Discuss the Role of Developmental Theory. The other three participants (Riley, Ryan, and Avery) did not speak much about developmental theory. Riley talked about child and youth development, but this was based in their observations over their career rather than specific theories. They did not speak about the role they thought developmental theory should play in art education, likely because it does not play a big role in their work. Like Corrie, Riley pulls from approaches like VTS which have their origins in developmental theory.

Avery and Ryan are both newer to the field of museum education, so it makes sense that developmental theory would not play a large role in their practice. As I heard from my participants, there have been shifts in the field away from modernist approaches to education, which developmental theory falls under. Within my participants, three of the four participants who have been in the field for

over 20 years spoke about developmental theory. Neither of the participants who are newer to the field (in the last five to six years) spoke about it.

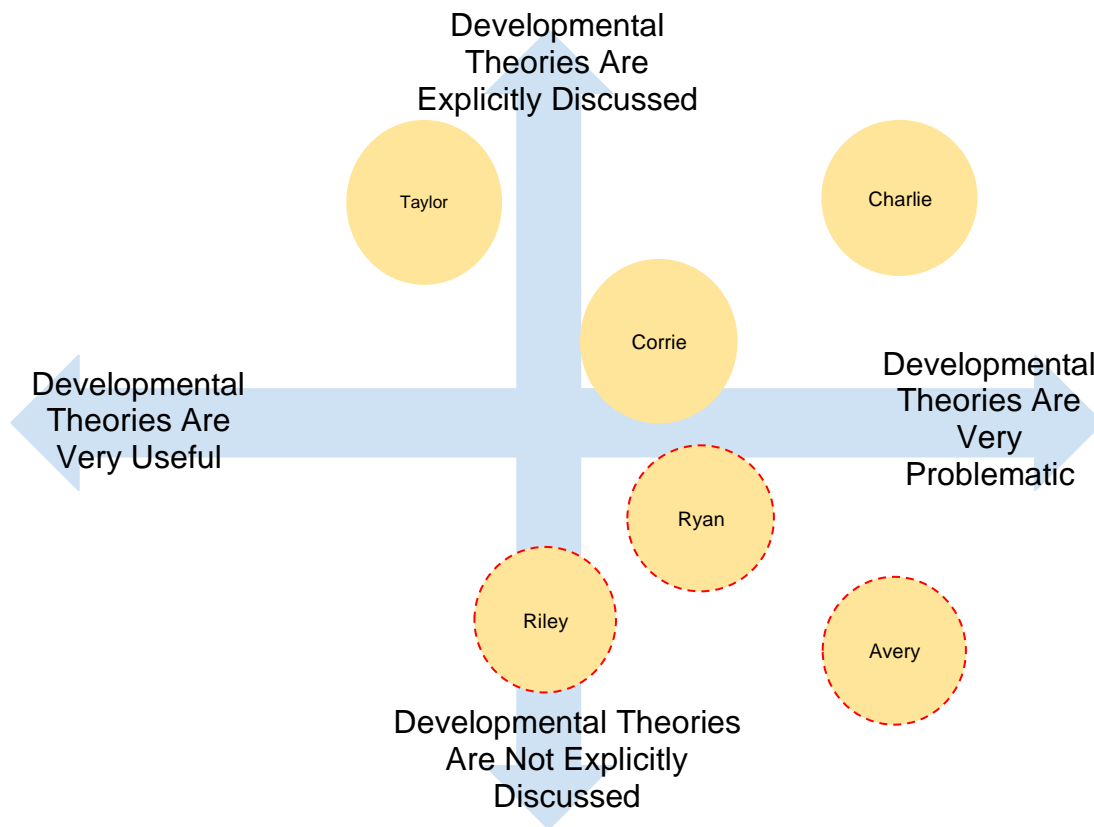
Inferred Perspectives on the Role of Developmental Theory Today. Based on their values and approaches to museum education, I can infer where Riley, Ryan and Avery may fall on a continuum of perspectives about the role of developmental theory today. Riley uses many of the same approaches as Taylor and Corrie, approaches that came out of developmental theory. Because of this, I suspect they would see some value in developmental theory. Perhaps they would agree with Corrie's assessment that developmental theory can help you to better understand the approaches that came out of it. I suspect that they would see less value in developmental theory than Taylor, because they appear to be more focused on the concrete and practical, whereas Taylor has an interest in the academic and theoretical as well as the practical. Riley seems to have a more traditional approach to art education than Ryan and Avery. This, along with the fact that they did not speak about shifts in the field, makes me think they may not have as many postmodern criticisms of modern methods like some of the other participants.

Ryan showed an interest in theory and pedagogy, so they might find developmental theory interesting and may see it as having some value, similar to how Taylor spoke about developmental theory. However, like Charlie, their pedagogy is in line with postmodern and contemporary values like social justice. They may not see a huge value in developmental theory because it focuses heavily in the formal, aesthetic, and visual and Ryan is more interested in the conceptual, social, and political elements of art. I suspect that Ryan would fall somewhere between Taylor and Charlie on the continuum.

Unlike Ryan, Avery did not speak about the theoretical in their work. They seemed quite practical, like Riley, but their values and methods were postmodern and contemporary. I suspect they would have a similar standpoint to Charlie.

Figure 2

Inferred Continuum of Participant Perspectives on the Role of Developmental Theory Today



Practical Vs. Theoretical Focus. The vertical axis of this figure seems to correlate with where participants fall on a continuum of being focused on the practical/concrete vs being focused on the theoretical in education. Riley and Avery appeared to be the most practical in their approach to education. They spoke about their observations of what methods do and do not work. They did not discuss where these methods come from academically or theoretically. Ryan and Corrie were somewhat in the middle, talking about both the practical and the theoretical. Taylor and Charlie spoke the most about theory, although they were still very focused on the practical as well. They were more aware of where methods came from, academically, and could speak to that side of education. They also have years of experience working with students and therefore have lots of experience with the practical application of the theories.

The Role of Developmental Theory Today. Across all the participants, none of them fell on the far side of the continuum, believing that developmental theories are very useful. Developmental theories were not central to any of their practices. They may inform some of their work or be the origins of certain methods or approaches they use, but developmental theory was very much an aside.

Participants' Critiques of Modernist Developmental Theory. Participants raised several critiques of developmental theories and models of aesthetic development. Charlie was the most critical of these, but Taylor and Corrie also raised some issues. Below are the critiques discussed by these three participants.

1. Inherent limitations of all models.

- Models and frameworks are inherently limited because they try to “impose order” on the world and only prioritise certain types of knowledge.
- Models reflect the values of the time and place they came from.
- Models are often rigid and lack fluidity.
- Models can be prescriptive.
- Models of aesthetic development were based on interviews, which only show what was observable to the researcher.

2. The models are dated.

- The theory and models were written decades ago and can no longer be expected to be fully accurate.
- Historical research has limitations and our views have changed and opened up since.
- Art itself has changed since the models were written.

3. The models are inaccurate.

- The models are inaccurate in some ways, for example they say that young children are only interested in beauty and realism which is not the experience of the participants.

4. The models are cognitive and visual in focus.

- The models are largely cognitive and fail to balance the mind and the “heart,” or the emotional side of art.
- The models focus solely on sight and the visual.
- The models are not hands on enough for some educators.

5. The models conflict with accessibility and social justice.

- The idea of stages is problematic, “infused with privilege” and conflicts with accessibility.
- These theories and models are western ways of understanding knowledge.
- The theories and models only apply to certain kinds of art (western works that are largely figurative or narrative) and do not acknowledge newer types of work or work that was not traditionally considered “art” (such as non-western works that were classified as “artefacts” in the past).
- The models do not acknowledge that the viewer brings their own knowledge to the work and “do not give anybody any credit.”

Concluding Statement: The participants’ perspectives on the role of developmental theory in art education today fell on a continuum. Some participants viewed developmental theory as somewhat useful, although not a key focus in their work. Others were more critical of developmental theory and found it problematic. Several critiques were raised: the inherent limitations of all models, that these models are outdated, that they are inaccurate, that these models are cognitive and visual in focus, and that they conflict with accessibility and social justice. Developmental theory did not play a significant role in any of the participants’ practices. Half of the participants did not speak about developmental theory in any depth because it is not a part of their work.

Analysis of Themes: Educator Experience and Comfort

Table 24

Frequency of Discussion of the Educator Experience and Comfort Theme

	Corrie	Charlie	Taylor	Riley	Ryan	Avery
Educator Experience and Comfort	*		*	***	*	
* Minor Theme (Mentioned Briefly) ** Secondary Theme (Discussed in Some Detail) *** Key Theme (Discussed at Length)						

Educator Experience and Comfort was the least discussed theme and was discussed by four of the six participants. It was a key theme for one participant and a minor theme for three participants. The participant comments about this theme can help to contextualise museum and gallery education and how it differs from education in the school system. It also shows the importance of teacher education and professional development.

