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Narrative Inquiry, Pedagogical Tact and the Gallery Educator

Jennifer Andersen
University of Melbourne, Australia

Marnee Watkins
University of Melbourne, Australia

Robert Brown
University of Melbourne, Australia

John Quay
University of Melbourne, Australia

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Abstract

This paper responds to the need for a deeper understanding of gallery educator practice. Focusing on a significant encounter in a major city public gallery, it describes how narrative inquiry offers new insights into how experienced gallery educators shape school education sessions based on prior knowledge and experience,

and in-the-moment observations and judgements. Responding to artworks, artists, gallery spaces, and students' needs and interests, gallery educator practice is infused with 'pedagogical tact'. Narrative inquiry makes this complex teaching visible and, in doing so, affords a valuable approach to professional learning.

Introduction

Two researchers are seated opposite a gallery educator in a neutral university meeting room. They are here to discuss a narrative that the researchers developed following their observation of a school session the educator led the previous week in the rich aesthetic and social environment of a large public art gallery. The tables have turned and the observers are now the observed. The researchers are nervous: does the educator think the narrative is accurate? Is it fair? Is it interesting? 'Well', the educator says. She pauses and then laughs. 'It's a lot quieter than what was going on in my head!'

Gallery educators perform an important role in galleries' engagement with schools, but the arts-based pedagogical practices of these professionals are under-researched (Burnham & Kai-kee, 2011; Healey & Lemon, 2014). The complexity of gallery pedagogy and learning calls for innovative research practices that can engage with the holistic experience of these encounters (Falk & Dierking, 2013; Pringle, 2006). This paper explains the process of engaging with narrative inquiry, to describe, analyse and represent the multiple and often tacit dimensions of gallery educator practice. The outcome of this process is a deeper awareness of the complex decision making, and 'improvisational tact' (van Manen, 2016) that educators draw upon when working with diverse school groups. It also explores the ethical and practical aspects of engaging with participants as co-researchers, and the potential affordances of narrative for gallery educator professional learning.

Background

The research took place at a major city public art gallery which holds a historical and contemporary international art collection, with a strong focus on Australian Indigenous art. The gallery has an extensive learning program that caters for early childhood, school and tertiary students from diverse demographic and cultural backgrounds. The learning program is led by an experienced team of trained art teachers who are charged with a broad mission that includes supporting school curricula and cultural, social and personal learning. Committed to reflective practice and professional learning, the gallery learning team instigated a collaboration with University of Melbourne researchers to examine their practice so as to guide their future work and to share it with each other and other gallery professionals.

To understand the phenomenon of school education programs in the gallery, over an eighteen-month period the researchers engaged in immersive, grounded and participatory research (Charmaz, 2008; Willig, 2008) underpinned by theories of social constructivism, experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and narrative thinking (Bruner, 1987). Seeking a broad and deep understanding of gallery educator practice, multiple methods were utilised, including teacher and student surveys and interviews, gallery educator interviews and focus group discussions, and observations of five primary school gallery sessions. Throughout the research, the emergent themes were confirmed and explained through a recursive and participatory approach that involved regular educator reflection and co-analysis. This paper focuses on part of the larger study, namely the use of narrative inquiry to probe deeply into the complex decision making that gallery educators engage in when working with diverse school groups. It centres on a significant moment in one gallery session.

Examining the complex practice of the gallery educator

Students visiting the gallery commonly participate in a one-hour educator-facilitated session that involves discussion of several artworks related to one or more learning foci. Such sessions are characterised by complex, contextualised, interconnected interactions between educators, students, teachers, works of art and the gallery environment. Immersed in the world of art, gallery educators impart knowledge and model a passion for art and learning. They have to be capable of working with diverse and mostly unknown school groups, many of which have had very limited experience with art and galleries. Quickly attuned to the needs, interests and responses of each group, educators have to establish an emotionally supportive climate that is conducive for ‘seeing’ not just ‘looking’ at art. These tasks require educators to be ‘physically relaxed and mentally present’ (Findlay, 2017). They must be informed, where possible, about prior student experience and pre-determined school goals, and be responsive to student engagement. The gallery educator leads a ‘navigated adventure’ (Woods, 1993), a recursive, interactive experience involving noticing, knowledge-sharing, interpreting and reflecting.

