

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Narrative Beginnings

Throughout my adult life, I have been fascinated with museums and other places of informal learning, such as zoological parks, botanical gardens, science centers,¹ and art galleries. Although museums have played a significant role in my adult life, I cannot put my finger on what it was that sparked my interest in museums. I have only one childhood memory of visiting a museum. It occurred when I was five or six years old, when my family accompanied another family to the Museum of Science and Industry—a very large museum located in Chicago, Illinois, a two-hour drive from our home. The strongest memory I have of my day at the museum was picking up a telephone and speaking with Mickey Mouse. At the time, I believed it was the real Mickey on the other end of the phone. I also remember walking through a huge model of a human heart and hearing the loud thump-thump, thump-thump. The only other memories I have of the day relate to where we ate after the museum visit—at a place called the Pickle Barrel. I do not recall what sense I made of that experience back then, whether I understood what a museum was, or what I was supposed to take away from the visit. It is difficult to say what, if any, impact that museum experience had on me. I do not have any other memories of visiting a museum as a child—not even of going on school field trips to museums.

I know my parents must have influenced my interest in museums. They are both voracious readers with a wide range of interests, particularly in the areas of the arts, history, and medicine. Their passion for learning and the arts is something that

¹ American English spelling has been used throughout to reflect my dual citizenship and identity. Australian English spelling has been used for study participants.

I have witnessed throughout my lifetime. While growing up, our house was filled with the sounds of classical music and opera. Somewhere in my consciousness I must have been aware of my mother's interest in art. I have vivid memories of my father and mother discussing artworks featured on the cover of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a tradition that continues today. As a child, I can also remember my mother in her role as a "picture lady," taking art into primary school classrooms. It was a mysterious activity; one day each month she would leave the house carrying works of art and disappear for an hour or two. Her passion for art and continuous pursuit of it throughout her life, despite the struggles and strains of bringing up four children born in quick succession, is evidenced today through her work as a docent at the Art Institute of Chicago.

My mother's history of volunteerism around the arts has also been a constant in my life. Over the years, her volunteer work has included serving on the Board of the local art museum, caring for a university art collection while working on an advanced degree in art history, and providing in-school talks for a chapter of the Lyric Opera. Although I did not directly witness her volunteer work, she modeled a particular type of engagement with the arts that was different from being an audience member—active engagement that focused on learning and contributing in personally meaningful ways through the process of volunteerism.

When I was in my early twenties, I started volunteering as a docent at a zoological park in Cleveland, Ohio. At that point in my life, I had a strong interest in the natural world and a growing interest in pursuing a career in education. As a docent, one of my duties was to provide school groups with guided tours. Over the course of the four years working at the zoo, I guided a large number of tours. I loved the experience of taking children through the park, sharing information about

the animals, and hearing and watching their reactions to seeing rare and exotic wildlife.

A few years later, after moving back to Illinois, I was hired as an educational program assistant at the Brookfield Zoo, located in a suburb outside of Chicago. Although my job was primarily preparing teaching materials, I also had the opportunity to do some teaching. For one of the programs, I played the role of a scientist who engaged a tree (I was too short to be the tree) in a conversation about the importance of saving tropical rainforests. Through that experience, I became aware of the ways in which drama can be used to engage children in informal learning environments. One of the puzzlements I had during this time was wondering what effect these experiences had on children. Did they leave having positive feelings about zoos? Would their experiences at the zoological park translate into a deeper concern for the preservation of animals and the environment?

After another move, this time to Connecticut, I made the switch from working at zoos to working at science centers—first as an educator at a science-based school for gifted children, and later as the manager of the Scout and overnight programs at the Science Center of Connecticut. Early on, I struggled to understand what it was that I wanted children to get out of their experiences. I ultimately decided that my main goal was to stimulate children's interest in science. Consequently, I worked to design educational experiences that were highly enjoyable. The most popular program I developed was a “mystery” sleepover where, during the night, children solved a crime using a variety of forensic science techniques. While working at science centers, more questions emerged. I queried which methods of delivery were most effective in engaging children in learning about science. I wondered if simply having fun doing science was a good enough outcome. As with my experiences at zoological parks, I wanted to know what

impact, if any, these experiences had on the children who participated in the programs. I continued to struggle to understand the potential of these experiences.

After moving to Brisbane, Australia, in 1998, I volunteered in the Education Section of the Queensland Museum. After a short period of time, I was hired as an educator. It was there that I was exposed for the first time to the fascinating work that goes on in a museum, especially in the area of research. I can remember my reaction of utter amazement when I saw the hundreds of glass bottles filled with little dead animals during a behind-the-scenes tour of one of the collection areas. I felt privileged to be in such close contact with historically and scientifically significant specimens and artifacts. While there, working with school groups, I often wondered what thoughts were going through children's minds as they encountered dinosaur skeletons, "olden day" objects, and preserved animal specimens. The most common question children asked me was, "Is it real?" I found myself questioning the effectiveness of the traditional teaching strategies used to deliver educational programs (teacher-led workshops and tours) in maximizing opportunities to excite and stimulate young learners. Once again, I wondered what it was that children were getting out of these excursions. Would these experiences in any way shape future experiences?

My career path took a turn when I was hired as a research assistant—working on a project² focusing on young children's learning in museums (see Anderson, Piscitelli, & Everett, 2008; Piscitelli, Everett, & Weier, 2003). A completely new and stimulating world opened up for me. During the course of that project, the research team, along with community and school partners, took children on field trips to a variety of museums—natural/social history, science, and art. It

² *Young Children's Interactive and Informal Learning in Museums: A Joint-venture Research and Training Program*. Australian Research Council: Project ID # C10024104.

was during this time that I became interested in children's responses to art. I was astonished to see young children highly engaged in an art museum setting—a place that is not known for either hands-on exhibits or large dinosaur skeletons. It has been six years since the completion of the project, and I have often wondered if or how their museum visits influenced the lives of those children. Will they draw on these experiences later in life? Did the nine visits to three different types of museums over the course of one school year serve to enculturate them into the world of museums? Are any of those children regular museum-goers today?

After that project ended, I continued to work in the area of museum visitor studies—conducting studies evaluating the effectiveness of educational resources and programs (see Everett, 2005; Everett & Piscitelli, 2006). In addition to evaluation studies, I also worked on research projects that focused on adult learning in museums. These experiences raised questions concerning the ways in which adults engage with museums. What are their reasons for visiting? What are their preferred ways of engaging with a museum? What value do they place on their museum experiences? Although these studies provided answers to some questions, other questions remained unanswered.

I carried these questions with me to my next place of residence, Hobart, Tasmania. Upon my arrival in Hobart, I searched for opportunities to continue my work in the field of visitor studies. During my first week of living there, I arranged a meeting with the one person I identified as conducting research in the area of arts education, Professor Margaret Barrett. That meeting changed my life course. During our conversation, Margaret and I explored my interest in museums and my curiosities about museum visitors. By the time I left her office, I was headed down the path that led me to explore these curiosities with seven individuals who visit the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Through both my personal and professional experiences, I have come to understand the potential museums have in providing visitors with truly unique, powerful, and personally meaningful experiences—a potential that I feel is currently underutilized. I know there are many people like me who enjoy making regular visits to museums. I have often wondered, in those cases where people have a special affinity for visiting museums, how does that interest form? In what ways do they engage with museums? What do they get out of their museum experiences? What brings them back? My passion for museums has led me to investigate these questions. Through the stories of people who share my interest in visiting museums, I hope to put more pieces of the museum visiting puzzle together.

Background to the Study

Historically, museums and art galleries (henceforth, museums³) have served as important sites for cultural engagement. The role of museums in society has changed considerably from their inception to modern day times. They have evolved from places that once served the interests of cultural elites to public institutions with a mandate to serve all sectors of the community (Casey & Wehner, 2002). Despite the significant role they play in society, museums today are faced with a number of challenges. Some of these challenges stem from reduced government funding, resulting in increased pressure to attract diverse audiences and a need to justify their public value (Goulding, 2000; Pitman, 1999). Other challenges may be attributed to the rapidly changing society in which we live—changes in demographics, lifestyle and leisure time activities, and communication and technology (Casey & Wehner, 2002; Fewster, 2005; Macdonald & Fyfe, 1996; Paris, 2006).

³ For the purpose of this study, the word museum encompasses history, art, and science museums.

Because of these challenges, museums have had to address issues of sustainability and re-examine their role and mission. In response, many museums have shifted their focus away from the collection of objects and have adopted a strong visitor focus, choosing instead to emphasize their educational role (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). As a result of this shift, museums are currently searching for ways to relate to their audiences and engage with the public (Orr, 2004). There is much debate over the future of museums, the direction museums should take and the sorts of experiences they should provide visitors. Some suggest that in order to compete with other leisure destinations museums need to move away from information-based exhibits and move towards experience-based (Ansbacher, 1999) or “edutainment” models (Mintz, 1994). Roberts (1997) argues for museum educators to move away from the traditional methods of transmitting information and instead employ methods that involve the construction of narratives that encourage personal meaning-making. Others suggest adopting a stronger social role—providing communities with a place to gather and discuss contemporary issues in order to “affect the quality of life in the here and now” (Weil, 1999, p. 248).

One factor that contributes to the issue of museum sustainability is that only a select portion of the population visit museums. Treinen (1996) contends “the group of potential visitors that can be motivated to visit a museum is rather small; between 15 and 20% of the adult urban population” (as cited in Reussner, 2003, p. 103). Because of this low participation rate, museum audience development goals include such aims as broadening and deepening participation (Reussner, 2003). Consequently, the returning⁴ visitor is increasingly viewed as an important segment of the visiting public (Bradburne, 2001; Henry, 2000). Wood and Rentschler (2003)

⁴ In this study, a “returning” visitor refers to an individual who makes return or repeat visits to one museum. The term “regular visitors” refers to people who visit any number of museums on a regular basis.

argue that “Museums need repeat visitors; visitors who not only return, but also bring new generations of visitors with them” (p. 534).

These challenges mean museums must seek new ways to stay relevant, to attract and retain visitors, and to secure their position as important cultural institutions. In the context of these challenges, researchers have called for studies to help construct a more complete view of the museum visitor’s experience. Goulding (2000) states, “In the present climate, the need to understand the nature of the museum experience has never been greater” (p. 261). Csikszentmihalyi, Hetland, and Karaganis (2003) contend that “Understanding the *effects* of different arts activities—arts curricula, particular exhibits, museums more generally—is an essential contribution to the lives and future of these institutions” (p. 4). Other researchers affirm this imperative to better understand visitors (see Dierking, Falk, & Ellenbogen, 2005; Pekarik, 2007; Silverman & O’Neill, 2004). Given the current economic conditions, particularly declining numbers of visiting tourists, the significance of the local audience has increased dramatically as a factor in museum sustainability (Vogel, 2009). Thus, research that seeks a better understanding of the returning visitor is of vital importance.

Although the field of visitor studies⁵ has grown rapidly over the last few decades, there are still significant gaps in our understanding of the museum experience. Several factors contribute to these gaps. First, much of the research is either survey research that is used to collect statistical data for demographic profiles, or evaluation studies used to measure the effectiveness of specific exhibitions and programs (Goulding, 2000; Roberts, 1997). Few studies employ methodological approaches that provide in-depth accounts of museum experiences.