Analysis Across Participants

Generalist vs Specialist Teachers. Corrie and Ryan both brought up the difference between generalist and specialist teachers. In elementary schools, there is usually not a specialist art teacher at the school and art is taught by classroom teachers. Ryan called this a funding issue, where only wealthy schools have specialist teachers and even dedicated art rooms. Corrie said that many teachers are only required to take one art course in their preservice training, and many of them stopped studying art themselves at grade five. A lot of teachers “get stuck there and never move on.” Museums and galleries have specialised staff and spaces, which is one of the reasons why teachers bring their students in.

Comfort Teaching Art. Corrie and Riley both brought up how a teacher’s lack of comfort in teaching art can impact the art education students receive. If teachers do not have the training to teach art, which many do not, they are unlikely to be comfortable teaching it. Riley believes that teaching art requires “delving into the unknown” and exploring things an educator has no control over. Teachers may fear making mistakes or not knowing all the answers. This can seem “too risky” and there is the tendency to stick to the concrete and tangible because these are more “comfortable.” This has a negative impact on students’ art education. Teachers who are open to possibilities, translate that openness to their students. In contrast, students pick up on it when their teachers are afraid of teaching art and do not have a “growth mindset.”

Corrie discussed teacher comfort, specifically referring to teaching about contemporary art. They pointed out that while contemporary art is accessible to children, many teachers are “intimidated” by teaching it. Corrie said that this is because contemporary art can sometimes be “hard to try to figure

out.” Teachers are often more comfortable teaching about art by historical and modern artists. They also tend to repeat the same artists each year. Corrie does professional development for teachers to show them how to take a contemporary works and make sense of it with their students through strategies like the 5 Entry Points.

Professional Development. Corrie, Taylor, Riley, and Ryan all saw one of the roles of the gallery as providing professional development to teachers. Galleries offer formal professional development for teachers. They are also a resource that teachers can reach out to if they have questions or need strategies and tools for teaching art. Teachers who bring their students in for tours also get exposed to how the gallery educators approach teaching about art to the students.

Concluding Statement. It appears that an educator’s level of experience and general comfort teaching art has a strong impact on their students’ learning. My participants observed classroom teachers coming into the gallery with their students, and they have noticed areas where more Professional Development opportunities would be useful for classroom teachers. Some of the galleries offer these sorts of opportunities to their local teachers.

Connections to the Literature

Much of what my participants discussed in our interviews has also been discussed in the literature. When discussing the role of theories of aesthetic development today, it is important to look at the shifts that have taken place between modernist and postmodernist (and contemporary) ways of thinking. These were indirectly described by my participants as they spoke about the shifting field of gallery education. Part of this shift can be seen in the critiques raised by the participants and the literature about modernist models of aesthetic development.

Critiques of Developmental Theories

Parsons’ model of aesthetic development, as well as modernist developmental models in general, have been the subject of much criticism since they were written. There are four common critiques to these modernist models in the literature, many of which were echoed by my participants.

- 1. Modernist models themselves are inherently limited and tend to be prescriptive.**

Any model must reduce the complexities of the phenomenon they describe to be able to present them in a succinct way. Aesthetic experiences are complex, and thus difficult to order into conceptual frameworks (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993). Parsons' model of development restricts viewers responses into a designated sequence (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993, p. ii) which fails to capture the true complexity of aesthetic responses. These types of models consider deviations from this designated sequence to be behaviours that must be overcome (Hamblen, 1993), rather than part of the natural diversity of human experience and culture. These models of aesthetic responses present preferred endpoints to be achieved, rather than branching possibilities of what can be achieved (Hamblen, 1993).

2. Modernist models present a universal view of development but lack generalisability.

Models of aesthetic development convey a universalism (Hamblen 1993), without being reflective of the diversity in aesthetic responses across demographics and cultures. The behaviours described in Parsons' model are presented as given and natural rather than "as culturally legitimated developments" (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993, p. ii). Parsons' model is Eurocentric (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993) and rather than being universal, it presents a model of how Western audiences in the 1980s responded to Western paintings from the past few hundred years. This model fails to recognise marginalised belief systems as valid and valuable (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993).

Parsons' model does not examine socio-cultural influences on aesthetic response and development. This raises the question: if development is dependent on societal influences, would this model continue to be applicable (even in the Western world) if these societal influences were to change? (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993). This was a topic of much discussion in my interviews, where participants spoke about the shifts in art and education and how these shifts impact the practices and theories used.

3. Modernist Models perpetuate modern values.

Hamblen (1993) argued that models of aesthetic development are the product of modernist thinking and perpetuate modern values in education. These models attempt to

rationalise human thought and behaviour and systemise these to identify universal rules (Hamblen, 1993). We have seen, however, that this creates inherently limited models that are not, in fact, generalisable. These modernist models decontextualise learning and focus on expert-oriented knowledge and abstract and theoretic information, which was highly valued under modernism (Hamblen, 1993).

4. Modernist models disadvantage students from minority socio-cultural groups.

Models of aesthetic development disadvantage students from minority socio-cultural groups (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993). These models present Eurocentric norms and ideals and valorises dominant cultural discourses (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993). This impedes the appreciation of difference among students and disadvantages students from subordinate groups (Balomenos-Trifonas, 1993).

Modernism and Postmodernism

Parsons and Blocker (1993) believe that the problem for most art educators “is not whether to accept modernism or postmodernism, but how to strike the right balance between those approaches and to take from them what is most valuable to us” (p. 62). I found that my participants were all striking a balance between the values and practices of these two periods and ideologies, whether they framed their work in this way or not. The participants discussion of the shifting values and practices in gallery education demonstrated that the field is rapidly changing. It became clear, in speaking to my participants, that part of this change is being driven by the art itself. This change is also being spurred on by the societal and cultural shifts we are experiencing, with increased focus being placed on equity, diversity, accessibility, etc.

Shifts in education will never be sudden or complete and, as Parsons and Blocker (1993) argued, educators can decide what they find useful about established ways of doing things, while also challenging problematic aspects of traditional educational practices. I found that my participants perspectives in our interviews demonstrated the diverse ways gallery educators balance modernist and postmodernist/contemporary approaches to education.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined my nine themes, looking across all six participants to see how their perspectives compared to each other. As I cross examined the responses, relationships between the themes emerged. I found that some themes that I had expected to be very important, such as the Role of Developmental Theory Today, were not. Other themes that I had not anticipated, were very important to the participants, such as Shifting Values and Practices and Accessibility and Diversity in Museums. In Chapter 6, I delve deeper into the relationships between these themes and the implications they have for art education.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

In Chapter 1 I presented an overview of my study. I delved more deeply into the literature in Chapter 2, exploring what has been written about theories of aesthetic development and art history. My exploration of the literature and the museum and gallery context informed my research problem and interview questions (see Chapter 3). This study set out to explore how museum and gallery educators approach teaching children and youth about contemporary art in developmentally appropriate ways. My research questions were developed to explore the effect and role of theories of aesthetic development in the contemporary museum and gallery context. I specifically chose to focus my study on museum and gallery education because the educators working in these contexts are specialists in art and education. In Chapter 4, I described my findings and in Chapter 5 I analysed those findings.

This final chapter examines the implications of the findings from my study. Firstly, I explore the participants' responses in order to answer my research questions. I then examine the implications of these findings for art education. As this was a small, exploratory study with a non-randomised population, these results cannot be generalised to museum and gallery educators as a whole. However, I believe that the expertise of my participants indicates current shifts and trends happening in museum and gallery education. Furthermore, these shifts and trends align with the movement from modernist thinking to postmodernist thinking, and beyond into contemporary thinking.

Summary of Data and Analysis

My data collection consisted of exploratory, qualitative research using semi-structured interviews. In these interview, nine themes emerged. In the charts below, I have laid out the frequency

of which these themes were discussed by the participants. In the first chart, I note how many of the six participants discuss each theme, and whether the theme was part of the interview questions. This is important to note because some topics that I asked the participants about in the interview questions did not end up being important themes, while other unexpected topics did end up being very important. For example, I did not ask the participants about accessibility and diversity in museums, and five of the participants spoke about this. Conversely, I did ask all participants about the role of developmental theory in museum education, but only three participants really spoke about this, which indicated that this is not a very relevant concept in half of the participants' work.