Throughout each session, ideas and ways of experiencing and thinking about art are introduced, re-visited and developed to deepen the students’ attention and understanding (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011). Drawing from a repertoire of visual thinking and analysis strategies (Brown, Watkins, Quay, Andersen & Stockley, 2019), educators tune their interactions and respond to the dialogue unfolding with the group so as to realise planned and emergent learning possibilities. Determining what and how much information to impart involves a continual checking of signals of student engagement, which requires what van Manen (2016) describes as ‘pedagogical tact’ and ‘child sense.’ Educators have to judge when to lead and when to follow, what strategies to use, and when to transition from one strategy or line of inquiry to another, all the time ensuring the scope and progression of the session meets

a school's expectations. To examine the complex planned and in-situ decision making of gallery educators, we engaged with narrative inquiry, drawing on its potential to 'come at things differently', to ask new questions and develop new insights (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, 2008).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative is a primary way that we organise and make sense of situated and socially constructed knowledge. It is both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation; a methodology and a method. People can 'apprehend' and 'tell' the world through descriptive and probing stories that resonate with and raise critical issues for themselves and others (Bruner, 1987). Narrative inquiry is grounded in a belief that we cannot move beyond habitual ways of knowing without a serious commitment to open examination, study, reflection, and improvement of our own practice (Carr, Clarkin-Phillips, Beer, Thomas, & Waitai, 2012). Drawing on real life experiences, narrative inquiry involves the independent and collective telling, reading and re-reading of practitioner stories. In doing so, it offers a fruitful way for researchers to understand practice 'from the inside' (Witherell & Noddings, 1991) and to engage with participants in a spirit of shared inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010), prompting them to examine and articulate their interpretations, wonderings and uncertainties to themselves and others.

This paper discusses the processes and outcomes of a narrative inquiry that involved two of the researcher-authors of this paper and an experienced gallery educator, Harriet,¹ engaging in a collaborative analysis of observation field notes, photographs and audio recordings. The process involved an iterative, progressively focused (Stake, 2000) method of writing, reading, sharing and re-writing about gallery educator practice that was used to interrogate the gallery education experience, and represent analysis in a resonant and thought-provoking narrative. This paper focuses on the observed practice of one gallery session led by Harriet, exploring Indigenous Australian artworks from the exhibition, *Past Legacy Present Tense*. The group was comprised of twenty children aged 10-to-12 years from a culturally diverse inner-city school.

First iteration of the narrative

The catalyst for our narrative inquiry was a set of observation field notes which had sought to capture the felt experience of the phenomenon of the session (van Manen, 1990) and to highlight significant events where the students or the educator responded strongly or in a way

¹ A pseudonym

that piqued our curiosity. The first iteration of the narrative, written by one of the researchers, describes the students' introduction to *Ngayarta Kujarra* (Fig. 1), a monumental (3 metre x 5 metre) painting created by twelve Martu women artists of a salt lake located in their traditional lands². The work, which suggests an aerial view, is dominated by a large white shape surrounded by a delicately textured pastel coloured border. Emerging from the border into the white expanse is an irregular semi-transparent shape.



*Figure 1. Ngayarta Kujarra*³

² In English, this place is known as Lake Dora.

³ Jakayu Biljabu

Yikartu Bumba

May Chapman

Nyanjilpayi Nancy Chapman

Doreen Chapman

Linda James

Donna Loxton

Mulyatingki Marney

Reena Rogers

Beatrice Simpson

Ronelle Simpson

Muntararr Rosie Williams

Ngayarta Kujarra 2009

Harriet moves the group to *Ngayarta Kujarra*, a vast painted canvas. Once all are seated, she asks, 'What's the first thing you notice about this painting?' Almost immediately, a child proffers a response: 'There's a big white screen—there's no painting in the middle'. Harriet prompts again for what they notice: 'It looks like a head of someone', 'The frame', 'It has lots of colour', 'It looks like a snowstorm', 'The parts of the colours'. Harriet enthusiastically welcomes all the responses.