⁵ Visitor studies is a hybrid discipline drawing on theory from sociology, psychology, education, marketing, management, communication, and leisure studies (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999).

Second, much of what is known about the museum experience is derived from studies that have been guided by a limited view of the “positive outcomes” that arise from a museum visit, focusing primarily on cognitive learning outcomes. Far less is known about the broader range of experiences and benefits museum visits provide. Third, much of the research has been conducted with single visit participants (Ellenbogen, 2003), and consequently, provides a limited “snapshot” view of the museum visitor and the visitor experience. Although researchers have investigated “long-term” impacts of museum visits (Anderson, Storksdieck, & Spock, 2007), there is little research that has involved probing the role museum experiences play in the larger context of people’s lives.

Given that one of the imperatives of visitor research is to more fully understand visitors’ expectations, motivations, and experiences in order to design effective museum experiences that result in increased participation and visitation, it is crucial to ask visitors who visit museums on a regular basis “What brings you back?” Surprisingly few studies have been conducted with regular visitors. Even fewer studies have investigated visitors who make return visits to one museum, the focus of this study. As a consequence of the limited amount of research focusing on regular visitors, there are gaps in our understanding about this audience in general, and significant gaps in our understanding of individuals who return to the same museum. Consequently, little is known about how visitors form and sustain continuing relationships with cultural institutions such as a museum.

Significance of the Study

For museums to effectively confront current challenges, a critical issue that needs further investigation is the exploration of relationships visitors form with museums. This study seeks to understand the nature of sustained relationships

individuals form with a single museum. The concept of *sustained engagement*, the central focus of this study, describes a relationship an individual establishes with a particular museum that is maintained through different life stages. As the study seeks to understand the individual's experience and meaning-making in their museum visitation and life contexts, a narrative research approach is adopted. Exploring the stories of individuals who have established a sustained relationship with a museum is vital to the process of developing strategies to attract and retain visitors, and deepen the local audience's engagement with the museum.

Because there is limited empirical data on the phenomenon of sustained visitor/museum relationships, this study employs an exploratory, qualitative case study approach (Stake, 1995). Within that broad methodological framework, a narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) is adopted to explore four key areas associated with sustained visitor/museum relationships:

1. the nature, characteristics, and features of a sustained relationship,
2. how these relationships form and develop,
3. what sustains these relationships, and
4. what contributions sustained visitation to a single museum makes to an individual's life.

The narrative approach employed to investigate these aspects of the phenomenon provides novel insights that extend our understanding of the museum experience by placing museum visiting in the context of people's lives. The setting for this study, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), is one of the oldest museums in Australia.⁶ It serves a combined purpose of displaying art, natural and cultural heritage collections. Because of its historical significance and diverse collections,

⁶ In Australia, public museums and art galleries are supported by State, Federal, and Local Government funding. General admission is free.

the TMAG provides unique opportunities to investigate museums as sites for sustained engagement.

Research Aims and Objectives of the Study

Through the investigation of sustained visitor/museum relationships in a single museum site, this study aims to understand:

- the ways individuals form, develop, and sustain a relationship with a museum,
- the ways individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum,
- individual's perceptions of positive outcomes that result from sustained engagement with a museum, and
- the ways museums serve members of their communities as sites for sustained engagement.

Findings from this study provide insights about the ways individuals form meaningful, continuing relationships with museums. This information can inform the development of museum strategies that aim to build long-term, sustainable relationships with members of the community, and reveal important features of museum experiences that may facilitate retaining visitors and reaching new audiences. Such outcomes may assist museums in securing their position as vital centers for cultural engagement.

Research Questions

This study aims to understand the life experiences individuals have with a museum that lead to the development and maintenance of sustained visitor/museum relationships. To meet the aims of the research, the study will be guided by the following questions:

1. What factors and circumstances contribute to the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?
2. What factors influence the development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?
3. In what ways do individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum?
4. What benefits are derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships?
5. What personal factors contribute to sustaining a visitor/museum relationship?

In this study, a distinction is made between how sustained visitor/museum relationships form (Research Question 1) and how they develop (Research Question 2). For the purpose of this study, the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship is viewed as those factors that contribute to the initiation of the relationship. The development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship is viewed as those factors that support the progression of that relationship—the visits an individual makes to one museum after the initial visit. Given this interest in individual experience and relationships with the institution of the museum, a narrative methodological approach was deemed to be most suitable to investigate the research phenomenon and the study's five guiding questions.

Summary

Museums today are faced with a number of challenges and are currently searching for ways to attract and retain audiences, and deepen engagement with their communities. This research project, *Guided tour: A study of museums as sites for sustained engagement*, explores the life experiences individuals have with and in museums in order to come to understand how relationships with museums form and

develop, the ways returning visitors engage with a museum, the benefits derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships, and how these relationships are maintained over time. By employing a narrative research approach, this study provides novel insights that extend our understanding of the museum experience. Such insights reveal important features of museum experiences that may facilitate retaining visitors and reaching new audiences, and assist museums in securing their position as vital centers for cultural engagement.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first chapter establishes the context for the exploration of this topic and provides an overview of the phenomenon under investigation. Chapter One also addresses the significance of the study as well as the study's aim and the questions that guide the research. Chapter Two presents a review of literature that informs the study in the areas of cultural/arts participation and engagement in museums in order to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for the study. Chapter Three describes the methodological assumptions that underpin the study, and provides a description of the study's design, implementation, and analysis processes. Chapter Four presents the research texts in the form of narrative accounts of seven individuals' life experiences with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings derived from thematic analysis of the narratives. Chapter Six presents a summary of the findings, including implications for museum practice and recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with insights gained, through the inquiry process, about research, place, and self.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter provides a research context for exploring the phenomenon of sustained visitor/museum relationships. It serves two purposes: to identify key issues related to each of the questions that guide the study, and to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework from which to explore the phenomenon. Because the phenomenon under investigation extends across the disciplines of education, marketing, and visitor studies, an interdisciplinary approach was employed to inform the research. The empirical and conceptual literature that serves as the context for this study is presented in two parts: 1) Cultural/Arts Participation and Museum Visitation, and 2) Engagement.

Cultural/Arts Participation and Museum Visitation

To provide a context for the study in the area of museum visitation, specifically, how visitor/museum relationships form and develop (Research Questions 1 & 2) and the benefits derived from such relationships (Research Question 3), I draw on three bodies of literature: cultural/arts participation, marketing/customer service, and museum visitor studies. In this section, I provide an overview of the issues related to the broad topic of arts participation. Then, I discuss issues specific to museum visitation.

Cultural and Arts Participation

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the area of cultural and arts participation. This interest stems, in part from reduced government support and the consequent need for arts and cultural organizations to provide funding bodies with evidence of the cultural, social, and economic impact of the arts (Scott, 2006).

Within this context, several major studies and reports on cultural and arts participation have been conducted both nationally (Saatchi & Saatchi, 2000) and internationally (Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, 2004; McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004; Walker & Scott-Melnyk, 2002). Review of these studies identifies key issues associated with individual participation in cultural and arts activity. Although these studies focus on the general topic of arts participation, their findings underpin and inform the discussion of issues surrounding museum visitation. Two studies present arts participation models (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001; Walker & Scott-Melnyk, 2002), two studies focus on the value of the arts (Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, 2004; Saatchi & Saatchi, 2000), and one study examines the benefits associated with arts participation (McCarthy et al., 2004).

Walker and Scott-Melnyk's (2002) conceptual model of arts and cultural participation illuminates the complexities involved in determining why individuals participate in cultural activities (see Figure 2.1). The authors contend that individual and community factors influence individual participation choices. Included among the individual factors are motivations (values, beliefs, and interests) and resources (skills, free time, and money). Community factors include "paths of engagement"—how individuals make initial contact with cultural institutions, and "structures of opportunity"—programs and events available in the community. Walker and Scott-Melnyk argue that these factors combine to determine the methods of participation, the types of activities, and the venues in which individuals participate.

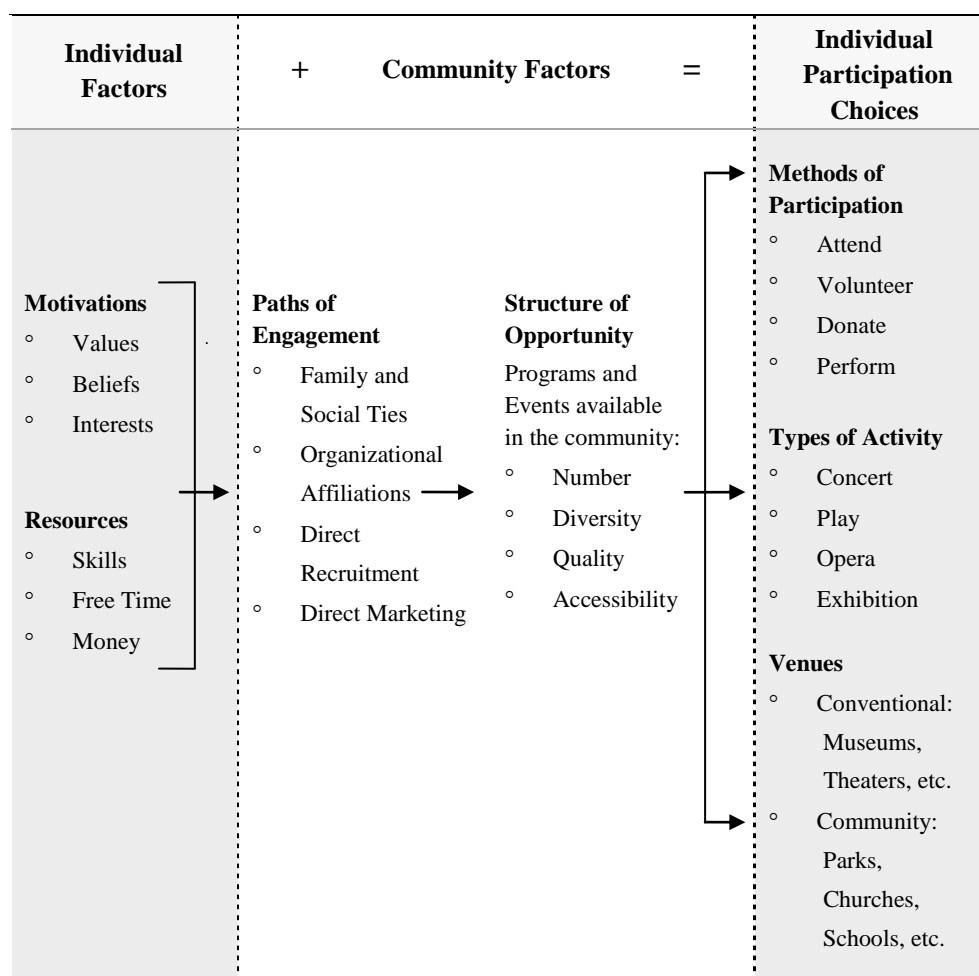


Figure 2.1. Conceptual Model of Arts and Cultural Participation. From “Reggae to Rachmaninoff,” by C. Walker and S. Scott-Melnyk, 2002, p. 15.