Table 25

Summary of Which Themes Were Discussed by Which Participants

Theme	Was Discussed By	Was the Topic of this Theme Included in the Interview Questions?
Goals and Values	All six participants	Yes
Strategies and Approaches	All six participants	Yes
Accessibility of Art from Different Periods	All six participants	Yes
Age, Development and Learner Background	All six participants	Yes
Accessibility and Diversity in Museums	Five participants	No
Context and Constraints	Four participants	No

Shifting Values and Practices	Four participants	No
Educator Experience and Comfort	Four participants	No
The Role of Developmental Theory Today	Three participants	Yes

In this second chart, I list the comparative frequency of the discussion of each theme. For each participant, I sorted the themes they discussed into key themes (with a value of three stars), secondary themes (with a value of two stars), and minor themes (with a value of one star). I then tallied these up (for a maximum score of 18) for all participants to compare which themes were more frequently discussed and therefore most important to the participants.

Table 26

Summary of Frequency of Discussion of Each Theme

Frequency of Discussion (Out of a Possible 18*s)	Themes
18*	Goals and Values
17*	Strategies and Approaches
15*	Age, development, and learner background
14*	Accessibility of art from different periods
10*	Accessibility and diversity in museums
9*	Shifting values and practices
8*	Context and constraints

7*	The role of developmental theory today
6*	Educator experience and comfort

Answering the Research Questions

Research Questions 1 and 2

Research Question 1: How does individual aesthetic development affect understanding of art from different periods (pre-modern, modern, and postmodern/contemporary)?

Research Question 2: What are the experiences of contemporary art educators in teaching about contemporary art to children and youth with different levels of aesthetic development?

Research questions 1 and 2 both address the relationship between age/stage of aesthetic development and ability to understand art from different art periods. In this discussion, it is important to note that in Parsons' model of aesthetic development, children and youth's level of development (levels 1-3) are tied to their age. So, while participants were not formally assessing the level of development of their students, we were able to discuss this in broad terms by referring to students' ages (Stage 1 is seen in preschool aged children, Stage 2 in elementary school, and Stage 3 in some adolescents).

Effect of Age and Development on Understanding Art from Different Periods. I found that my participants do not see a strong correlation between age/stage of aesthetic development and the ability to understand or engage with art from any specific period. In fact, it is noteworthy that the participants felt that they could teach any age group about art from any period.

The participants identified factors other than age that impact how viewers interact with art. These included experience with art (exposure), individual backgrounds and lived experiences. These factors were discussed in the context of museum and art experiences in general and did not appear to be connected to viewers' ability to engage with art from any specific period. Overall, the participants

indicated that no one age group or developmental level seems to be more or less adept at understanding art from any art period.

Aesthetic Accessibility of Art from Different Periods. The participants felt that the period a work of art is from does not indicate how aesthetically accessible it will be to any age group. Participants did identify some challenges to accessibility in different periods of art, but each period had aspects that made it both more and less accessible than other periods. For example, historical and modern artworks require viewers to unpack the context of a work, whereas viewers are more likely familiar with the social and cultural context of contemporary works. On the other hand, contemporary artworks can challenge preconceived notions of what art is, can involve meta-analysis of art itself, and can force the viewer to face uncomfortable issues and reflect empathetically on the experiences of others. At the same time, contemporary art can have many points of access, opportunities for sensory activation and the making of personal connections. Overall, there was no one period that was described as more accessible than any other and the participants felt that contemporary art is accessible to children and youth.

The aesthetic accessibility of an artwork appears to vary just as much within an art period as across art periods. Within one art period, artworks are varied and the factors that make one more accessible than another are difficult to tease apart. Some factors in accessibility identified by the participants included medium, style and subject. All these factors appear to be more significant than the art period for the accessibility of an artwork.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Are the existing models of aesthetic development consistent with art educator observations of contemporary children interacting with contemporary art?

When comparing the participants' observations with Parsons' model of aesthetic development, I found that children and youth appear to be interested in, and capable of understanding, a much broader range of artworks than Parsons' model implies. This conclusion is based on the observations of my six participants, which is not a sufficient sample size to truly test this model. However, given my

participants' high level of experience and expertise, I think their observations are worth paying attention to.

One key difference between Parsons' model and my participants' observations was around Stage 2 children (elementary school-aged). At this stage, Parsons described children as being primarily interested in beautiful and realistic artworks. My participants show elementary school children works of art that are not traditionally beautiful or realistic. Significantly, the participants indicated that very young children enjoy, and can understand, abstract and conceptual works of art (non-realistic). They are also interested in works with subjects that are not traditionally beautiful.

The participants did identify some observations of trends that learners of different age groups display. Generally, they found that children tend to be more open and less set in their ways than adults. This shift seems to take place in the adolescent years where learners become more reserved and hesitant to speak first in a group. These observations applied to art experiences in general, not to looking at specific types of artworks. One exception to this was adults who have preconceived notions of what art "should" be like. In this case, adults may find non-traditional mediums to be more challenging than traditional ones and therefore find some contemporary art less accessible.

Contemporary Children. This study did not attempt to compare contemporary children with the children of the 1980s, when these models were written. Given the rapid and radical scope of change on a global level (including the Covid-19 pandemic, wars and climate crises), it is possible that contemporary children and youth develop differently than those of the past. This idea was raised by one participant, who speculated that contemporary children may be significantly different than those in the past due to their exposure to media and the internet. This participant spoke about how young children are exposed to topics like gender, identity, and representation through media at a very young age and speculated that this may affect how they interact with artworks. This makes sense. My participants' observations indicate that the students they are working with are learning very differently from the way Parsons described several decades ago. Whether this model was never an accurate representation, or whether children have significantly changed the way they learn, is up for discussion, and may never be

accurately determined. This topic would require much more study, with a larger and more diverse range of participants, but it is an interesting question to consider.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4: How may the experiences of contemporary art educators inform developmentally appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education?

Participants' Goals. The goals participants spoke about were not primarily developmental. Goals may be simpler, and language tailored down to younger learners, but the actual goals of the participants were similar for teaching all age groups. Key goals included:

- Exploring and learning about, and through art
- Using art as a vehicle to explore broader issues and topics
- Exploring a variety of multisensory experiences
- Developing visual literacy and critical thinking skills
- Self-expression, self-discovery, and individual growth
- Inspiring curiosity, fun and joy
- Promoting accessibility of all kinds

Methods Used by Participants. The strategies and approaches used by the participants were similar for all age groups, as opposed to being specific to the developmental level of the students. Factors other than development affected what strategies and approaches participants use. These factors included the specific learning context (school versus gallery), the type of artwork being explored, the educator's experience and comfort level, and the educator's values and goals. The most common strategies discussed were:

- Constructivist, open-ended questioning strategies, such as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and the Saskatchewan Gallery Method (SGM)
- Prompts for student responses (ex: I see..., I think..., I wonder...)
- Howard Gardener's 5 Entry Points Approach
- Multi-sensory activities (embodiment, storytelling, poetry, dance, etc.)
- Art making (such as a studio component or drawing in the gallery space)

There was consensus about what strategies and approaches are appropriate to use in the museum and gallery context, except for one participant's criticisms of VTS being too visually focused and implying to the students that they might get the answer wrong. This participant used a similar open-ended questioning strategy, the SGM, which had a slightly different wording than VTS to avoid these pitfalls.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5: How may the experiences of contemporary art educators inform how developmental theory is used in art education today?

My goal with my research questions, and specifically with question 5, was to explore the role of theories of aesthetic development in contemporary art education today. I found that these theories do not play a significant role in my participants' work. Half of my participants did not discuss the role of developmental theory in our interviews because these theories are not a part of their work. The other half of the participants' views on the role of developmental theory fell onto a continuum from viewing developmental theories as somewhat useful to viewing them as very problematic. None of the participants saw developmental theory as an important foundation for art education today.

How Developmental Theory Is Being Used. One way that theories of aesthetic development are currently being used by participants is in the methods that originated from these developmental theories. Some participants spoke about learning about developmental theory as a way to better understand where approaches like Visual Thinking Strategies came from. VTS was one of my participants' most used methods and it originated from the work of Abigail Housen and Philip Yenowine. My participants were more knowledgeable and interested in the concrete approaches that came out of these theories than in the theories themselves.

Why Developmental Theory Is Not Being Used. Instead of exploring the effect and role of developmental theory in museum and gallery education today, my research ended up revealing why these theories are not being used today. The main reason for this appears to be the shifts that have

taken place in museum and gallery education. My participants described five types of shifts they are seeing:

1. Shifting art
2. Shifting language
3. Shifts in education
4. Shifts in teaching approaches
5. Shifts in curation and representation

The participants' discussion of these shifting values and practices demonstrates that the field of museum and gallery education is moving away from modernist educational approaches. Developmental theory is one of the modernist approaches that the participants saw as becoming less of a focus.

While contemporary approaches to art education are still emerging, and are therefore difficult to define, my data shows that these contemporary educators' practices do not use modernist models of aesthetic development. Perhaps aesthetic development theory should not play a dominant role in art education today, or it may need to be updated or adapted to today's context. It is possible that the process of individual aesthetic development is changing, or that this view of development is just no longer viewed as useful in designing learning in the museum context, and perhaps the social context as well.