Harriet then focuses the students' attention on the impressive size of the artwork and says, 'It's a map of sorts. What do you think it might be a map of?' A child says, 'A tribe area.' Harriet then invites the children to speculate about what the dominant central white shape might represent. A child suggests, 'It's the Europeans taking over the land.' 'Yes', says Harriet, 'It could be. I hadn't thought of that.' She goes on to explain that it represents a body of water, a lake.

Researcher discussion

When we, the two observing researchers, discussed this narrative, we noted that the final exchange in this incident had made an impression on us both. We were struck by the sophistication of the student's thinking and observed that he had made a connection back to information Harriet had offered earlier in the tour about colonisation. We wondered why Harriet had not chosen to pursue this thought-provoking idea further with the group and speculated that her response may have been constrained by external factors such as a lack of time.

Clandinin and Huber (2010) note that 'the movement from composing field texts to composing interim research texts is a time marked by tension and uncertainty for narrative inquirers' (p. 439) who must avoid concluding their interpretation through their initial writing, but instead maintain a dialogue with participants. They describe the interim works-in-progress as 'partial texts' that are open to questions and wonderings, and that allow 'participants and researchers to further co-compose storied interpretations' (p. 439). An interview with Harriet was scheduled to take place several weeks after the session, to find out more about her arts-based pedagogical practice through a conversation about her experience of the session we observed. We decided to use the formative narrative as a prompt for discussion of these

synthetic polymer paint on canvas
300.6 x 500.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 2011
2011.276
© the artists, courtesy Martumili Artists, Newman

topics, and therefore re-shaped the second paragraph to express our curiosity and unconfirmed interpretation of the encounter. Our changes are noted in italics below.

Second narrative

Harriet moves the group to *Ngayarta Kujarra*, a vast painted canvas. Once all are seated, she asks, ‘What’s the first thing you notice about this painting?’ Almost immediately, a child proffers a response: ‘There’s a big white screen—there’s no painting in the middle’. Harriet prompts again for what they notice: ‘It looks like a head of someone’, ‘The frame’, ‘It has lots of colour’, ‘It looks like a snowstorm’, ‘The parts of the colours.’ Harriet enthusiastically welcomes all the responses.

Harriet then focuses the students’ attention on the impressive size of the artwork and says, ‘It’s a map of sorts. What do you think it might be a map of?’ A child says, ‘A tribe area.’ Harriet invites the children to speculate about what the dominant central white shape might represent. *A student links back to information about Indigenous Australians’ long continuous history and the more recent colonisation that Harriet had shared earlier in the tour. He suggests, ‘It’s the Europeans taking over the land’. The metaphoric thinking around this big issue warrants further probing but, with time pressing, Harriet acknowledges this as an interesting response and goes on to explain that it represents a body of water, a lake.*

First interview

A few weeks before the scheduled interview, Harriet was given this second iteration of the narrative and three prompting questions to consider:

1. What experience and what knowledge were you hoping to offer the students?
2. What were some significant moments for you and the students in the session, and why?
3. What worked and, in retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

In relation to the moment discussed in this part of the narrative, we also planned to ask Harriet what factors influence her presentations. Before we could do so, though, Harriet raised this issue herself saying, with reference to this encounter, ‘I’m just sorry that I can’t answer every single question that’s asked [by the students]. If I had all the time in the world I could go off on tangents and have all sorts of discussions, but the time constraints are hard for me.’ She went on to say that she would have liked to discuss that particular student’s interpretation of the painting as Europeans taking over the land but was mindful that, to do so, may have meant

running out of time or losing the attention of some students who were too young or too tired to explore such an abstract idea.