McCarthy and Jinnett (2001) present a behavioral model to understand the complexities associated with arts participation. In their “participation model,” they identify four main stages as influencing an individual’s involvement in the arts (see Figure 2.2): background stage (socio-demographic factors, personality factors, past experiences, and socio-cultural factors), perceptual stage (personal beliefs, perceptions of social norms, and attitudes), practical stage (intention/decision to participate), and experience stage (participation, and reaction to experience). They argue that components within these four stages influence decision-making processes and provide feedback that informs future involvement.

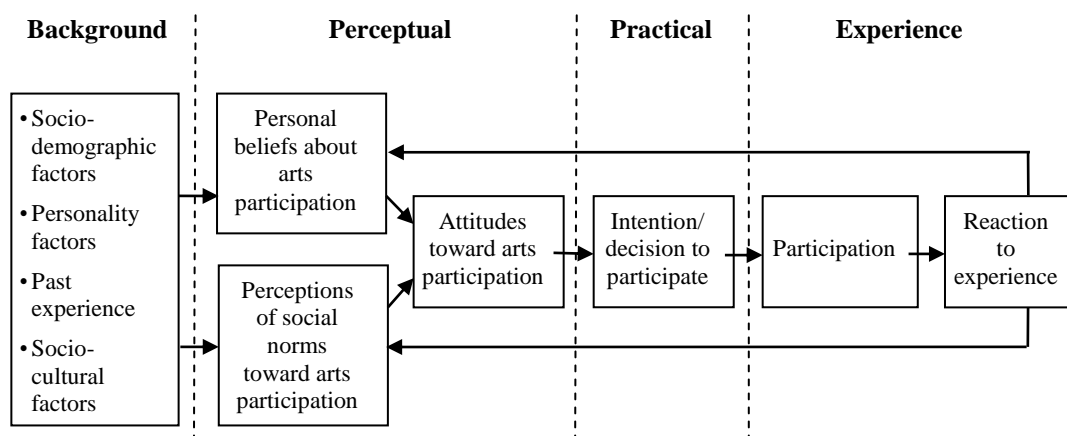


Figure 2.2. Behavioral Model of Participation. From “A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts,” by K. McCarthy and K. Jinnett, 2001, p. 24.

The review of these two models identifies key factors that influence cultural/arts participation: an individual’s background, perceptions of, motivations for, paths of, and opportunity for engagement, as well as the nature of, and personal response to the experience itself.

Other studies examine the role values and benefits play in arts participation. A study for the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (2002) investigated the meaning and value people ascribe to arts participation. The authors present a “Values Framework” in which they identify eight overlapping value clusters associated with arts participation: cognitive, physical, socio-cultural, aesthetic, emotional, spiritual, political, and identity formation (see Figure 2.3). Identity formation is viewed as an overarching value set that surrounds the other seven value clusters. The study’s authors contend that factors within the eight overlapping clusters constitute the diverse reasons for and benefits derived from participating in arts activities. This framework serves as a backdrop to illustrate and organize the numerous and wide-ranging values derived from arts participation. Additionally, it highlights the significant role the set of values associated with identity formation plays in arts participation.

Cognitive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lengthen attention span ◦ Learn to make choices ◦ Activate the imagination ◦ Connect ideas ◦ Improve analytical skills ◦ Improve communication skills 	Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Exercise/stay fit ◦ Sensory pleasure, stimulation ◦ Sexual arousal ◦ Relax, de-stress ◦ Acquire new technical skills ◦ Improved coordination, movement skills ◦ Improved body image ◦ Gain a sense of possibility for human capacity 	Socio-cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Civic/community pride ◦ A sense of place; belonging ◦ Learn about other cultures ◦ Understand more about your cultural heritage ◦ Better relationships with friends and family ◦ Access cultural memory through pageantry, ritual ◦ Communicate norms, beliefs ◦ Establish a legacy ◦ Remember things you've forgotten 	Aesthetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Transform a space into something new or better ◦ See more aesthetic value in your surroundings, ordinary objects ◦ Evolve your aesthetic sensibilities ◦ Awaken new creative outlets in others
Emotional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Process emotions, get in touch with your feelings ◦ Empathize with others ◦ Relive your childhood ◦ Have fun, feel happy ◦ Be comforted, take solace ◦ Be disturbed 	Spiritual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Escape, take a journey ◦ Express/strengthen your faith ◦ Renew, replenish energy; nourish the soul ◦ Transformation/out-of-body experience 	Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Civic engagement; political dialogue ◦ Get exposed to new ideas and opposing viewpoints ◦ Clarify your own values ◦ Transfer values to your children 	Identity Formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Enhanced sense of self; who I am, how I fit in ◦ Improved self-confidence, direction, focus ◦ Sense of accomplishment, achievement, pride ◦ Self-esteem, self-worth, dignity

Figure 2.3. The Value System Surrounding Arts Participation. Identity formation (in red) is the overarching value set. From “The Values Study,” Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, 2002.

A further study concerning the value of the arts, conducted for the Australia Council for the Arts (Saatchi & Saatchi, 2000), examined the value and meaning Australians ascribe to the arts. The study's findings provide an overview of Australians' attitudes towards the arts and arts participation. The study finds that the Australian population is almost equally divided between those who place a high or fairly high value on the arts and those who place a low or fairly low value on the

arts. Among people who value the arts, enjoyment, entertainment, and relaxation were the most common reasons provided for why they engage in arts activities. The study also finds a range of “higher order” issues that contribute to participation such as contributions the arts make to national identity, as well as “other intellectual, social and emotional benefits” (p. 31). A complementary research project investigating Australian children’s perceptions of arts participation, identifies five key factors children (aged 6-17 years) attribute to their participation in arts programs, specifically music participation and engagement: “a love of performance; a shared unity of purpose; a desire for challenge and ‘professionalism’; the quality of relationships developed and sustained in these settings; and the opportunities for individual growth and well-being that arise in these settings” (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007, p. 39). The findings from these two studies underscore the positive contributions arts participation make to the lives of individuals who value and choose to participate in arts activities.

A central question around which this study is organized is: What keeps visitors coming back? This issue is discussed in the arts participation literature. McCarthy et al. (2004) suggest that intrinsic benefits, such as enjoyment and pleasure, are central to sustained involvement. Whether or not the individual receives those benefits is determined by the quality of the experience. The authors argue that “the quality of experience is largely about getting engaged” and that “engagement, mental, emotional, and social engagement is critical to sustained participation” (Moore, Stone, & Ondaatje, 2004, pp. 8-9). The issue of sustained arts participation is of vital importance because there may be a direct link between the benefits participants receive and the frequency of participation. McCarthy et al. (2004) contend that the level of benefits, both intrinsic (e.g., captivation and pleasure) and instrumental (e.g., social and economic benefits), depends on the level

of involvement of the participant, and that many of the benefits of the arts are gained only through a process of sustained involvement. The authors identify two key factors that stimulate sustained involvement: early childhood experiences, and strong arts experiences that are marked by high levels of engagement.

Findings from these cultural/arts participation studies have three primary limitations in terms of their significance to this study. First, the focus of the present study is specifically museum visitation, not the broad topic of arts participation. Second, art museums are the principal museum type represented in this body of work; consequently, implications for other types of museums are not clear. Third, the work pertains primarily to adult participation, and thus its significance to children is unknown. In spite of these limitations, this review of the cultural/arts participation literature provides an important comparative context for the topic of arts participation in general, and identifies key issues directly relevant to the present study:

- 1) the complex set of factors that influences arts participation, including an individual's background, values ascribed to participation, motivations, perceptions, personal resources, paths of engagement, and opportunities available, and
- 2) issues specifically related to sustained participation/engagement, such as early childhood experiences, the quality of the experience, level and types of engagement, and the relationship between the level of benefits and sustained participation/engagement.

These key issues identified in the literature serve as a foundation for investigating the factors and circumstances that contribute to the formation and development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship.

Museum Visitation

Over the last decade, the field of visitor studies has grown rapidly (Hein, 1998). Consequently, there is a large body of research concerning museum visitors. A review of the visitor research literature provides an overview of the issues that relate specifically to museum visitation—who visits, motivations for visiting, and benefits derived from visiting museums. Equally important, this review highlights gaps in our understanding about regular museum visitors. In this section, I present key factors related to visitation: demographic attributes and psychographic issues. Then, I discuss issues related to benefits and outcomes derived from museum experiences. Lastly, I address issues that pertain specifically to regular museum visitors.

Demographic Attributes

Age, race, education, and income are demographic variables commonly used to describe museum visitors. Visitor studies reveal that typical museum visitors are well-educated, white professionals with higher than average household incomes (Black, 2005; Burton & Scott, 2003; Falk, 1998). Although children make up a high percentage of visitors coming to museums as part of family or organized school groups (Black, 2005; Falk & Dierking, 1992), teenagers and young adults are less represented in museums (Mason & McCarthy, 2006).

Statistics generated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics ([ABS], 2005-2006) concerning the Australian museum visiting public (15 years of age and older) provide a general profile of museum and art gallery⁷ visitors that is consistent with the general description of museum visitors. Attendance rates in Australia are highest for employed persons with higher income and education levels. Additional

⁷ In Australia, the term “art gallery” is used when referring to an art museum.

characteristics of likely museum visitors in Australia include being born overseas in English speaking countries and living in state capitals. More women than men visit art galleries. Females aged 45-54 have the highest attendance rates; women 75 years and over have the lowest attendance rates at art galleries. Males and females have similar attendance rates at other types of museums. Males between the ages of 18 and 24 have the lowest visitation rates at both museums and art galleries. There is a high attendance rate for museums by couple families with dependent children.

Regarding the frequency of visits, a majority of visitors make one or two visits per year. Fifty percent of people who visit museums visit once over a 12-month period; a further 25 percent make two visits per year. For art galleries, 37 percent of visitors make one visit, and an additional 27 percent make two visits per year. This indicates a considerable percentage of people make more than two visits per year—25 percent of museum visitors, and 36 percent of art gallery visitors. The ABS (2005-2006) survey does not provide any information about how many of these people are making return visits to a single museum.

Concerning children's (ages 5-14) museum visitation, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *2006 Survey of Children's Participation in Culture and Leisure Activities* reports similar attendance rates for boys and girls aged 5-11, with lower attendance by children aged 12-14. Nearly 50 percent (46.7) of children visited a museum or art gallery outside of school hours during the 12-month period prior to the survey being conducted. This suggests that many children are making visits to museums in contexts other than school excursions. This survey reported similar attendance rates for one parent and couple families (ABS, 2006a).