Research Question Conclusions

In summary, when answering my research questions, I found that my participants do not see a child's level of aesthetic development, as described in Parsons' model, to be a significant indicator of how well they will be able to understand art from different art periods. No one period of art was seen as more or less accessible to any age group. Generally, the participants saw some trends in age that were like those described in models of aesthetic development, but they described many ways that the models do not accurately describe how contemporary children understand art. The goals and methods my participants described were not primarily developmental in nature and they generally did not see modernist models of aesthetic development as something that should be prioritised in art education today.

Implications of Findings

This study set out to explore how museum and gallery educators approach teaching children and youth about art in developmentally appropriate ways. What I found was that my participants do not find theories of aesthetic development to be relevant to their work. Instead of exploring the role of theories of aesthetic development in current museum and gallery education, my research ended up revealing how my participants' approaches to contemporary art education reflect the shifts they described in museum education over the past few decades. These shifts align with the shifts seen in the art world as it moved from modernism to postmodernism and into the contemporary, which is yet to be fully defined. Art education clearly does not exist in a vacuum or apart from the turbulent social developments around the globe. Contemporary children's contexts may be far more complex than the theories of a generation ago could foresee.

While my participants represent a small, non-randomly selected group of Canadian museum and gallery educators, they are experienced and knowledgeable professional art educators. This is a highly credible group with four of the participants working in the field for over 25 years. These participants have established professional networks across the country and have observed how the field has shifted in the last two or three decades. The two participants who were newer to museum and gallery education approach art education in a way that was consistent with what the other participants were describing as the direction the field is going. I believe that the participants' perspectives are indicative of what is happening in museum and gallery education in Canada today.

On the surface, the fact that my participants are not using these theories/models may look insignificant. Whether or not a handful of educators are using a specific type of model is not necessarily very interesting. But what is interesting, and I think very significant, is *why* they are not using these modernist models. The rest of this chapter will discuss the implications these findings have for both art education and education in general.

A Modernist Approach to Art Education

At the heart of my findings is the fact that my participants have both explicitly and implicitly rejected modernist art education practices and models of aesthetic development (Parsons, 1987;

Housen 1983) because they view them as unhelpful, problematic, or inadequate in forecasting the context in which children are growing up today. In their descriptions about the limits of these theories, their comments reflect the limits of a modernist approach to art education in the dynamic and unpredictable contemporary world.

While this study was not formally an exploration of modernism and postmodernism in art, these worldviews are key to understanding both contemporary art and the shifting world of museum and gallery education. In my discussion of my findings and their implications, I explore what I have learned about these two periods, but these are complex topics with nuances that are outside the scope of my study. This chapter explores my interpretation of the participants' contexts through the lens of modernism and postmodernism in art education, while acknowledging that there is much more to these periods than what I discuss.

What is a Modernist Approach to Art Education? Modernism was a wide-reaching philosophical movement across society. During this period there was a belief that through positivist science and rational thought we could improve all aspects of society. Inherently positivist fields, like math and science, were advanced in the modern period. Art, despite being an interpretive, subjective field, was not unaffected by modernist thinking. Rational thought was applied to art as well as art education. In the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, a modernist approach to art education is characterised by (but not limited to):

- A systematic approach to instruction that focuses on the cognitive and treats students as disembodied learners (Wallin, 2007)
- The presenting of art history as a linear, progressive (improving over time) master narrative, while highlighting the work of institutionally accepted artists (mainly white men) (Emery, 2002)
- An understanding of western art concepts as being universal (Emery, 2002)
- Presenting a dichotomy between “high”/ “fine” and “low” art (Emery, 2002)
- A focus on the individual, and specifically individual self-expression and originality (Emery, 2002)

- A focus on aesthetics, and art for art's sake, which saw art as independent from utilitarian or functions purposes (Danto, 1997)

What Art Can Teach Us About Modernism and Postmodernism. While a modernist approach may work with subjects that more easily fit into a positivist understanding of education, art poses real challenges in this context. Part of this is due to the nature of art. Subjects like math or biology can be presented as objective truths (although postmodernism would have criticisms of this). It is very difficult to see art as objective, especially in the contemporary context. No two people will look at a painting and have the exact same experience or interpretation. In fact, the same person can look at a painting at two different points in time and have vastly different understandings of it. Art is subjective. We interpret it, and our understandings of it change and evolve with time and context.

Art as a subject of study is a good way to understand modernism and postmodernism as ways of thinking that went well beyond art, because art has explicitly explored these. You cannot understand western art history without knowing something about the modern art period and the postmodern art period, and therefore something about the broader periods of modernism and postmodernism outside art. You cannot fully understand contemporary art practices without understanding what came before these. In many other school subjects, modern and postmodern ways of doing things may not be explicitly discussed by educators. In art they are unavoidable.

Art Education: The Limitations of a Modernist Approach and the Possibilities of a More Contemporary Approach. While modernism brought certain advantages, such as scientific and technological advancement, it has some major limitations. This is not to say that there is no place in education for any modernist approaches. Some very experienced educators find valuable aspects to pull from modernist approaches. For example, some of my participants were highly critical of certain modernist approaches, whereas others saw some value in these approaches. Instead of asking whether educators should take a modernist *or* a postmodernist/contemporary approach to their work, it is important to consider the options and be aware of their strengths and limitations. We should be aware of the limitations of modernist approaches and explore the possibilities in more contemporary

approaches. As both Parsons (1987) and Emery (2002) argued, educators must find a balance in how they practice art education.

The Limitations of a Modernist Approach. Some of my participants were highly critical of modernist approaches to education. Because of this I have highlighted in this thesis some of the common criticisms of the modernist approach, according to my participants and the literature.

Our education systems are still largely modernist. We have set, sequential curriculums, with the goal of students reaching a specific end point, which is predictable - and which predicts the student's future success in life, or at least work life. Curriculum is a "meta-narrative" that described the nature of learning (Emery, 2002). Postmodern art practices promote diversity, while curriculum "appear[s] to demand conformity" (Emery, 2002, p. 3). Predictability and conformity appear to be inadequate tools for children living in immensely complex contexts.

While we may no longer see students as a blank slates to be filled with information, we often still see a teacher's job as to transmit the sequence of approved content to their students. We continue to teach preservice teachers developmental models (although not usually aesthetic ones) as a way to concisely understand how children develop. Through assessment, schools attempt to measure students' learning and make it visible and quantifiable. Even subjects like art are not exempt from assessment in the school system.

In education, modernism often exhibits a reductionist view of the world. In an attempt to analyse and describe the world in an objective and systematic way, the complexities and subtleties of the world were lost or de-emphasized. Modernists were interested in what was measurable and observable. They tended to believe that there is such a thing as objective, universal knowledge. This type of knowledge often presented the ideas of only certain privileged groups and excluded or erased other voices.

Modernism celebrated individualism and the individual. In art, this looked like the glorification of artists as special individuals who reached a celebrity status. Individual creativity and originality were highly prized. The social and cultural forces that shape individuals were less focused on. To be considered a good artist, one had to be accepted by the art world and institutions of the day. The elite (white, male) experts that made up these institutions had the power to determine what art was good

and important; essentially what was part of the master narrative of art history. Modernist thinking is often characterised by dualistic ways of seeing the world. In art, there were strong hierarchical divides between fine art and low art. What fell into these categories was determined by art institutions and powerful individuals.

The New Possibilities of a Postmodernist/Contemporary Approach. Postmodernism was largely a reaction to modernism. Postmodernist thinking resulted in a fracturing of the idea of a single master narrative into many diverse narratives that could coexist. The objectivity of truth was challenged with the idea that truth is socially constructed. Postmodernists acknowledged that society and culture play a big role in how we understand ourselves and the world. Some people in society have more power than others, and the values of those with power become entrenched in our institutions and political structures. Therefore, these institutions, and the traditional ways we do things, need to be challenged and deconstructed in order to raise up marginalised voices.

These shifts were some of what took place in the move from modernism to postmodernism. We have now moved beyond postmodernism and into the contemporary, which is always difficult to define while it is happening. As society shifts into new worldviews, we often keep what is useful and reject what is problematic from our earlier ways of thinking. It appears that my participants are doing just that in their approach to art education. New, contemporary values are shaping how they approach their work.

Art Educators are Ahead of the Game

Schools, as institutions, are often slow to change. For example, redrafting curriculum takes years. While changes in the school system are slow, I found that my participants who are working in art museums and galleries have experienced a lot of change in the past two or three decades. This is likely because these educators are working directly with contemporary art and artists, who are on the cutting edge of what is happening in art and society. These educators are less removed from what is emerging in the art world and the world in general. Museum and gallery educators can anticipate where education is heading sooner than the school system might, because of their work with contemporary art and artists. They are a great resource to look to, to see where education is headed.