This exchange with Harriet revealed two significant issues: the potential for narratives to act as sensitive prompts for researchers and participant-researchers to discuss and understand pedagogical practices, and the limitations of researcher observations.

In addition to the ethical dimensions of the subject matter discussed in their narratives, researcher-writers must attend to the potential consequences of their representations of other people and deal with these in a sensitive manner (Brown, Jeanneret, Suda & Andersen, 2017; Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Although we were curious as to why Harriet did not follow up on the student's insightful remark, we did not want to confront her directly about this, as we felt to do so would erroneously imply a negative judgement about her work. This resulted in our nervousness, expressed in the opening vignette of this paper. By using the narrative to hint at our interest in this moment, we hoped that Harriet would be drawn to reflect on it herself and this is, in fact, what happened.

In relation to the second point revealed by the interview, Harriet amusingly commented that the narrative was 'a lot quieter than what was going on in my head!' She explained that when she was conducting the floor talk her mind was a 'frenzy' of decisions. Her discussion of the considerations informing her decision not to follow up on the student's comment furthered our understanding of the multiple, often hidden, factors that shape gallery educator practice.

In this interview, we also asked Harriet about her goals for the students. She said that she wants students to have a sense of ownership over the public gallery space and to feel that they can have their own responses to the artworks. These goals gave us a new appreciation of two other comments that Harriet made during the tour. At the start of the session, Harriet reminded the students that they could return to the gallery at any time and act as 'tour guides' for their friends and family. Later, when looking at the gallery's collection of works from the *Papunya Tula* region of central Australia, she noted that while the deeper meanings of these works are not available to non-custodians of the cultural stories and places they represent, everyone can make their own meanings from them.

With this privileged access to Harriet's goals, pedagogical orientations, and decision-making, we reappraised the moment at *Ngayarta Kujarra*. Instead of considering the student's response as an isolated individual insight, we saw that it could be an expression of a relationship with art stimulated by the accumulative experiences of this education session and, possibly, the students' previous inquiries into Australian Indigenous art at the gallery and at

school. We wondered if the ‘knowing disposition’ (Perkins, Jay & Tishman, 1993) that the student had shown here might act as a catalyst for future inquiry.

We once again returned to the narrative and revised it to integrate the new data. The third iteration aimed to reflect the pedagogical approach used by Harriet to help students spiral towards a deeper and more personal understanding of Indigenous Australian art through brief but connected encounters with several artworks.

Third Narrative

Harriet moves the group to *Ngayarta Kujarra*, a vast painted canvas. Once all are seated, she asks, ‘What’s the first thing you notice about this painting?’ Almost immediately, a child proffers a response: ‘There’s a big white screen—there’s no painting in the middle’. Harriet prompts again for what they notice: ‘It looks like a head of someone’, ‘The frame’, ‘It has lots of colour’, ‘It looks like a snowstorm’, ‘The parts of the colours.’ Harriet enthusiastically welcomes all the responses.

Harriet then focuses the students’ attention on the impressive size of the artwork and says, ‘It’s a map of sorts. What do you think it might be a map of?’ A child suggests ‘A tribe area.’ Harriet invites the children to speculate about what the dominant central white shape might represent. *Earlier in the session Harriet had observed that although non-Indigenous people may not have access to all the meanings in Indigenous artworks, ‘We can all see things for ourselves in these paintings.’ Perhaps emboldened by this invitation to trust his personal responses, a child shares his interpretation of the white shape in Ngayarta Kujarra.* Linking back to information about Indigenous Australians’ long continuous history and the more recent colonisation that Harriet had shared earlier in the tour he suggests, ‘It’s the Europeans taking over the land’.