In regard to Tasmania (ABS, 2005-2006), the demographic attributes and attendance rates for Tasmanians visiting museums and art galleries correspond with the national statistics with two main exceptions: 1) The visitation rate for people 75

and over is higher than the national rate; and 2) While the attendance rate at art galleries by Tasmanians (24%) is very close to the national average (23%), the attendance rate at museums in Tasmania (31%) is higher than the national average (23%). These differences in attendance rates between Tasmania and the rest of the country may be explained, in part by the demographic reality of a higher percentage of people over the age of 65 residing in the state (ABS, 2006b). Tasmania's population is ageing at a faster rate than any of the other states or territories of Australia (ABS, 2008). People who are retired may be more inclined to visit museums. They may have more free time, be looking for opportunities to stay active, and have a greater appreciation for place, art, and history (Kelly, Savage, Landman, & Tonkin, 2002). The integrated nature of museums in Tasmania may also account for the higher attendance rates at museums. Tasmania's two largest cities have combined purpose museums—the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart, and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston.

Information concerning visitors of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the setting for the present study, stems primarily from anecdotal evidence and marketing-related surveys. A visitor survey⁸ (Hammond, 2005) conducted by the TMAG in 2005 found tourists (interstate and overseas) make up the largest percentage (64%) of visitors; local visitors represented approximately 28 percent of surveyed visitors. Of the Tasmanian visitors surveyed, 77 percent were from the local Hobart region. Consistent with the ABS (2005-2006) survey, the TMAG survey found attendance rates for women (60%) were higher than those for men. However, unlike the data from the national study, the TMAG survey reported

⁸ Surveys were distributed to 514 visitors, 15 years of age and older, from 1 November–18 November, 2005 (inclusive). The sample consisted of 201 male and 296 female visitors. The purpose of the survey was to gather information to assist the development of products for sale in the museum's gift and bookshop (Hammond, 2005).

highest attendance rates by people aged 50-59. With regard to frequency of visits, the TMAG study found 44 percent of surveyed visitors were returning visitors. Half of the returning visitors were from the Hobart region; nearly three-fourths (74%) of whom indicated that it had been less than 12 months since their previous visit. This suggests that many local visitors make more than one visit per year.

This review of the ABS and the TMAG surveys raises a number of issues for the present study. First, it finds that the Australian visiting public matches the general description of typical museum visitors—people who have higher income and education levels. These demographic attributes of typical museum visitors suggest that an imperative for the current study is to identify in what ways participants who visit one museum regularly may vary from the general demographic profile of museum visitors. Second, the review highlights the idiosyncrasies of museums and museum visitors in Tasmania. This is an essential consideration since these different contexts may create a different museum experience. Finally, it reveals that a high percentage of local visitors are returning visitors. This underscores the necessity to know more about this important, loyal audience: why they return, how they are engaging with the museum, and what benefits they derive from their visits. This information is critical for museums to shape experiences that better serve the needs of members of the local community.

Psychographic Issues

In the effort to refine understanding of visitors, museum researchers have extended their work beyond demographic attributes to investigations of psychographic characteristics of visitors (Falk, 1998; Hood, 1983), including visitor's motivations, values, and attitudes. This work provides insights into why people choose to visit museums. Over the years, motivations for visiting museums

have been classified in a variety of ways. Hood (1983) identified the following factors as influencing an individual's decision to participate in specific leisure time activities such as visiting museums: "being with people, or social interaction, doing something worthwhile, feeling comfortable and at ease in one's surroundings, having a challenge of new experiences, having an opportunity to learn, and participating actively" (p. 51).

Recent studies investigating motivations for visiting museums have expanded descriptions beyond social and learning motivations. Roberts (1997) contends people also visit museums for such things as reminiscence, introspection, and escapism. Packer (2004) places motivations for visiting educational leisure settings in four broad categories: social contact (being with friends and family), restoration (rest and relaxation, escape from everyday stress), entertainment (stimulation, novelty, escape from boredom), and personal development (learning, creativity, self-actualization). Other recent work calls attention to the role personal identity plays in motivating museum visits (Ellenbogen, 2006; Falk, 2006). Falk (2006) identifies five identity-related motivations for visiting museums: explorer, facilitator, experience seeker, professional/hobbyist, or spiritual pilgrim. He argues that these identity-related motivations influence what an individual experiences during and remembers from a museum visit.

Thyne (2001) investigated motivation-based values of museum visitors. In research undertaken at the Otago Museum in Dunedin, New Zealand, interviews were conducted with 18 adult visitors ranging in age from 18 to 70 years. The author states, "The most important finding in this study is the prevalence of socially-oriented values (being with family and friends), whereas traditionally a museum visit had been linked to more individualistic values, such as education and knowledge" (p. 116). This argument suggests a possible shift in focus for the type

of experiences museum visitors seek, and consequently, the social aspect of visits is an area that warrants further investigation.

Individuals' perceptions of museums have also been found to influence decisions about visiting museums and art galleries. Perceptions that deter visitation include seeing museums as places that are boring, unwelcoming (Black, 2005; Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, 2004), requiring special knowledge (Bell, 2002), and/or mental engagement (Burton & Scott, 2003). Exploration of these psychographic factors illustrates the broad range of issues that may influence museum visitation, and highlights the complexities of understanding why people choose to visit museums. However, this body of work does not specifically address motivations and perceptions of regular museum visitors, and it does not consider the combination of reasons visitors may have for museum visits. Importantly, the current study provides opportunities to extend our understanding not only of why people choose to visit museums, but why individuals continue to return to one particular museum.

Benefits and Outcomes

Although the body of visitor research provides information about the type of people who visit museums and their reasons for visiting, less is known about the benefits derived from museum experiences. In the present study, the term benefit is used to describe positive outcomes from museum visitation. The increased pressure on museums from funding bodies to provide evidence of their impact and worth has stimulated a growing interest in this area. To date, many researchers have focused their efforts on providing evidence of cognitive learning outcomes (e.g., Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998). Recently, however, researchers from a variety of disciplines within the field of visitor studies have identified the need to focus on a

broader range of positive outcomes that visitors derive from museum visits in order to better serve and communicate with their publics (Kotler, 1999; Packer, 2008; Silverman, 1995). In addition to learning, social, and aesthetic benefits, studies document that outcomes from museum experiences include such things as: increased capacity for reflection, restoration, and well-being; affirmation of one's sense of self; and increased feelings of connectedness to community and culture (Silverman, 2002). This work points to the diverse and significant ways museums contribute to visitors' lives and indicates the need to investigate this topic further.

There are a number of challenges associated with documenting, assessing, and reporting benefits derived from museum experiences. First, there are varying points of views among museum professionals on how to approach issues related to benefits and outcomes—e.g., what terminology to use, which outcomes to focus on, and the appropriate emphasis to place on assessing the impact of museum visits. Second, the scope of benefits is very broad. Benefits are discussed on a variety of levels—general and specific. Some writers stress overarching benefits such as the ways in which museums “contribute positively to the quality of individual human lives and to enhance the well-being of human communities” (Weil, 1999, p. 231). Other researchers highlight specific types of individual benefits, such as therapeutic (e.g., Silverman, 1999) or educational benefits (e.g., Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Rounds, 2004). Third, there are different timeframes used to discuss benefits. Many studies focus on the immediate effects from single visits; far less is reported on long-term effects (Anderson et al., 2007).

This gap in our understanding of the impact of museum experiences is due, in part to the difficulties associated with documenting benefits from museum visits—many benefits emerge gradually and over time (Weil, 1999). In a study conducted in Australia, Scott (2006) found many museum visitors value

“intangible” outcomes, such as opportunities to access the past, to develop perspective, and to engage in personal learning. Effective methods for assessing these benefits have not been developed. Despite such challenges, there is agreement that further research in the area of benefits is critical to the future of museums (Silverman, 1995; Weil, 1999). If museums are to make the case for the vital role they play in improving the quality of life for visitors, contributions they make need to be more fully documented. Through its narrative research design, this study aims to extend current understandings about benefits derived from museum visitation.

Profile of Regular Museum Visitors

One of the most important gaps in the existing research literature is that there is little treatment of regular museum visitors—people who engage with museums on a regular basis. What has been reported consists primarily of statistical data designed to provide demographic and psychographic profiles of visitors and non-visitors. For instance, Hood’s (1983) study found frequent visitors (defined as people who visit museums three or more times per year) preferred to engage in leisure activities that involved learning, challenges, and doing something worthwhile. Occasional visitors (defined as people who visit museums once or twice a year) and non-visitors were found to prefer leisure activities that involve social interaction and relaxation.

More recent studies have provided additional information and confirmed findings concerning the characteristics and motivations of regular museum visitors. Love of learning, and having an inquisitive and curious mind were identified as key factors in determining whether a person is likely to be a regular museum-goer (Davies, 2005; Spock, 2006). Other factors found to influence frequency of visits include: subject matter of interest (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council,

2004), self reported knowledge of art (Smith & Wolf, 1996), and the visitor's proximity to museums (Davies, 2003). A characteristic common among regular museum visiting adults is having been exposed to museums as children. Although many studies find early exposure to museums is a key factor in museum visitation later on in life (Burton & Scott, 2003; Gray, 1998; Hood, 1983), Verdaasdonk, van Rees, Stokmans, van Eijck, and Verboord (1996) report that recent experiences are "more determinant in frequency of visitation—than perhaps early socialization" (p. 186).

An additional factor that influences the frequency of visitation to museums is satisfaction. Studies reported in the marketing/customer service literature identify a set of issues that influence levels of visitor satisfaction in museums that include building loyalty; satisfying needs, wants, and expectations; and matching experiences to the skills and knowledge of visitors (Kotler, 2003; Rentschler & Reussner, 2002). In their work in the area of visitor satisfaction, Pekarik, Doering, and Karns (1999) identified four categories of satisfying museum experiences: object, cognitive, introspective, and social. Characteristics of satisfying "object" experiences include "seeing 'the real thing'" and "being moved by beauty." Aspects of satisfying "introspective" experiences include being transported to "other times or places," "feeling a sense of connectedness or belonging," and recalling past experiences and memories (p. 155). Given that context, satisfaction with museum experiences is an important topic to explore with participants in the present study.

"Regular Visitor" Studies

A review of the visitor research finds few studies focusing specifically on regular visitors. Of the studies investigating regular museum visitors, two focus on learning (Ellenbogen, 2003; Leinhardt, Tittle, & Knutson, 2000), and three studies

have a marketing focus (Burton, Louviere, & Young, 2008; McManus, 2001; Verdaasdonk et al., 1996).

Ellenbogen (2003) examined four families who frequently visit museums to determine what role visits to science museums play in family life. Participants were selected based on the criteria of being “frequent museum goers”—defined in the study as families who make six or more visits per year to science-related museums. The study employed combined methodological approaches of ethnographic research and discourse analysis. Findings suggest that families who make frequent visits to science museums not only use visits to shape understandings of science but to establish family identity.

Leinhardt et al. (2000) recruited 15 adults who were known to visit museums regularly to investigate museum learning. Participants were instructed to visit five museums over a period of approximately six months, and to write a personal description of each museum experience in a diary after each visit. Analysis of diary entries revealed that meanings made from interactions with objects and exhibitions are influenced by a combination of factors, including the purpose for the visit, response to the environment, identity, and “cognitive tools” employed, such as description or analysis. Intense experiences with objects occurred when the diarist “deliberately blurred the lines between the exhibit and themselves, developing a personal meaning for the object, or exhibit, or drawing an interpretation out into their own lives” (p. 26). Findings from these two studies highlight the important role identity plays in shaping museum experiences, and illustrate the personal nature of the meaning-making process.