What Does This Mean for Art Education?

It is one thing to say that education needs to shift beyond modernist models of aesthetic development, and even curriculum. It is much more difficult to imagine what that would look like in schools. My participants are experts in a field that is not based in rationality. They are observing what is happening when contemporary children are interacting with contemporary art. These interactions are on the front line of what is developing in both art and education. I believe that the experiences of these museum and gallery educators can show some of the possibilities beyond modernist approaches to education.

While modernist values may have made sense in art and education during the modern period, we have since begun to understand, as a society, that modernism has many flaws. As we have begun to challenge the elitist, exclusionary, power-based practices of the modern art world, our museums and galleries have begun to take more diverse and inclusive approaches to curation and education. These changes were described by my participants.

According to my participants, many museum educators' primary goals today are to provide accessible, inclusive educational experiences that encourage students to explore and reflect in ways that can continue beyond the gallery walls. They do not shy away from having difficult conversations, such as those around issues of racism, sexism, and colonisation. Using purely modernist approaches, such as developmental theories, is no longer sufficient according to the participants. Even when they use the strategies and approaches that came out of modernist theories (such as VTS), they do so in a reflective way that takes what is useful from these tools and discards what is not.

It appears, in speaking to my participants, that we cannot successfully teach students about contemporary art by relying on modern education practices and models of aesthetic development. These approaches are at odds with the goals of the contemporary art educators I spoke to. Facilitating students in their move from one developmental stage to another is not useful when an educator is primarily focused on things like making educational experiences accessible to all students.

In addition to a disconnect with contemporary educators' goals, modernist approaches to education are poorly suited to much of the art that is being made today. Discussion about the ideas and

concepts expressed in contemporary art (such as the deconstruction of power structures, decolonisation, and anti-racism) do not fit into an approach that only exposes school-aged children to beautiful and realistic art, as Parsons' model suggests is appropriate for Stage 2 children. Expecting adolescents to only be able to understand art as an individual communication between artist and viewer (Stage 3) would rule out looking at artworks that explore the social role of power in the oppression of whole groups. Thinking that only some adults, and no children, are capable of understanding artworks as social achievements in the context of an artworld (Stage 4), makes it difficult to discuss the ever-shifting social meanings of artworks. In speaking to my participants, they made it clear that they have observed that these types of conversations are very possible for children and youth to not only engage in but understand, despite what the model says.

Modernist approaches to art education appear to no longer be sufficient for contemporary children or contemporary art. They are even of limited use when teaching contemporary children about modern art, as our current understanding of art from this period is tied to our beliefs that modern art demonstrated deeply flawed and oppressive practices. The implication of this is that we need to embrace new approaches in art education.

Alternative Approaches in Art Education

According to my participants, modernist theories of aesthetic development do not play a significant role in their work in museums and galleries. The criticisms they raised about these theories were echoed in the literature. However, that does not necessarily mean that these theories have absolutely no role to play in education. There are alternative views of Parsons' model, discussed in the literature, that describe it to be a set of tools or a series of viewpoints.

Treating Parsons' Model as Tools and Viewpoints. Rather than treating Parsons' model of development as universal, the stages can instead be understood as a series of viewpoints: the non-reflective viewpoint, the beauty, realism and skill viewpoint, the expression of ideas and feelings viewpoint, the artworld viewpoint and the plural artworlds viewpoint (Erickson and Clover, 2003). These are viewpoints that we acquire over time, and as we do, we expand our repertoire of ways to

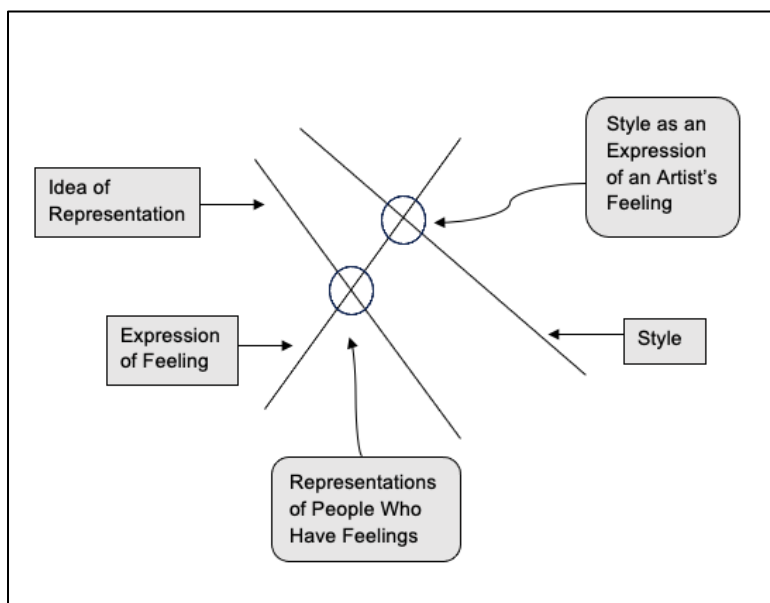
understand artworks (Erickson and Villeneuve, 2009). When looking at certain artworks, one viewpoint may be more useful than another, but all viewpoints have something to offer to their users.

Similarly, to viewing these models as a series of viewpoints, they can also be understood as tools in a toolbox. One of my participants, Taylor, used this metaphor in describing how they view these models. Parsons himself also uses this metaphor in his more recent writing. This metaphor demonstrates how development can be non-linear and emphasises the diversity and cultural character of aesthetic development (Parsons, 2003). The idea of a toolbox clarifies that the tools are social creations that we teach children, and that children's development consists of their increasing ability to use these tools (Parsons, 2003).

Updating Parsons: Development as a Lattice. In his later writing, Parsons (2003) amends his description of development from a straight line to a lattice. This lattice, with many different beginning points and end points, shows how development can happen simultaneously on different paths at the same time. Additionally, we can see in Figure 3 that when two lines intersect, two tools can be used together. To Parsons, this suggests that development in art is connected to cognitive development in other domains.

Figure 3

Development as a Lattice (Figure adapted from [Parsons, 2003, p.80](#))



In his model, Parsons discusses the way several ideas develop, such as our understanding of representation, our ability to take the perspective of others and understand their feelings, and our understanding of the art world and art criticism. In the above image, we can see how one's understanding of representation and their understanding of the expression of feelings may intersect to enable them to better understand paintings that represent people displaying emotions. In a different context, our understanding of the expression of feelings may intersect with our knowledge about art styles to help us to understand how an artist uses a particular style to express their feelings.

This view of Parsons' model challenges its linear, progressive nature, but still acknowledges that we learn to understand art as we age and are exposed to it. We need this exposure and education to be able to use certain tools or viewpoints. As many of my participants stated, different tools and methods are needed for different types of artworks. When educators are helping students to expand their toolboxes, they need to consider the variety of tools that are out there, and not simply modernist, western ones.

Practical Advice for Art Educators

Shifting our understanding of models of aesthetic development and their role in education is something that my participants both demonstrated and advocated for. These discussions about the role of theory can seem difficult to put into practice. To help with this, I have summarised my participants' comments about their goals and methods to present some concrete advice for art educators to consider in their practices. The application of this advice will vary from context to context, but it provides some interesting points to consider.

1. Make time for students to look at and make art

Make time for looking at, and making, art with students. There can be a feeling like there is never enough time with students to get through what needs to be covered, but art is such an important subject. It is important not to see it as an add on, or an optional break from more serious subjects. Studying art gets at the heart of questions of who we are in relation to others. It is a way to understand other perspectives. It helps us to tackle complex topics in ways that make them accessible and can really "get under our skin" and make a big impact on us. Art is not a tool through which to achieve these

things; art is at the heart of how we as humans make meaning. As the contemporary realities of students change and become increasingly complex, studying art becomes more and more important.

2. Show students a variety of artworks

Show children a variety art with different subjects, mediums, and styles. With the right support, children will be able to engage with all different types of artworks. Educators should not let their preconceptions of what children will be able to understand limit what they expose their students too. There is still always the need to tailor conversations to the students' age levels, and provide support when having difficult conversations, but children are capable viewers.

3. Be aware of your own comfort level as an educator, and seek out resources as needed

Be aware of your own comfort level and experience as an educator. This may impact what you feel comfortable looking at with your students. Learning about art can be a shared process, where you learn alongside your students. There are also many resources out there to support educators in their professional development. Some experience and knowledge are important when teaching students, but that does not always have to come from you alone. Reach out to local galleries and museums, as their staff are usually happy to help and provide resources and even training sessions. Learning a few simple strategies can be very helpful. The strategies discussed in this study may be a good place to start: Visual Thinking Strategies and other constructivist open-ended questioning strategies, Howard Gardener's 5 Entry Points approach and prompts like "I see, I think, I wonder."