The metaphoric thinking around this big issue warrants further probing. *Although Harriet recognizes the potential to pursue this particular tangent, her response is constrained by time and her observation of the young students in front of her, some of whom are showing signs of fatigue. Thinking that she would lose some of this group if she were to engage in discussion of this abstract concept, Harriet makes one of the many immediate assessments that shape her work in the gallery. She acknowledges the student’s contribution as an interesting observation, saying ‘Yes, it could be. I hadn’t thought of that’ and goes on to explain that the white area represents a body of water—a lake. Her response both informs the group of the artists’ intention and acknowledges the validity of the student’s interpretation,*

leaving open the possibility that the students can carry over this process of artful inquiry to their future thinking and experiences of art.

Final interview

After reading the third iteration of the narrative, Harriet responded by email that it had successfully encapsulated her 'feelings in the moment and reflections afterwards.' A further brief interview focused on her experience of the narrative inquiry process and her reflections are discussed in the section below.

Discussion

The warrant for narrative inquiry lies in what new understandings it reveals for researchers and participants. This project offered two intersecting insights: it made visible complex aspects of gallery educator pedagogy and it highlighted the value of narrative inquiry for gallery educator professional learning.

An insightful method for understanding gallery educator pedagogy

Gallery educators' encounters with students are informed by countless decisions as they weigh up the prior experience and needs of each group, the schools' goals, their personal interests and knowledge about individual artworks, the time available and the physical affordances of the gallery space. The educator's observable practice does not always reflect the complexity of these hidden dimensions of practice.

Educators' interactions with children are both planned and responsive, aligning with the concept of 'flexible purposing' in arts practice, which, as Eisner (2004) observes, 'capitalizes on the emergent features appearing within a field of relationships' and 'is not rigidly attached to predefined aims when the possibility of better ones emerge' (p. 6). Gallery educators are guided by expert knowledge of the art collections and pedagogical know-how (Schep, van Boxtel & Noordegraaf, 2018). Throughout the session, they make in-the-moment judgements, to strike a balance between how much information to offer to students and how much to encourage them to follow their personal responses. In her interview, Harriet said that she wants students to be absorbed in the aesthetics of the artworks, and 'to enquire, to talk to each other and to learn off each other' but, as a non-Indigenous Australian who is aware of the historical and ongoing wrongs endured by First Nations peoples, she also feels a responsibility to first 'give students a sense of the complexity and the richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.' Harriet's early conversations with the group led her to believe that the students had had limited previous access to Indigenous Australian history and cultures. This belief informed her in-situ decision to offer more background information about the works of art and to de-emphasise explorations of their personal responses in this encounter.

As Roberts (1997) notes, the educator's job is 'anticipating and negotiating between the meanings constructed by visitors and the meanings constructed by museums' (p. 3). In the context of this encounter, to this might be added, 'and the meanings constructed or held in custody by the artists.'

Harriet's intention to inform the students about the historical and cultural contexts of Indigenous artworks did reduce the time that could be devoted to discussing their personal responses to and interpretations of the collection, and Harriet commented in the final interview that there is more 'inquiry' in sessions that involve open-ended dialogue. This research suggests, though, that gallery educator pedagogy is more complex than the type of verbal exchanges that happen at any one moment. The student's metaphor of European colonisation referred to several pieces of didactic information that Harriet offered throughout the session. He may have also drawn on his own previous knowledge and opinions. The educator's practice can therefore be seen as a negotiation between the gallery space, the work of art, the students' thinking and an assessment of and response to the group's personal and learning needs. Reading children's needs in this way is characterised by van Manen (2016) as 'pedagogical tact'.

Aligned with flexible purposing, the caring actions of a pedagogically tactful practitioner are intrinsically improvisational and contextualised. They are informed by what pedagogues judge to be right and appropriate for individual and groups of children at any given moment, coupled with an awareness of their future development (van Manen, 2016). During the encounter at *Ngayarta Kujarra*, Harriet made a quick assessment of the needs of the student whose insightful interpretation of the artwork warranted further exploration, and the needs of the group, which included rest and an understanding of the provenance of the artwork. Her compromise was to acknowledge the validity of the student's remark, but to move on to the remarkable story of how the artwork was made. Prompted by the narrative to consider this moment in more detail, Harriet revealed in the interviews that she was far from certain that this was the perfect response. Van Manen views this 'doubt and uncertainty' (p. 33) in a positive light, saying that it reflects the ethical dimension of pedagogy and is an essential part of the process of relating to children in more sensitive ways.