Verdaasdonk et al. (1996) examined factors affecting choice and frequency of attendance by regular museum-goers. A survey was conducted with 298 adults—people who were regular visitors of the Noord-Brabant Museum, a museum located

in a southern province of the Netherlands. Questions pertained to respondents' socio-economic characteristics, and their experiences at the Noord-Brabant Museum and other museums. In this study, a distinction was made between infrequent museum visitors (people who make a maximum average of three museum visits per year) and frequent museum visitors (people who make an average of four or more museum visits per year). The study found that experiential variables, such as rebates on admission fees and preference for collections, were more likely to affect patterns of attendance among regular museum visitors than socio-economic factors.

A recent study conducted at two major social history museums in Australia also focused on choice and museum visitation (Burton et al., 2008). This research aimed to identify features of museum experiences that might serve to increase visitation of current visitors. Data were generated through 40 face-to-face interviews and an online survey (171 respondents). Through the application of choice modeling, the study suggests that strategies such as extended hours, joint ticket packages with other local cultural institutions, and rewards associated with frequency of visits would have a positive impact on visitation choices.

One study specifically investigates the issue of frequent visitation to a single museum. Conducted for the Education Section of the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum of fine and applied arts in London (McManus, 2001), the author asserts that, "No literature on frequent visitation defined as one or more visits annually to a particular museum could be found. The study reported here would appear to be a unique investigation in this field" (p. 42). McManus's aim was to "uncover information which might reveal how more people can be encouraged to become frequent repeat visitors to the V&A" (p. 4). The sample consisted of 104 visitors aged 16 and older who frequently attended the museum's educational programs.

Participants were surveyed by means of face-to-face interviews. During the interviews, visitors were asked questions concerning visiting patterns, reasons for visiting, and questions that related specifically to the program in which they were participating that day. One finding from the work that has particular significance to the present study asserts, “Clearly, frequent visitation is not a phenomenon that is linked to a single museum—these visitors are very experienced museum goers. Their loyalty may not be to particular museums but to museums as institutions” (p. 21).

Importantly, the current study provides opportunities to extend our understanding of visitation to a single museum by providing a different context and focus for studying returning visitors. The site for McManus’s study was the V&A, a museum located in a large city that has many museums. In comparison, the location for the current study is a smaller city with fewer options for visiting museums. Additionally, the V&A is a museum of art and design, whereas the TMAG’s collections encompass art, natural and social history. A further distinction from previous studies conducted with returning visitors is the focus of the present study on the sustained nature of visitation—understanding individual experience and engagement with a single museum across the lifespan.

Although these five studies provide insights concerning regular museum visitors, there are limitations to this small body of work. The studies have a propensity to focus on frequency and current museum experiences. They do not consider the dynamic nature of visitors’ visitation patterns and engagement with museums over time. As a consequence of the limited amount of research focusing on regular visitors, there are gaps in our understanding about this audience in general, and significant gaps in our understanding of individuals who make return visits to one museum, the focus of the current study.

An additional limitation of this body of work relates to the methodologies used in visitor research. Although researchers have called for studies to help construct a more complete view of the museum visitor's experience (Dierking et al., 2005; Goulding, 2000; Pekarik, 2007; Rennie & Johnston, 2004), few studies employ methodological approaches that provide in-depth, long-term accounts of the museum experience from the visitor's perspective. Much of the existing body of visitor research employs survey research to collect data for demographic profiles or evaluation studies to measure the effectiveness of specific exhibitions and programs (Goulding, 2000; Roberts, 1997). By employing narrative research, a methodological approach new to the field of visitor studies, this study provides novel insights that increase our understanding of the museum experience generally, and sustained relationships particularly.

In summary, the review of literature from the disciplines of cultural/arts participation, marketing, and museum visitor studies provides a context for investigating the phenomenon of sustained museum visitation, and raises important considerations for the present study. First, this work identifies numerous factors that influence participation and visitation, including visitor's personal characteristics and background, identity, interests, pathways, perceptions, motivations, prior museums experiences, and level of satisfaction. Within this context, there is a need to investigate how these and other factors influence the formation, development, and maintenance of sustained visitor/museum relationships. Equally important, the review highlights the need to document benefits that are derived from such relationships. This review also underscores the need for new methodological approaches to be employed to expand our understanding of the museum experience.

Engagement in Museums

Theoretical and applied research informs this study concerning the ways in which people engage with museums (Research Question 3). In framing the discussion concerning engagement, first I identify key conditions of John Dewey's philosophy of experience that provide a foundation for the way engagement is approached in this study. Second, I review current theories of engagement in museums that inform the study. Finally, I provide a description of how engagement is viewed in this study.

John Dewey: Conceptual Foundations of Engagement

The work of John Dewey continues to have relevance in a variety of educational settings including museums as evidenced in writings by a number of contemporary professionals working in the field of museum studies (Ansbacher, 1998, 2005; Cole, 1995; G. Hein, 2006; H. Hein, 2006; Roschelle, 1995). Dewey's aesthetic philosophy, therefore, provides the primary conceptual structure for my approach to engagement. In the discussion that follows, I identify key conditions of Dewey's theory of experience that directly relate to the ways visitors engage with museums.

A Transactional Event

At the center of Dewey's philosophy of education and aesthetics is his view of experience. For Dewey, experience involved "active and alert commerce with the world" (Dewey, 1934, p. 18). Dewey viewed experience as a transactional event, one in which human beings are in continuous interaction with their environment. According to Dewey, "life goes on in an environment; not merely *in* it but because of it, through interaction with it" (p. 12). From a Deweyian perspective, experience is "an involved, meaningful, and shared response to the world and to each other"

that takes place “within a social and cultural context, a ‘lifeworld’” (Alexander, 1987, pp. xvii-xviii).

An Experience

One of the most fundamental distinctions made by Dewey (1934), that has important implications for this study, is that made between ordinary experience and *an* experience.

Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and enviroing conditions is involved in the very process of living. Under conditions of resistance and conflict, aspects and elements of the self and the world that are implicated in this interaction qualify experience with emotions and ideas so that conscious intent emerges. Oftentimes, however, the experience had is inchoate. Things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into *an* experience. There is distraction and dispersion; what we observe, and what we think, what we desire and what we get, are at odds with each other. We put our hands to the plow and turn back; we start and then we stop, not because the experience has reached the end for the sake of which it was initiated but because of extraneous interruptions or of inner lethargy. In contrast with such experience, we have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment. Then and only then is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences. (pp. 36-37)

Although Dewey believed everyday experiences could and should result in *an* experience, he believed experiences associated with the arts lend themselves naturally to deeper felt experiences, experiences distinct in their immediacy, intensity, and clarity (Jackson, 1998). Museums serve as ideal environments for the type of experience Dewey describes—places where “distraction” and “dispersion” are removed from the environment. They are quiet places where visitors can escape everyday distractions and engage in focused attention and reflection. Such conditions provide an optimum setting for *an* experience to run “its course to fulfillment.”

Continuity and Unity

Dewey identified two factors as setting ordinary experiences apart from *an* experience: *continuity* and *unity*. Although he viewed an experience as a separate entity, distinguished in time from other occurrences, he also saw an experience as having *continuity*. An experience does not occur in isolation; it is linked to both past and future experiences. In addition to continuity, an experience is also set apart by its *unity*. During an experience, all the individual parts come together to form a unified whole. Dewey identified this unifying quality as aesthetic, an emotional quality that gives an experience its completeness and unity. He viewed emotions as qualities that, when significant, denote “a complex experience that moves and changes” (1934, p. 43). Museum experiences may also be characterized by their continuity and unity as they are linked to past and future experiences, and have an emotional, aesthetic quality.

Mind/Body Dualism

Dewey rejected the mind/body dualism. He argued that the idea of the separateness of mind and body “strengthens the conception which isolates the esthetic from the modes of experience in which the body is actively engaged with the things of nature and life” (1934, p. 275). He viewed thinking, acting, and feeling as intertwined—inseparable from each other. For Dewey, *an* experience was one in which the whole self is deeply engaged, practically, emotionally, and intellectually.

It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the others. The emotional phase binds the parts together into a single whole; “intellectual” simply names the fact that the experience has meaning; “practical” indicates that the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it. (pp. 56-57)

Dewey viewed experience as a multidimensional, embodied interaction with the world. Within this perspective, interaction in museum settings demonstrates the

multidimensional nature of engagement. During museum visits, visitors engage in a range of visual, auditory, and physical activity. Museums provide unique opportunities for visitors to be engaged cognitively, emotionally, aesthetically, socially, and physically—often all at the same time.

Perception

The heightened awareness that occurs during *an* experience, Dewey claimed, leads to increased understanding and meaning. Dewey identified *perception* as a key concept in the meaning-making process. He made a distinction between recognition and perception. Recognition, according to Dewey, was “perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely” (1934, p. 54). Dewey viewed perception as an active process of doing and undergoing—finding “relation between what is done and what is undergone” (1934, p. 47). During the undergoing process, described by Dewey as “taking in,” one reflects on the effect of the experience. It is through this process that meaning is made.

Dewey identified specific factors that influence meaning made from interactions with art: motor preparation, prior experience, intensity, and time. He described motor preparation as knowing what to look for in a work. He argued it was “necessary that there be ready defined channels of motor response, due in part to native constitution and in part to education through experience” (1934, p. 102). Thus, the more the viewer knew about an object, the richer its meaning (Jackson, 1998). Dewey also identified “prior experience” as shaping meaning derived from encounters with art. He argued that prior experiences are “funded in such a way that they fuse with the qualities directly presented in the work of art” (Dewey, 1934, pp. 102-103). This notion that prior knowledge and experience strongly influence the

construction of meaning elucidates the highly individual nature of aesthetic experiences.

The transformative power of encounters with art, according to Dewey, was influenced by the intensity of the experience. “When the quality of an experience is at its height or is more intense, so too is the value that we place on the object that stands at its center” (Dewey, as cited in Jackson, 1998, pp. 60-61). In his interpretation of Dewey, Jackson (1998) states that under ideal conditions the experience of engaging with an object “is often felt to have a religious or spiritual character” (p. 113). During such encounters, Dewey states, “We are carried beyond ourselves to find ourselves” (1934, p. 202). Dewey viewed the quality of the experience as not only influencing meaning made from the experience, but also playing a vital role in shaping future experiences (Cole, 1995).

Time, according to Dewey, was essential to the perception process. He argued that time spent with a work influenced the meaning derived from the experience, as “in no case can there be *perception of an object* except in a process developing in time” (1934, p. 182). Jackson (1998), drawing from Dewey, addresses the dynamic nature of perceiving works of art. He asserts:

Many works of art are also perceived as a whole on more than one occasion. ... Each successive rewitnessing ... is never exactly the same as the preceding one, for the perceiver has changed personally in the interim. ... The object of the perception may have undergone significant change as well. But the similarities between successive encounters are usually sufficient for the later event to be looked on as a repetition of the earlier one rather than as something entirely new. In seeking to understand how perception operates, what makes repetitious encounters interesting is the fact that earlier opinions and beliefs concerning the object may be modified or become unsettled by later ones. With repeated exposure a work of art may grow stale and tiresome, or, conversely, it may become increasingly enriched through the acquisition of new meanings. All such changes testify to the dynamic nature of perception, to its changing yet conservative character. (p. 58)

The issue of time spent with works of art has important implications for the present study, because as Jackson suggests, there may be personal benefits derived from

“repetitious encounters” with objects. The study of the nature of sustained engagement with a museum provides opportunities to explore such encounters.