4. Let students lead the discussion and meet them where they are at

Let students lead the discussion when looking at artworks; ask them what they think about artworks and draw from their pre-existing knowledge. All children have pre-existing knowledge. Provide background information as needed, but make sure this is tailored to the questions students are asking and the conversations they are having.

Listen carefully to what children are saying and what they are asking. Meet them where they are at and be responsive to the needs of the individuals as well as the dynamics of the specific group you are working with. Be aware of trends that exist in different age groups but do not let these override what

the individual students are doing in the moment. Watch for participation, for responses to questions, and for positive body language as indicators that students are engaged and understanding.

5. Use approaches that involve a variety of the students' senses and their hearts as well as their minds

Get students involved in using a wide variety of their senses to explore works. Engage senses of sound, touch, smell or even taste. Consider listening to music, having students embody artworks, doing dance or exploring objects of similar textures to those found in the artworks. Do not expect students to only have a cognitive response to artworks. Invite them to explore the ways artworks can move them, impacting not only their hearts but their minds as well.

6. Consider barriers to Access in Art and Art Spaces

Be aware that not all children and youth (or adults) have had the opportunity to go to galleries, museums, or other art spaces before. Looking at art may be unfamiliar to some students. Work to make them feel welcome, feel like they belong and feel like their perspectives are valuable. Make efforts to make learning about, and being exposed to, art accessible to all children and youth. If possible, try to take students to galleries, or even to see public artworks. This can help all students to become comfortable in these spaces and increase the chance they will go again in the future.

Consider the factors outside of a student's age and development that may pose barriers to their engagement. Be aware of historical and ongoing issues such as colonisation and power relations when looking at art with students. While we generally want to draw content from the students, we do not want this to perpetuate the privileging of dominant perspectives. In some cases, it is most appropriate to have students listen. This may involve listening to stories or recordings by artists, or Elders, or members of groups who have traditionally been excluded from many art spaces. It is the job of the educators to provide relevant contextual information and ask the students questions to facilitate a conversation about difficult topics. All participants in this study felt that conversations are an important part of children and youth understanding artworks.

7. Stay flexible and reflective

Be aware that education is a constantly shifting field that requires a lifelong commitment to learning. What we have done in the past may not be appropriate today, and what we are doing today may need to be adapted in the future. Be thoughtful and reflective in working with students, and open to your own learning. Stay flexible and continually assess your practice. Approach accessibility as a dialogue and ongoing practice.

Why This Type of Learning Matters

The type of learning that students do when exploring art is especially important right now. Divisive politics are on the rise. In many ways, modernist values have been pushed to the extreme. Global conflicts, extremist governments, and power-based relations form the reality that students today are growing up in. In an increasingly uncertain world, educators do not know exactly what they are preparing their students for. The skills and ways of thinking that discussing art can cultivate are becoming more and more important.

In my research, I found that participants are having difficult conversations with even their very young students. This is difficult work. One participant pointed out that the content of contemporary art is the heaviest it has ever been. Art is acting as a tool to facilitate these difficult conversations. Art invites us to think in ways that we may often not. This can be uncomfortable, but with the right supports my participants are facilitating these conversations with their students. They are presenting students with artworks and asking them what they see and feel. This is being done in discussion with other students, where sharing is taking place and learning is happening together. One student's observation may lead to new understandings for their peers. This type of learning is collaborative, not competitive. There is not one right answer, or even a defined end point that must be reached. And, as several participants said, students are taking this learning with them after they leave the gallery space and applying it to the rest of their lives.

There is a unique quality of art that opens the door to these conversations, which may be socially uncomfortable and often avoided, especially when speaking to children. A classroom teacher may be understandably hesitant to have these discussions with their students, as these topics can be heated and divisive. There is a legitimate fear of discomfort, or of parent backlash. Yet these

conversations are happening successfully in museums and galleries across the country and art is at the heart of this.

Art experiences are not just cognitive or rational, as so many of our education experiences are. The exploratory nature of art is what we need in today's uncertain world. Educators do not know what the future holds for their students, so prescriptive methods of education do not make sense anymore. Art can teach creativity and new ways of thinking. The dialogue and perspective-taking that my participants are engaging in with their students is so important when society is facing such strong divisions right now. My participants described adults as being less open than children, and perhaps our education systems are partly to blame for that. Art requires an openness and a willingness to listen. These skills are sorely lacking and much needed today.

Art is a communication between artist and audience, but it is often not a straightforward or simple to interpret one. Many images in our day to day lives are designed to be interpreted by everyone in a very particular way. Signs, infographics, and instructional images are only successful if we all interpret them in the same way. Art images work differently. One participant described the different role art that addresses social justice issues plays compared to images like protest signs. For example, protest signs are designed to send a specific message, and often to solicit a specific action by individuals or the government. Art images about the same social justice topics leave the interpretation more open. They ask us to think more deeply about the issue, without leading everyone to the same conclusion or action. They may ask us to reflect on how we perceive issues, what role we play in them, etc.

One participant spoke about the very different impact that facts and statistics on something like Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women have on people, versus a visceral artwork that affects viewers on an emotional level. Art can foster a sense of empathy in students. It is also a meaning making tool. One participant described art as "a way to help you make sense of the world, make sense of yourself and your own identity, and your relation to others in the world." Learning about art gets at the core of who we are, as individuals but also as humans. Art is fundamentally human. Humans have

used art to make sense of the world for tens of thousands of years. This is a skill that children and youth need today and will need in the future.

Possibilities for Future Exploration

Although initially intended to explore modernist theories of aesthetic development, this study stumbled upon the shifting world of museum and gallery art education. I only just scratched the surface of the complexities of these broad shifts and what is happening in these institutions. After completing this study, there are further areas that I think would be interesting to explore.

My study was too small to be able to conclude if most museum and gallery educators are experiencing the same shifts and using the same strategies as my participants. I was also only looking at Canadian educators, and educators in the United States or Europe may be having different experiences. What is happening in art education in non-western countries may be very different from what my participants observed. Given that many of the students (and their families) in Canadian schools and gallery programs are from all over the world, the diversities in ways we can teach students about art are important to consider. This study also did not focus on Indigenous Ways of Knowing or learning about art. This lens is very important in the Canadian education context. While my participants mentioned the inclusion of some Indigenous teaching methods and the ways that Indigenous artists, curators, and Elders are involved in museum education, this study did not result in a deep understanding of this perspective.

It would be interesting to do further research into the application of these museum education strategies in classrooms in the school system. My participants were usually working with students in one-off experiences and field trips. Some had the students for longer, but generally they were not able to observe students over many months or a whole school year. A longer time with students, as teachers in the school system have, would present more opportunity to build upon learning and expand students' "toolkits." There would, of course, be other constraints in these contexts than those faced by museum and gallery educators. My participants touched on the difference between the classroom and the museum context, but further exploration would be interesting.

Implications for Other Subjects

As I have described in this chapter, examining art and art education can help us understand the problems with modernist education more clearly, which is still being applied in many ways today. I have discussed some of the limits of modernist education, and alternative possibilities, in the context of art education. However, this could also be applied to education as a whole.

Education is not a neutral practice, it is impacted by our society's values and beliefs, as well as our politics. School systems and curriculum are heavily impacted by what our society views to be the role of teachers, schools, and education. The broader values of the time inevitably seep into our education practices. When shifts occur, such as those from modernist to postmodernist thinking, or from postmodernism to contemporary thinking (which has yet to fully be defined), these changes slowly work their way into education systems. Backlash to these shifts can also impact education (Wallin, 2007). This change may be slow but there are educators who are committed to embracing change because they believe that change is necessary. The museum and gallery educators that I spoke to are prime examples of this. By looking to their experiences with contemporary children learning about contemporary art, we have seen what this commitment can look like in art education.

The goals and methods used by my participants are tailored to their art context, but this context has stemmed from our society's broader climate. Questions of accessibility, equity, inclusion, reconciliation, etc., are not specific to art museums or art education. They are taking place across society.

If contemporary children are capable of much more, in art education, than modernist developmental theories imply, this is likely to extend beyond their capabilities in learning about art. These same learners are bringing in their lived experience and capabilities to all aspects of their learning. Discussions about art may be especially useful in drawing out the kinds of learning that my participants' described, but it is reasonable to believe that this is possible in other learning contexts and subjects.

What has the impact of modernist thinking been on math education or science education? Today we view these as positivist subjects, but in the past, they have been studied alongside

philosophy. Further inquiry into how these alternative approaches to education, as described by my participants, could be applied to other subjects would be an interesting study.

Personal Reflections

Going into this study, I was not looking to find that modernist models of aesthetic development were irrelevant to contemporary art education. In fact, as an art lover who grew up going to museums to see modern art, I felt that Parsons' model of aesthetic development resonated with my experience looking at and learning about art. It made sense to me that postmodern and contemporary art would be less accessible, and hard to teach to anyone, let alone children. These experiences, and the apparent gaps in Parsons' description of what children and youth are capable of understanding, led to my research questions.