Our initial analysis of the school session focused on the time students were given to look at the artworks and the nature of their verbal exchanges with the gallery educators i.e. the kind of questions they were asked, the nature of their responses, and whether they asked any questions themselves. While valuable, the danger with this somewhat mechanistic approach is that it can reduce arts-based pedagogy to pre-determined teaching techniques and fail to engage with the holistic experience of educators, students and teachers (Perkins, 1994).

This research points to a characterisation of gallery educator pedagogy as a contextualised process rather than a set of strategies. Harriet confirmed this, saying that the narratives highlighted how each gallery learning session is shaped by the exhibition, the artworks, and what she determines to be the most valuable approach for each group. She noted, as an example, that her method of introducing the school students in the observed session to Indigenous history was different to the approach she took with a group of tertiary students from the United States in the same week, with whom she focused on making links with their own country's history.

The promise of narrative inquiry for gallery educator professional learning

A goal of this research was to make visible gallery educators' internal dialogue and decision-making process. Narrative inquiry, supported by participant interviews, offered an effective way to do so. The process of transforming our field notes into the first iteration of the narrative helped us, as researcher-writers, to identify the areas of interest and puzzlement that we could only learn more about through dialogue and 'ongoing negotiation' (Clandinin & Huber, 2010) with Harriet. The second iteration gave further focus to our collaborative exploration of gallery educator pedagogy through discussion and integration of specific examples of practice. The use of multiple interviews, which contributed to successive iterations of the narrative, facilitated a more nuanced understanding of arts-based pedagogy than could be achieved by member-checking a single-version narrative. As Harriet, prompted by the narrative, recalled her thoughts during the observed session, a more detailed picture emerged of her knowledge, goals and decisions. As these elements are often tacit, they cannot easily be identified or understood through external observations alone. Narrative inquiry offers a way to discuss participant co-researchers' lived pedagogical practice in a non-judgemental spirit of shared curiosity (Brown, Jeanneret, Suda & Andersen, 2017).

This research highlights some characteristics of narrative inquiry and effective narratives. Effective narratives are 'evocative' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744), artful and storied, offering readers resonant depictions of practice (Conle, 2000). While narratives can be affirming and should always be sensitive, to be of value to practitioners they should also be unresolved, reflective, and questioning (Brown, Jeanneret, Suda & Andersen, 2017; Conle, 2000). Acting as 'third parties', narratives can offer practitioners opportunities to step outside their practice and to focus on meaningful pedagogical issues from different perspectives.

Gallery educators are rarely afforded the opportunity to, literally, 'read' their practice in the detailed and concrete forms used by narrative inquiry (Barone, 2000). In the final interview with Harriet, we asked her what value the process had for her as an educator and she offered two insights. The first, touched on earlier, was that narrative inquiry revealed and offered her a practical way to discuss the tacit and often unacknowledged aspects of her arts-based

pedagogical practice. It affirmed that although she often responds seemingly intuitively to what is happening in gallery education sessions, these responses are informed by knowledge and experience. The second insight was that by making the familiar strange, narrative inquiry helped her to see her practice in a new light, raising questions and challenging her to do some things differently, two outcomes that are linked.

Harriet reflected that she reads the mood of a room of children and that, usually, it would be difficult for her to articulate the explicit thinking behind her actions during a gallery education session. The group's fatigue, described by the narratives, had, in the moment, been felt by herself as a change in energy that required her to move on. The narratives reminded Harriet that to do so she is 'always reading body language, reading mannerisms and gesture, reading whether there's a conversation going on between the kids; where they're looking, where their eyes are focused.' While acknowledging that she had a valid reason for cutting short the encounter at *Ngayarta Kujarra*, Harriet noted that the narratives and discussions prompted her to question this decision and to reflect that when educators pay too much attention to realising their pre-planned goals they can stop responding to students. Narrative inquiry highlighted for her the importance of 'teachable moments'—of not always completing the idea that is in her head, of sometimes focusing on one aspect of the artwork in more detail, and of 'allowing that organic process to unfold a bit more and trusting the audience more.'