Consummatory Phase

Dewey saw aesthetic experiences as having a consummatory phase that culminates with a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction. Expanding on this, Jackson (1998) explains the ways in which the phase after the experience shapes the meaning an individual takes away from an experience.

There are also emotional components to such closures, and they often extend beyond the culminating feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction. The experiences commonly leave us with things to think about, fond memories and lingering afterthoughts. These, too, take time, and they may often involve communicating with others, sharing opinions and comparing notes, affirming and sometimes contradicting someone else’s impressions of what had taken place. (p. 127)

According to Dewey, the aim of an aesthetic experience is growth—a change in the way one views the world. He considered an experience that resulted in change to be educative. With growth, Dewey claimed, comes a heightened sense of awareness and perception that carries over to future and everyday experiences, ultimately leading human beings to live more full and meaningful lives.

Implications of Dewey’s Work

Dewey’s aesthetic philosophy serves as a conceptual lens through which engagement can be viewed in this study. I draw on key themes in Dewey’s work to explore visitor engagement with museums. I suggest that a museum experience:

- is a transactional event that involves interaction between an individual and their environment,
- takes place within a social and cultural context,
- involves whole body, multidimensional engagement,

- is characterized by its continuity (connection to past and future experiences) and unity (its emotional, aesthetic quality),
- involves perception (personal meaning-making),
- has a consummatory phase that culminates with a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction, and
- results in change and growth.

These touchstone conceptualizations serve as the foundation for how engagement with museums is explored with the participants in the present study.

Current Theories of Engagement in Museums

In addition to Dewey's theory of experience, this study is also informed by current theories of engagement in museums. In spite of the large body of research focusing on the visitor experience, few studies provide a comprehensive view of visitor engagement. Many studies are limited in scope and investigate specific dimensions of engagement, such as cognitive or social, and pertain to only one particular visit or certain types of museums, such as science or art. Therefore, because the site used in this study is a combined museum, displaying art, social and natural history objects, I draw on two models, one art-based and one non-art-based to provide a frame for exploring engagement.

Aesthetic and Emotional Engagement

Though there are various models that describe aesthetic experiences, many of them focus on identifying specific stages of aesthetic development (e.g., see Housen, 2000-2001; Parsons, 1986; Wetzl-Fairchild, 1991). Because the focus of the present study is on aesthetic experiences, and not on aesthetic development, I draw on Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's (1990) "Conceptual Model of Aesthetic Experience" to guide the study in this area.

In a study commissioned by the J. P. Getty Museum and the Getty Education Institute for the Arts, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) sought to investigate aesthetic experience. The questions that guided the study were, “Is there such a thing as aesthetic experience? If yes, what are its distinguishing characteristics? Can people be helped to experience it more often?” (p. xiii). During the first stage of their study, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson developed a conceptual model of the aesthetic experience. At the center of their “Conceptual Model of Aesthetic Experience” is the concept of “flow.” The term “flow” describes intrinsically rewarding experiences in which people are deeply engaged. After comparing Beardsley’s (1982) criteria for aesthetic development with criteria for a flow experience, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) concluded that “flow and aesthetic experiences are indistinguishable from one another” (p. 9). In later work, Csikszentmihalyi identified specific factors as influencing intrinsically rewarding flow experiences in museums: interest; enjoyment; emotional, sensory and/or intellectual involvement; and positive feedback (Csikszentmihalyi & Hermanson, 1995).

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s description of aesthetic experience as flow has specific implications for the present study. First, it emphasizes the multidimensional qualities of engagement in museums. Second, it illuminates the central role enjoyment plays in intrinsically rewarding experiences. This feature is important given the possible link between intrinsic benefits and the frequency of participation in cultural and arts-related activities (McCarthy et al., 2004; Ostrower, 2005). It is acknowledged, however, that flow describes a certain type of experience visitors may have during museum visits. This study seeks to move beyond the concept of flow as the single explanatory point for engagement.

In addition to developing a conceptual model, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) sought to better understand the nature and conditions of aesthetic experience. Through their analysis of interviews conducted with 57 museum professionals about their responses to art, they identified four major dimensions of aesthetic experience: the perceptual, emotional, intellectual, and communicative. Their findings suggest that during encounters with art, viewers may experience more than one of these dimensions, although there may be a primary mode. For example, for some respondents, the emotional response was “the central aspect of the aesthetic experience” (p. 38).

For Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), the perceptual response focuses on elements of the work, such as form, line, color, texture, balance, and harmony. The emotional dimension was a central feature of participants’ aesthetic experiences. Although nearly every participant experienced an element of emotion, there was considerable variation in the intensity and variety of emotional responses. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson also observed “that the quality of emotional response may vary depending on how much time is spent with the work” (p. 40). Concerning the intellectual dimension of aesthetic experience, they found that viewers employ a wide range of cognitive approaches during their encounters with art. While some viewers prefer to use interactions with art to stimulate new questions and thought, others search for answers to specific questions related to theory, history and/or culture. The fourth dimension, communication, is described as “a multidimensional experience, one that integrates the visual with the emotional and the intellectual” (p. 62). Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson identify three primary ways viewers communicate with works: communication with the artist, communication with an era or cultures, and communication within the viewer—with self and others. Communication can take many forms including fantasy,

reminiscence, transcendence, and introspection. These insights about the dimensions of aesthetic experience highlight the diverse ways in which individuals respond to art.

Based on their analysis of the interviews with museum professionals, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) also came to understand the structure of an aesthetic experience—a structure they describe as a “process of fusion” (p. 18).

The aesthetic experience occurs when information coming from the artwork interacts with information already stored in the viewer’s mind. The result of this conjunction might be a sudden expansion, recombination, or ordering of previously accumulated information, which in turn produces a variety of emotions such as delight, joy, or awe. The information in the work of art fuses with information in the viewer’s memory—followed by the expansion of the viewer’s consciousness, and the attendant emotional consequences. (p. 18)

Some of the markers of Dewey’s (1934) descriptions of the nature and quality of *an* experience have been taken up in Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s approach to aesthetic experiences. Both view aesthetic experiences as multidimensional engagement—involving focused attention, a heightened state of consciousness, and a fusing of past and present experiences. In addition, the emotional quality of aesthetic experience is fundamental to both descriptions. Because of this strong link between emotion and aesthetic experience, in the present study, aesthetic engagement is viewed as encompassing the emotional dimension of engagement. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s work not only reinforces Dewey’s description of aesthetic experience, but also identifies factors that influence intrinsically rewarding museum experiences, and highlights the diverse and idiosyncratic ways in which individuals respond to art.

Cognitive and Social Engagement

Current museum learning theories are influenced by constructivist and socio-cultural perspectives on learning (Black, 2005; Kelly, 2002). Visitors are

viewed as actively constructing meaning from their experiences (Cole, 1995; Hein, 1998). “Meaning emerges as interplay between individuals acting in a social context and the mediators—tools, talk, activity structures, signs and symbol systems—[that] are employed in those contexts” (Schauble, Leinhardt, & Martin, 1997, p. 4).

Falk and Dierking’s (2000) Contextual Model of Learning (CMOL) in museums provides a framework for understanding cognitive and social engagement. They contend that factors within the contexts of the personal, socio-cultural, and physical interact over time to shape an individual’s learning in and from museums. Each visitor enters a museum with a unique personal “story line” or “entrance narrative” (Doering & Pekarik, 2000, p. 261). Falk and Dierking identify motivations and expectations, interest, prior knowledge and experience, and the degree of choice and control an individual has over learning as factors situated within the visitor’s personal context. All of these factors influence the ways in which visitors engage in museums. For example, museum visit motivation has been shown to influence visitor behavior and learning (Falk, 2006). Additionally, visitors are more likely to engage with exhibits that connect with interests, prior experiences and knowledge. This suggests that not only is each visitor’s experience different, but that the nature of an individual’s engagement during different visits may vary.

Factors within the socio-cultural context also influence visitor engagement. Because many visitors experience museums as part of a social group, the social dimension of engagement is particularly important in museum settings. Falk and Dierking (2000) and other researchers (e.g., Leinhardt, Crowley, & Knutson, 2002; Packer & Ballantyne, 2005; Silverman, 2000) contend that the social aspect of museum visits influences what visitors learn and take away from museum experiences. For instance, how conversations between group members can stimulate

discussion and expand ideas with companions during a museum visit (Feinberg & Leinhardt, 2002).

In museum settings, social interaction can take many forms. It can take place within the social group; it can also be facilitated by others outside the group. Social interactions children have with adults and peers during a museum visit play an important role in shaping learning outcomes (Dierking, 2002; Piscitelli & Weier, 2002). A visitor's cultural background also influences museum learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Visitors bring with them culturally-based ways of knowing and doing. The way visitors perceive themselves and the world around them influences the way in which they engage with museums and the meaning they make from their museum experiences (Falk, 2006; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Leinhardt et al., 2000).

In addition to personal and socio-cultural contexts, Falk and Dierking (2000) find factors within the physical context also influence museum experiences. These factors include advance preparation, setting, design, and subsequent reinforcing events and experiences. Particularly concerning school visits, advance preparation in the form of orientation and teacher pre-visit information packages have been shown to have positive effects on children's learning outcomes (Anderson & Lucas, 1997; Balling & Falk, 1980; Bitgood, 1991). The feel, comfort, and design of the physical spaces within the museum building shape levels, duration, and type of engagement experienced during museum visits. For example, certain exhibit design features, such as interactive spaces where family members can engage with one another, have been found to facilitate family learning (Borun, 2002). Furthermore, the range of visual, auditory, and physical activity that many museum environments provide create opportunities for embodied engagement (Joy & Sherry, 2003; vom Lehn, 2006; Weier & Piscitelli, 2003)—experiences in which the whole self is engaged (Bresler, 2004; Dewey, 1934). An additional factor situated within the

physical context that influences learning outcomes is subsequent reinforcing events and experiences. Falk and Dierking contend that reinforcing events that take place months or years after the museum visit are as critical to the learning process as the visit itself. This framework for understanding cognitive and social engagement emphasizes the complex set of factors that shape an individual's museum experiences.

In summary, the models and research described in this section serve to highlight key aspects of engagement in museums. First, aesthetic responses to art are multidimensional and diverse. Second, numerous factors affect visitor engagement with museums. Key factors that influence engagement in museums identified from the models include prior knowledge and experience, motivations and expectations, interests, choice and control during the visit, social interaction, exhibition design and content, levels of enjoyment and involvement, and subsequent reinforcing events and experiences. A review of these studies and models also underscores the unique nature of each individual's museum experiences. Although this body of research provides valuable insights into the ways in which visitors engage with museums, it does not serve to inform the broader view of visitor engagement, that is, how museum visits are situated within the context of visitor's lives. Investigating sustained relationships visitors have with a single museum over time provides an opportunity to extend understandings of the ways in which people engage with these institutions.