In my study, I found that my participants view contemporary children as actually very adept at looking at and understanding contemporary art. My participants shared their methods for making contemporary art, or any art that may seem difficult to "find a way into," approachable to a wide variety of audiences including children and youth. In addition to a better understanding of how educators are teaching contemporary students, I personally learned tools that can help *me* better understand contemporary art.

I learned that modernist models of aesthetic development, which made sense in the modern period, need to be re-examined as some aspects are more problematic than useful today. Through my reading of the literature and in speaking to my participants, I can see that the shifts my participants described in museum and gallery education are much needed to make art education accessible to the diversity of students coming into the gallery.

One of my participants mentioned that many art teachers in schools prefer to stick to teaching about modern art because it is more concrete and less intimidating than contemporary art. This is something that I can empathise with. Beyond seeming less intimidating to teach, I can understand how many teachers who grew up with modern art would want to share this work with their students. It may be what they love, or what got them interested in teaching about art. I understand why many teachers may want to keep teaching art in the same ways we have in the past.

Through this study, I have learned to better understand what postmodern and contemporary art is about. I have also come to see why modernist models like Parsons' are not actually sufficient for contemporary art education or contemporary children. I think that this study demonstrates how some art educators have moved beyond modernist approaches to art education, and the possibilities that can be found in more contemporary approaches.

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Appendix A

Audit Trail: Getting to the Theme Labels

The following charts present how I got to each of the nine themes from my data analysis. I initially coded each interview separately and then combined the codes from the first and second interview, for each participant, to arrive at the nine overarching themes that captured what the participants discussed.

Getting to the Label: “Goals and Values”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	“Core Values” “Engagement and Conversations”	“Goals of Art Education” “Importance of Art”
Charlie	“Goals”	“Goals and Importance of Art”
Taylor	“Audience Goals” “Engagement vs Passive Receiving” “Successful Tours”	“Artist Goals” “Visitor Goals”
Riley	“Core Values”	“Goals”
Ryan	“Art Practice” “Pedagogy and Values” “Goals”	“Pedagogy, Social Justice and Contemporary Art” “Goals of Contemporary Art Education” “What Can be Learned Through Art”
Avery*	“Approaches, Strategies and Values” “Art Therapy, Culture and Connection” “Responding to Art and the Effect of This”	“Responding to Art and Sharing Responses” “Strategies and Approaches” “Traditional Teaching and the Student Experience” “Curation and Programming”

	“Mentorship Approach and Leadership”	
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*Avery’s discussion of “Goals and Values” was heavily intertwined with their discussion of “Strategies and Approaches” to the point where they were almost the same theme

Getting to the Label: “Context and Constraints”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	-	-
Charlie	“Museums vs Classrooms”	“Answering to Constraints of the School System and the Gallery”
Taylor	“Captive Audiences and Exposure”	“Context” “Museum Educators Supporting Teachers”
Riley	“The Gallery’s Unique Context” “Curriculum” “Who Brings Children to the Gallery”	“Assessment and Censoring”
Ryan	“Schools vs Galleries”	“Context”
Avery	-	-

Getting to the Label: “Shifting Values and Practices”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	“Changes in the Field”	“The Focus Now”

Charlie	“The Shifting Nature of Contemporary Art”	“Shifting Art and Educational Practices” “Visitor/Learner Agency” “Trauma Informed Practice and Supporting Viewers” “Experts and Shifts in Galleries”
Taylor	-	“Shifts in Practice”
Riley	-	-
Ryan	“Shifting Practice” “Social Justice and Pedagogy”	-
Avery	-	-

Getting to the Label: “Accessibility and Diversity in Museums”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	“Accessibility”	-
Charlie	“Accessibility of Art”	“Different Meanings of Accessibility and the Need for Fluidity” “Barriers Within and Outside of the Artwork”
Taylor	“Accessibility and Barriers to Accessibility”	-
Riley	-	-
Ryan	-	“Accessibility of Museums”

Avery	<p>“Diversity of Representation and Perspective”</p> <p>“Empathy, Understanding and Communication”</p>	<p>“Accessibility of the Institution”</p> <p>“Staff Training, Empathy and Communication”</p> <p>“The Need for Diverse Staff and Artists”</p>
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Getting to the Label: “Strategies and Approaches”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	<p>“Strategies and Approaches”</p> <p>“Children Responding to Artworks”</p>	<p>“Strategies and Making Contemporary Art Accessible”</p>
Charlie	<p>“Saskatchewan Gallery Method (SGM)”</p>	<p>“SGM vs VTS”</p> <p>“Accessing Difficult to Access Works”</p>
Taylor	<p>“Theories, Strategies and Approaches”</p> <p>“Iterative Processes”</p> <p>“Gallery Design and Visitor Experience”</p>	<p>“Strategies and Approaches”</p> <p>“Availability of Training for VTS”</p> <p>“Approaches and Audience Background”</p>
Riley	<p>“Program Design”</p> <p>“Strategies and Approaches”</p> <p>“Tactile Engagement”</p> <p>“Conversations Beyond Art”</p>	<p>“Approaches”</p> <p>“Open Studios”</p> <p>“Educators Learning Alongside Students”</p>
Ryan	<p>“Strategies and Approaches”</p>	<p>“Strategies and Approaches”</p>
Avery*	<p>“Approaches, Strategies and Values”</p>	<p>“Responding to Art and Sharing Responses”</p> <p>“Strategies and Approaches”</p>

	<p>“Art Therapy, Culture and Connection”</p> <p>“Responding to Art and the Effect of This”</p> <p>“Mentorship Approach and Leadership”</p>	<p>“Traditional Teaching and the Student Experience”</p> <p>“Curation and Programming”</p>
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*Avery’s discussion of “Strategies and Approaches” was heavily intertwined with their discussion of “Goals and Values” to the point where they were almost the same theme

Getting to the Label: “Accessibility of Art from Different Periods”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	<p>“Mediums, Periods and Conceptual Art”</p>	<p>“Accessibility of Contemporary Art”</p> <p>“Digital Art”</p>
Charlie	<p>“Accessibility and Types of Art”</p> <p>“Technology”</p>	-
Taylor	<p>“Types of Artworks”</p>	<p>“Accessing Contemporary Art”</p>
Riley	<p>“Art Periods and Mediums”</p>	-
Ryan	<p>“Contemporary Art vs Other Art”</p>	<p>“Challenges and Approaches with Historical and Modern Art”</p> <p>“Contemporary Art”</p> <p>“The Role of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art”</p>
Avery	<p>“Accessibility of Contemporary Art”</p>	<p>“Accessibility of Contemporary Art and Experiencing vs Understanding”</p>

Getting to the Label: “Age, Development and Learner Background”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	“Learners of Different Ages”	“Children vs Adults and Preconceived Notions”
Charlie	“Ages and Developmental Levels”	-
Taylor	“Approaches with Different Age Groups”	“Ages and Development” “Assessing Developmental Appropriateness”
Riley	“Different Age Groups”	“Importance of Exposing Young Children to Art” “Ages and Development” “Development Over Time” “Preconceived Notions” “Every Child is Unique” “Capturing a Sense of Wonderment with Adults” “Development”
Ryan	“Ages and Development” “Contemporary Children and Youth”	“Ages, Development and What is Socially Appropriate for Children” “Contemporary Children and Youth”
Avery	“Ages, Development, and Working with a Group Over Time”	“Trauma and Youth from Distressed Backgrounds”

	“Partnership Organizations and Youth from Distressed Backgrounds” “English as a Second Language” “What is Appropriate for Children”	
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Getting to the Label: “Educator Experience and Comfort”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2
Corrie	“Educator Experience”	“Affect of Adults on Children”
Charlie	-	-
Taylor	“Experts and Educator Experience Level” “Teacher Comfort and Its Impact on Teaching”	“Expertise”
Riley	“Adults’ Influence”	“Adult and Teacher Influence” “Teacher comfort and experience”
Ryan	-	“Educator Experience, Professional Development and the Role of the Gallery”
Avery	-	-

Getting to the Label: “The Role of Developmental Theory Today”

Participant	Themes from Interview 1	Themes from Interview 2

Corrie	“Role of Developmental Theory in Practice Today”	“Problems and Limitations of Developmental Theory”
Charlie	“Developmental Theory and it’s Problems”	“Ideal Application of Developmental Theory” “Problems with Developmental Theory and VTS”
Taylor	-	“Application and Relevance of Developmental Theory” “Limitations of Developmental Theory” “Observed Consistencies and Inconsistencies with Developmental Models” “Alignment Between Developmental Theory and Other Ways of Knowing”
Riley	-	-
Ryan	-	-
Avery	-	-

Appendix B
Participant Consent Form



Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

████████████████████

Supervisor:

████████████████████

Title of Project:

Canadian Educators' Reflections on Children's Aesthetic Development and Contemporary Art
Education

Sponsor:

n/a

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Participation is completely voluntary, confidential.