Engagement with narratives offers a resonant way for practitioners to engage in research, as Harriet noted, saying that it is a 'luxury to have people look closely at your practice, to reflect it back to you and to discuss it.' While not initially a goal, this narrative was one of three included in a professional learning resource generated by this research that has been responded to positively by the gallery educators. While noting the worth of the researchers' external eye, we asked Harriet if she and the other educators would also find value in writing and sharing their own narratives about their personal or shared practice. Her gallery educator peers are a collegiate group of practitioners who routinely share strategies, observe each other's teaching and engage in informal discussions about their work. Harriet agreed that writing and reviewing narratives would be useful and enjoyable to them, speculating that with sufficient time built into educator practice, it would encourage dialogic learning and foster deeper reflective practice amongst both established and new members of the team. While narrative inquiry presents an effective tool for gallery educators to reflect on, share and shape their practice, without dedicated time to observe, write and share thoughts with others, the possibilities of this method are, however, limited.

Conclusion

Informing and enhancing gallery education requires a shared understanding of the complexity of a dynamic practice (Pringle, 2006) that is rarely articulated in sufficient detail, reducing

opportunities for gallery educators to develop and share their expertise with others (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011). This investigation of a small yet significant experience in a gallery education session foregrounds issues about gallery educator pedagogy and narrative inquiry. It draws attention to the pedagogical tact of educators who make in-the-moment judgements about what is in the best interests of individual and groups of children, influenced by the practitioners' personal beliefs and knowledge, the artwork, group dynamics, time and space. It points to the importance of understanding student learning and gallery educator practice through consideration of the holistic, multi-dimensional experience of gallery visits, rather than through analysis of isolated verbal exchanges, and the usefulness of narrative inquiry to do so. The contribution of a participant researcher throughout the narrative inquiry process reflects an ethical position that values their contribution to the research and indicates how such relationship building may enhance the insights that can be gleaned from observations and interviews. This collaborative research practice highlights the affordances and demands of narrative inquiry for effective gallery educator reflection and professional learning.

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About the Authors

Dr. Jennifer Andersen is a theatre maker, arts educator and researcher. Her theatre making practice is centred around creative exchanges with children and families in community settings. Jennifer is a drama lecturer at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne. She has worked on numerous research projects there investigating actor practice, out-of-school arts education experiences and pedagogies, and narrative inquiry.

Dr. Marnee Watkins is a Senior Visual Arts education lecturer in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, working as a mid-career researcher, teaching academic and artist teacher; contributing to undergraduate, postgraduate and university-wide subjects, research supervision and arts-based research. Marnee's practice reflects a deep appreciation of how research and engagement with learning communities informs her teaching. Her teaching/research praxis embodies multi-disciplinary teaching with art and visual literacy at its heart, teacher artistry, relational pedagogy, intergenerational art collaborations, artful inquiry, reflective practice, and teacher professional learning.

Dr. Robert Brown is a senior lecturer in the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne. His ongoing research interests are interconnected and include; child, youth and family engagement, artful pedagogies, creativity and play, cultural citizenship and teacher reflective practice. Drawing from methodologies including participatory action research, narrative inquiry and ethnography, Robert has led multi-disciplinary projects centred on young people's arts-based engagement and learning in early childhood, school and community contexts. Robert's current research is focused on engagement and learning in

museums and galleries and the experience these institutions afford to young people, families, artists, museum educators and teachers.

Dr. John Quay is an associate professor in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, Australia. His research and teaching draw insights from philosophy of education to inform educational practice in areas including but not limited to outdoor education, physical education and environmental education.

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