Description of Engagement

Researchers' perceptions concerning visitor engagement continue to evolve. Developments in museum visitor studies have seen a move away from viewing visitors as a passive audience to one of viewing people as actively engaged in the

meaning-making process (Hein, 1998; Rounds, 1999; Rowe, 2002). To date, much of the audience research concerning visitor engagement has focused on cognitive engagement and learning, particularly in science and history museums. This focus has been driven, in part by the need for museums to provide funding bodies with evidence of educational value and worth. Although much of the research focuses on learning, in recent years, museum professionals have argued for adopting an expanded view of what constitutes visitor engagement—placing learning in a broader context, one that encompasses a wider range of experiences. For example, Ansbacher (2000) argues that learning in museum contexts includes such things as “simply remembering the experience, heightened curiosity, changed attitudes, developing intuition or ‘physical knowledge’, achieving personal understanding” as well as “acquiring factual knowledge” (para. 5). Hooper-Greenhill (2004) views learning in museums as occurring “across a broad range of dimensions involving knowledge, skills, aesthetic responses and emotions” (p. 163) and resulting “in a diverse and multi-faceted range of outcomes” (p. 158). This expanded view of visitor engagement is essential to understanding the variety of ways in which visitors engage with museums.

Given these perspectives on broadening the description of engagement, for the purpose of this study, the term *engagement* describes the multidimensional interaction between an individual and a museum environment that involves any or all of the following dimensions: aesthetic, emotional, cognitive, social, and physical. This study views the dimensions of engagement as occurring simultaneously. However, in order to gain an understanding of the role specific dimensions play in an individual’s engagement with a museum, dimensions of engagement in this study are explored and discussed separately. The term

engagement in this study describes both immediate experiences as well as engagement over time.

Sustained engagement.

The concept of *sustained engagement* is the central focus of this study. It is a concept that has not been formalized in the literature. In its current usage, it has been employed to describe goals museums have for visitor interaction with specific exhibits or works of art (Bradburne, 2001), or as a general aim for museums—to aim for sustained engagement with visitors (Pitman & Hirzy, 2004). To date, discussion in the literature concerning individuals who return to the same museum on more than one occasion has focused primarily on occurrence and frequency (e.g., McManus, 2001; Verdaasdonk et al., 1996). This study moves beyond the parameters of how many times or how often visits occur, and instead focuses on the nature of the engagement returning visitors have with a single museum over time.

In this study, sustained engagement is considered to be a relationship an individual establishes with a particular museum that is maintained through different life stages. Although there may be periods when these individuals do not visit, they reconnect with the museum at various points in their lives. This perspective on sustained engagement is crucial given the imperative provided by the charter of museums to serve their local communities and to serve individual members of that community through their lifetime in the community—a directive often unfulfilled in contemporary museum practice. This study fits into the broader discussion of museum sustainability. Insights from the study hold potential to reveal important features of museum experiences that may facilitate building and strengthening relationships with visitors. Such outcomes may assist museums in securing their position as vital community and cultural resources.

Summary

In conclusion, this review of literature from the fields of education, marketing, and visitor studies establishes the conceptual and empirical context for the study. The review documents key issues associated with the phenomenon of sustained visitor/museum relationships in the areas of visitation and engagement. In addition, it identifies critical gaps in our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Little research has been conducted on how relationships with a museum form, how those relationships are developed and sustained, in what ways return visitors engage with the museum, and what benefits are derived from such relationships. The review also provides theoretical perspectives to guide the research, and a description of the concept that lies at the center of the study, that of *sustained engagement*. Finally, the review confirms the appropriateness of the methodological approach adopted for the research. The narrative approach used for this study extends what is known about the museum experience by providing novel insights and understandings. A further discussion of the study's methodology is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Overview

This study aims to understand the factors that contribute to the formation and development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship, the ways in which returning visitors engage with a museum, the benefits derived from such relationships, and how these relationships are maintained over time. As it seeks to understand the individual's experience and meaning-making in their museum visitation and life contexts, a narrative research approach is adopted. The study's methodological approach and design provide unique opportunities to explore the complexities of sustained visitor/museum relationships and gain novel insights, from the visitor's perspective, about the role museum visiting plays in individuals' lives. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology employed for the study and provide a description of the study, including the setting, the participants, data generation and analysis processes. I also discuss the study's trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with an introduction to Chapter Four, the narrative accounts.

Methodology

Because there is limited empirical data on the phenomenon of sustained visitor/museum relationships, an exploratory qualitative case study approach was employed (Stake, 1995). Within that broad methodological framework, a narrative inquiry methodology was adopted to investigate the phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Given this interest in individual experience and relationships with the institution of the museum, a narrative research approach is appropriate for investigating the nature of sustained visitor/museum relationships.

Exploratory

The goal of exploratory studies is to describe “what’s happening” in a social setting and to seek new insights (Robson, 1993). In this tradition, “what’s happening” refers to investigating a problem area about which there is little known in order to increase understanding about it. Because there is very limited research on the phenomenon, this study adopts an exploratory perspective to investigate sustained visitor/museum relationships.

Qualitative

Given that the focus of this research is to explore a human phenomenon that occurs in a natural, social setting (Creswell, 1998), the study employs a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach is appropriate to meet the aim of this study—to understand life experiences individuals have with a museum. A naturalistic, constructivist perspective is adopted for the study. As such, the researcher assumes there are multiple realities and that knowledge is something actively constructed by each individual (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Consistent with other qualitative studies, the role of the researcher in this study is not as an outside observer, but as a participant-observer (Stake, 1995). The researcher’s involvement with the participants is viewed as fundamental to understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002). In keeping with qualitative research traditions, this study aims to generate an understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. The qualitative design facilitates participant-centered approaches to answer the study’s guiding questions:

1. What factors and circumstances contribute to the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?

2. What factors influence the development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?
3. In what ways do individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum?
4. What benefits are derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships?
5. What personal factors contribute to sustaining a visitor/museum relationship?

This study employs qualitative methods of generating data—viewing the researcher as instrument (Hatch, 2002). The methods used in this study, interviews, observations, and researcher notes, are specifically constructed to take account of the particular characteristics of human experience and to facilitate the investigation of experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). The range of methods also provides multiple perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation.

Narrative Inquiry

This study is shaped by a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The word narrative is defined as “a spoken or written account of connected events; a story; the narrated part of a literary work, as distinct from dialogue; the practice or art of telling stories” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004, p. 951). In addition to its literary definition, narrative is also viewed as a way in which humans make meaning. Jerome Bruner (1985) identifies two modes of thought: paradigmatic and narrative.

Each provides a way of ordering experience, of constructing reality, and the two (though amenable to complementary use) are irreducible to one another. Each also provides ways of organizing representation in memory and of filtering the perceptual world. ... Each of the ways of knowing, moreover, has operating principles of its own and its own criteria of well-formedness. But they differ radically in their procedures for establishing truth. One verifies by appeal to formal verification procedures and empirical proof. The other establishes *not* truth but truth-likeness or verisimilitude. (p. 97)

In these terms, the paradigmatic mode of thought that Bruner describes requires logical proof. In contrast, the narrative mode moves away from the positivist stance and embraces multiple interpretations. According to Rorty, “one mode is centered around the narrow epistemological question of how to know the truth; the other around the broader and more inclusive question of the meaning of experience” (as cited in Bruner, 1985, p. 98). It is the broader and more inclusive approach to the meaning of experience that shapes the narrative methodology adopted for this study.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in narrative ways of knowing and a subsequent increase in studies that employ narrative approaches. Although narrative research has a long tradition in the disciplines of anthropology, counseling, history, and psychology (Bresler, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), the turn to narrative in the discipline of education is relatively recent. The term *narrative inquiry* first appeared in an educational research context in an article by Connelly and Clandinin published in 1990 (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007). Since that time, a variety of narrative approaches have been used to explore a range of educational issues in such areas as professional development (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Conle, 2000), arts education (e.g., Barone & Eisner, 2006; Barrett, 2007; Bresler, 2006), and music education (e.g., Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). Additionally, within the field of education, narrative is understood as the presentational form for such research (Eisner, 1993).

Clandinin and Connelly’s approach to narrative research is grounded in Dewey’s philosophy of experience. “Narrative inquiry is the study of experience, and experience, as John Dewey taught is a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Their framework for narrative inquiry draws on three specific conditions of Dewey’s experience: interaction, continuity, and situation. Like Dewey, they view experience as

involving people in relationship with others and their environment, developing from other experiences, and leading to further experiences. Stemming from Schwab's idea of curriculum "commonplaces," and in conjunction with Dewey's qualities of experience, Clandinin and Connelly identify three commonplaces that make up a "metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space": temporality, sociality, and place (p. 50). They argue that in order to understand experience, one needs to examine the temporal, personal, and social elements of experience as well as the context in which experience takes place (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Although narrative inquiry shares features of other qualitative research approaches, such as the socio-cultural focus in ethnography and the focus on individual experience in phenomenology, it is the simultaneous exploration of all three elements—temporality, sociality, and place that shapes a narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) view narrative as both phenomenon and method. "Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied and it names the pattern of inquiry for its study" (p. 2). They draw a distinction between story and narrative. "Story" describes the phenomenon, and the inquiry is "narrative." Through their research, they "have come to understand experience as narratively constructed and narratively lived," and thus argue that it is appropriate to "study experience narratively" (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, p. 162).

Because the aim of this research is to explore the experience of museum visitation to a single museum over time and in the context of individuals' lives, I draw on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry methodology. As Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry methodology is grounded in Dewey's theory of experience, the study draws on Dewey's notion of experience in both its theoretical and methodological framework. It is appropriate to use narrative inquiry

in this study because of these strong links between the two (Dewey's philosophy of experience and Clandinin and Connelly's methodological approach). In the following section, I discuss the imperatives of narrative inquiry that shape this study—the study of experience over time and in relation.

A narrative view of experience is adopted for this study. This means stories of experience serve as the starting point from which to explore people's engagement with museums. This work employs narrative as a way of understanding experience—people live stories, tell stories, and come to understand their lives through the living and telling of stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As a narrative inquirer, I come to understand experience (my participants and my own) through the process of living, telling, retelling, and reliving life narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

In narrative inquiry, the research process is viewed as relational—that is, a study of “people in relation” with each other (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). The personal relationship that forms between the inquirer and the participant is an integral part of the inquiry process. Throughout the inquiry, researcher and participants work together as co-researchers, sharing the narrative inquiry “landscape” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). A principle goal of this research approach is to ensure that all voices are heard (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Participants and their stories are valued for their unique qualities and help shape the direction the research takes. Meaning is constructed through negotiation and collaboration between the participants and the inquirer. As a result of the research process, both researcher and participants undergo change and growth (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Experience is also approached from a relational stance—individuals in continuous interaction with their environment (Dewey, 1934). The focus of this study is on the nature of the engagement that takes place between an individual and

a museum. Museum experiences are viewed through the lens of the narrative inquiry commonplaces: temporality, sociality, and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). As such, experiences individuals have with a museum are situated within the context of past, present, and anticipated future experiences. Because this research aims to understand sustained visitor/museum relationships, an equally important consideration is to recognize that the nature of these relationships changes over time (Clandinin et al., 2007). In addition to time, the personal, social, and physical conditions that shape visitors' experiences with museums are considered.