Purpose of the Study

This research study aims to explore the experiences of art educators working with children in Canadian art museums, to see how these experiences might inform an assessment of models of aesthetic development and clarify appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education for children.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to participate in two individual interviews done over Zoom, each approximately one hour in length. You will be contacted by email to schedule each interview and participating in both interviews is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study, or a portion of the study, at any point during the data collection.

Interview transcriptions will be sent to you after each interview, and you will have two weeks to review the transcription and amend or withdraw any statements, or to withdraw from the study. After these two weeks, data analysis will begin, and you will no longer be able to withdraw from that portion of the study.

The interview questions will be sent to you one week before each interview. The questions will be open-ended, and the interview will take the format of a guided conversation. The questions will focus on your professional experiences teaching children and youth about art, with a focus on contemporary art. The questions will explore your experiences with children and youth's individual development of understanding art. No formal background or training in developmental models or theories is expected of participants. All interview questions will explore your professional experiences, and personal or sensitive topics will not be included in the questions.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study altogether, or you may refuse to participate in parts of the study or decline to answer any and all questions. You may withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection without penalty.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected

Should you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to provide your name, email address, and the name of the organization you work for. Your participation and responses will remain confidential. In the publication of findings, you will be given a gender-neutral pseudonym. Any organizations you are involved with will also be given a pseudonym, and only the province the organization is located in will be identified.

Interviews will be recorded (video and audio) to assist with detailed and accurate data analysis. Only the researcher, her supervisor and a third-party transcription service will have access to the recordings. Third-party transcribers will sign a confidentiality agreement and will be required to delete all data after the transcripts have been sent to the researcher.

There are two options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I grant permission to be audio-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I grant permission to be video-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There are minimal risks to the participants associated with this study. The risk to participants will be no greater than the risks you encounter in your everyday jobs. Participating in the study will give you the opportunity to share your expertise and further knowledge about development in the field of art education

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

The researcher, her supervisor and a third-party transcription service will have access to the interview data and any audio recordings made. Video recordings, as well as your name and contact information will not be shared with transcribers.

Your participation and responses will remain confidential. In the publication of findings, you will be given a gender-neutral pseudonym. Any organizations you are involved with will also be given a pseudonym, and only the province the organization is located in will be identified.

You are free to withdraw from the study until two weeks after you receive the transcriptions of each interview.

You may withdraw from the study after the first interview and not complete the second interview. You may withdraw from the second interview within two weeks of receiving the transcripts for that interview. Withdrawal at this stage will not include withdrawal from the first interview.

If you choose to withdraw from the study within these timelines, any recordings or notes from your interview(s) will be deleted within 24 hours. Digital information will be deleted, and any physical documents will be shredded. Data will be stored on a password protected device in encrypted documents or in a locked cabinet for 5 years after the completion of the study (unless you withdraw from the study). After 5 years, the data will be deleted/shredded.

Would you like to receive a summary of the study's results?

Yes: ___ No: ___

If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number)

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at

_____. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C

Interview Script: Interview 1

Introduction Script

“Hello, how are you doing today? Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about my research. Before we get started, I want to reiterate that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. If you would like to withdraw, please let me know during the interview or by email after the interview is finished. If there are any interview questions that you would like to skip, please let me know.

Recording this interview will help me to be more accurate and detailed in my data analysis. Do I have your permission to record the audio and video of our interview today?”

(If yes, I will proceed to recording, if no, I will not record and I will take detailed notes)

“This interview will be open ended and conversational. I have some interview questions, which I sent you last week, that can serve as a guide for our conversation. I will take notes during our conversation to help me with my data analysis later. The interview should take about an hour.

After the interview, I will be transcribing our conversation/having it transcribed. Once this is completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript. If you would like to amend or withdraw any statements, or withdraw from the study entirely, please let me know within two weeks of you receiving the transcript.

After two weeks have passed, I will enter the data analysis stage of my research and you will no longer be able to withdraw from the first portion of the study. You will still be able to withdraw from the second interview.

Do you have any questions before we get started?”

(Any questions will be answered at this time, or as they arise during the interview)

“I would like to begin by briefly introducing myself and my research background. I am in a Master of Arts program at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. My area of research interest is contemporary arts education for children and youth. My research topic will explore the

application of theories of aesthetic development, or how children and youth develop in their understanding of art. I am interested in how Michael Parsons' model specifically, which was written 35 years ago, relates to children and youth's understanding of contemporary art today.

In this first interview, we will discuss the relationship between aesthetic development and understanding of art from different periods. I am interested in what you have observed about this relationship over your career. This doesn't have to fit into a formal theory of development but can include your observations of children and youth's patterns of behaviour."

Interview Questions

Background Questions

- Can you tell me about your work experience in art education? What age groups have you worked with? What art periods do you have experience teaching about?
- What role does knowledge of aesthetic development (formal theories or your own observations) play in your teaching practice?
- How do you assess, formally or informally, how well an individual is understanding the art they are learning about? What is the difference between an individual understanding a work from their developmental level and understanding a work as the artist intended/as the artworld understands it?
- How do you determine how accessible a work of art is for an individual or a group?

Research Question #1: How does individual development affect understanding of art from different periods (pre-modern, modern, and postmodern/contemporary)?

- What have you observed about the relationship between individuals' aesthetic development and their understanding of art from different periods? Are some periods more accessible? Less accessible?
- In your experience, how accessible are different art periods for preschool children? Elementary school children? Adolescents?

Research Question #2: What are the experiences of contemporary art educators in teaching about contemporary art to children and youth with different levels of development?

- How well do individuals of different ages/levels of development (preschool children, elementary school children, adolescents) understand contemporary art?
- Are there some levels that struggle more than others to understand contemporary art? Which ones? How do you know?

Sample Prompts

- Do you have any examples of this?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you expand on that?
- It sounds like you are saying _____, am I understanding that correctly?

Concluding Script

“Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. That concludes our first interview. Do you have any questions about this study or your participation in it? If any questions come up later, I can be reached at [REDACTED] I will contact you by email in the next few weeks to schedule our second interview. I will also be sending you the transcript from this interview. Thank you again and have a great rest of your day.”

Appendix D

Interview Script: Interview 2

Introduction Script

“Hello, how are you doing today? Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about my research. Before we get started, I want to reiterate that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. If you would like to withdraw, please let me know during the interview or by email after the interview is finished. If there are any interview questions that you would like to skip, please let me know.

Recording this interview will help me to be more accurate and detailed in my data analysis. Do I have your permission to record the audio and video of our interview today?”

(If yes, I will proceed to recording, if no, I will not record and I will take detailed notes)

“This interview will be open ended and conversational. I have some interview questions, which I sent you last week, that can serve as a guide for our conversation. I will take notes during our conversation to help me with my data analysis later. The interview should take about an hour.

After the interview, I will be transcribing our conversation/having it transcribed. Once this is completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript. If you would like to amend or withdraw any statements, or withdraw from the study entirely, please let me know within two weeks of you receiving the transcript.

After two weeks have passed, I will enter the data analysis stage of my research and you will no longer be able to withdraw from the study.

Do you have any questions before we get started?”

(Any questions will be answered at this time, or as they arise during the interview)

“In our last interview we discussed the relationship between aesthetic development and understanding of art from different periods. In this interview we will focus more on the relevance of models of aesthetic development for education today and how educator experiences may inform the application of developmental theory in art education.”

Interview Questions

Research Question #4: How may the experiences of contemporary art educators inform how developmental theory is used in art education?

- How relevant are developmental models, such as Parsons', for art education today? How relevant is it for art education about contemporary art specifically?
- What do you think could be revised, updated, or changed to make developmental models, such as Parsons', more useful or relevant?
- Are there other models or theories that you find relevant or helpful in your teaching?

Research Question #5: How may the experiences of contemporary art educators inform developmentally appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education?

- How important is it to have developmentally appropriate goals and methods in contemporary art education? What happens if the goals and methods are not developmentally appropriate?
- How do you think the goals of contemporary art education should vary with different age groups/levels of development? How should the teaching methods and approaches vary?
- How do your goals and methods vary with students of different ages/developmental levels?

Sample Prompts

- Do you have any examples of this?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you expand on that?
- It sounds like you are saying _____, am I understanding that correctly?

Concluding Script

"Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. That concludes our second interview. Do you have any questions about this study or your participation in it? If any questions come up later, I can be

reached at [REDACTED]. I will be sending you the transcript from this interview in the next few weeks.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation and responses have been very valuable for my research. I look forward to sharing the results with you in the coming months (if they have agreed to this)."