While narrative inquiry methodology has been adopted for this study, it differs from other examples of such work in the discipline of Education. Specifically, the site for the research is a museum, not a classroom. Consequently, an important contribution this study makes is the employment of narrative inquiry in a novel setting and its introduction to the field of visitor studies as a methodological approach.

Case Study

In addition to adopting narrative inquiry methodology, this study is also structured as a case study. Although there are important distinctions between narrative inquiry and case study (while case studies explore a specific thing and are designed to have multiple perspectives, they are not necessarily relational), there are times when they can be combined (D. Jean Clandinin, personal communication, January 5, 2007). Because this study investigates a particular case that can be defined by its participants, setting, and phenomenon, and it seeks multiple perspectives, it is also considered a case study.

Stake (2005) differentiates between an intrinsic and an instrumental case. An intrinsic case is one in which the study is undertaken for the purpose of

understanding the particular case. In an instrumental case study, the case is used to facilitate understanding of something beyond the case. This research falls into what Stake refers to as the “zone of combined purpose”—the zone where there is no clear division between an intrinsic and an instrumental case. Because of the uniqueness and significance of the setting used for the study—the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, one of the oldest museums in Australia that serves a combined purpose of displaying art, natural and cultural heritage collections—the case could be seen as having intrinsic interest. The case is also instrumental in the sense that the phenomenon of a sustained visitor/museum relationship is of interest beyond this case. Although the setting is unique, there are other museums that fulfill a similar combined purpose role in their communities, and therefore the findings may be transferable to similar settings (Robson, 1993).

Description of the Study

The case study is formed from the following three contexts: phenomenon, setting, and participants. The focal phenomenon in each of these contexts is sustained relationships visitors have with a single museum.

The Setting

The museum used as the setting for the study is the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery located in Hobart.⁹ The TMAG was established in the 1840s as the Museum of the Royal Society of Tasmania. The museum complex contains historically significant buildings including the city’s oldest building, the 1808 Commissariat Store (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2007). The museum’s collections include natural science, social history, and art. Because of its history,

⁹ Hobart is Australia’s second oldest capital city. At the time of the 2006 Census, the population of Greater Hobart was approximately 200,525 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006c).

role in the community, and diverse collections, the site offers many unique opportunities to investigate museums as sites for sustained engagement.

Negotiating Into

Initial contact with the TMAG was made in September 2005. In early September, I contacted a member of the TMAG's administrative staff and arranged a meeting to discuss the research I wished to conduct and to enlist the museum's assistance. During that meeting, a request was made for me to provide a letter stating the resources required by the TMAG. An agreement letter was written and delivered to the appropriate museum personnel. After reading the letter, the TMAG agreed to the following conditions: 1) to participate as the site for the study, 2) to permit video-taping of participant guided tours, 3) to provide a quiet room in which to conduct interviews, and 4) to assist in the recruitment of participants.

The study received ethical approval in November 2005. In February 2006, meetings were arranged by senior staff for me to explain the details and needs of the study to key members of museum staff, Friends of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (FTMAG), the TMAGgots (the "young" Friend's group), and the Art Guides. Included in the meetings were representatives from the TMAG's Visitor Services, and Marketing and Promotions staff, as well as the coordinators of the museum's auxiliary groups (FTMAG, TMAGgots, and Art Guides). These members of museum staff and auxiliary groups served as "gatekeepers" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) in helping to identify potential participants in order to adhere to the third-party recruitment ethics requirement.

Participants

The study participants consisted of seven key participants, individuals who have a sustained relationship with the TMAG; eight "significant other" (SO)

participants, family or friends of the key participants; and two museum representative (MR) participants.

Purposeful (or purposive) sampling was used to recruit the study's key participants. Purposeful sampling is an approach commonly used in qualitative case studies (Patton, 2002). Participants are not randomly selected, but are selected purposefully because they are the people who can provide the greatest amount of insight to help understand the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002). Initially, it was thought that the people who could provide the greatest amount of insight concerning the study's phenomenon were individuals who: 1) were frequent visitors, defined as individuals making three or more visits to the TMAG per year, and 2) maintained a relationship with the TMAG for one or more years. In keeping with the iterative nature of qualitative research design, as the study progressed, it became apparent that the sustained aspect of the relationship was more critical than was the frequency of the visits. Accordingly, individuals who had been making regular visits (once or twice a year) to the TMAG over a number of years (3 or more) were sought.

To access a wide range of stories, a maximum variation strategy (Patton, 2002) was employed in the recruitment of the study's key participants. Individuals representing different life stages, children and adults, were sought. In addition to key participants, study participants also included a significant other for each of the key participants as well as museum participants—a representative of the FTMAG and a member of the museum's Visitor Services staff. Significant other participants were sought to provide further insights into the ways in which individuals use the experience of museum visitation. The museum representative participants, one auxiliary staff member and one member of the institution staff, were sought to provide perspectives on visitor engagement and the TMAG in general. Having key

participants, significant other, and museum representative participants provided multiple perspectives of the phenomenon.

Recruitment

Three strategies were used to recruit the study's key participants:

1. Enlisting the assistance of the museum's auxiliary groups (FTMAG, TMAGgots, and Art Guides) and museum staff in identifying individuals who regularly visit the TMAG, and distributing recruiting letters and "Expression of Interest" forms to prospective participants (see Appendix A).
2. Presenting and/or distributing information about the project at FTMAG and Art Guide meetings.
3. Publishing a recruitment notice in the *FTMAG Newsletter* (see Appendix A).

Strategies 1 and 2 were the most successful strategies used to recruit key participants. No key participants were recruited directly through Strategy 3. A snowball sample (Patton, 2002) resulted when two participants nominated two additional participants. One participant recruited her daughter and granddaughter as key participants. A second participant recruited two friends to participate—one child and one adult. In the end, an all-female sample made up of two children and five adults ranging in age from 5 to 80 years was recruited to participate in the study as key participants. Having participants across a wide range of ages provided a cross-the-life-spectrum perspective of the phenomenon; individuals who are at different stages in their lives and whose stories represent various stages in the formation and development of a sustained relationship with a museum—initial through advanced. The seven key participants' lives, intersecting in some instances, are reflective of the close familial and social ties that exist in an established city with a rich heritage located in Australia's remote island state, Tasmania.

Significant other participants were recruited via a third party by asking the key participants to invite a family member or friend to participate. Table 3.1 provides a description of the key participants and significant other participants. Museum participants (FTMAG representative and the museum staff participant) were recruited via a third party—one of the TMAG’s deputy directors. All ethical requirements were adhered to and informed consent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix B).

Table 3.1

Description of Participants

Key participant’s name	Gender	Age	Relationship to other key participants	SO name	Relationship to key participant
Cecilia	female	59	Sarah’s mother; Jasmine’s grandmother	Liz	Friend
Sarah	female	31	Cecilia’s daughter; Jasmine’s mother	Cecilia	Mother
Jasmine	female	5	Sarah’s daughter; Cecilia’s granddaughter	Sarah	Mother
Zoë	female	10	Virginia’s friend	Oscar Rose	Father Mother
Mary	female	34		Ellie	Friend
Diana	female	49	Virginia’s friend	Sophie	Friend
Virginia	female	80	Zoë and Diana’s friend	George	Friend

Data Generation

Field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were generated through interviews, observations, and researcher notes.

Interviews

Interviews were the primary data source used in the study. For the purpose of this study, interviews were the most appropriate method for generating detailed accounts of the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005). The qualitative research interview aims to understand experience from the participant's point of view. Meaning is constructed through the interaction that occurs between the researcher and participant during the interview conversations (Kvale, 1996).

Individual interviews were conducted with the seven key participants, eight significant other participants, one member of the museum staff, and a representative of the FTMAG. All interviews were semi-structured and open-ended in nature. Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with flexibility to change the "sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up answers given and the stories told..." (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Questions were designed to stimulate conversations concerning museum visitation and engagement.

All interview schedules were piloted. Key participant interview guides were piloted with returning museum visitors, and with individuals representing a wide range of age groups, both children and adults. Pilot participants were recruited through personal knowledge and/or word of mouth. As a result of the piloting process, minor adjustments were made to the interview guides. Adjustments included reorganizing and grouping the questions to give the interviews more of an interactive, conversational tone. To better stimulate conversation with child participants, questions were re-worded to include such phrases as, "When you think about... what's the first thing that pops into your head?" "Tell me about..." and, "So, what happened next?"

Key participants.

A three-interview series designed by Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982, as cited in Seidman, 1998) was used to generate narrative accounts of the seven key participants' life experiences with museums. The purpose of the three-interview series is to facilitate understanding of the experience and to place the experience in context (Seidman, 1998). Each interview has a specific aim.

The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. (Seidman, 1998, p. 11)

Seidman (1998) suggests that interviews be spaced from three days to one week apart, but states that as long as participants are provided with the opportunity "to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives, alterations to the three-interview structure and the duration and spacing of interviews can certainly be explored" (p. 15). The three-interview method used in this study allowed sufficient time to establish a rapport with participants and to generate rich accounts of participants' museum experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005).

All interview data were generated over a period of seven months; data pertaining to each individual were generated over a period of approximately two months. Over that seven month period, three separate interviews were conducted with each of the seven key participants. The duration between Interviews One, Two, and Three varied from one week to one month, depending on the participant's availability. Each interview lasted for approximately 1 hour, with slightly less time for the children. Interviews were conducted at a mutually convenient time and place. They took place at a variety of locations—participants' homes, researcher's flat, the TMAG meeting room or café, or other cafés. All interviews were audio-taped.

The first interview, “Focused life history,” focused on the participant’s past museum experiences. During the interview, participants were asked about their background and interests, personal museum visiting history in general as well as their past experiences visiting the TMAG (see Appendix C for key participant interview guides).

The second interview, “Details of experience,” was conducted at the TMAG. This interview focused on the participant’s present museum experiences. During the interview, participants were asked to describe the ways in which they currently experience the museum. For this study, the three-interview series was modified during Interview Two to include a *guided tour* of the museum. After the interview, participants were asked to guide a tour of the museum, to show the researcher some of their favorite areas and objects. The guided tours ranged in length from 20 minutes to one hour. There was no set script for the tours. At the beginning of the tour, the only instruction the researcher provided the participants was to “Take me wherever you want.” During the tour, participant’s responses to the museum and its collections were explored. Audio and video recording devices were used during the tour to record conversations, comments, facial expressions, and embodied responses. In one instance, due to time constraints on the part of the participant, Interview Two and the guided tour were conducted on different days.

The purpose of the guided tour was to gain further insight into the participant’s personal association with the museum. Experiencing the museum with the participants provided a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the participant’s engagement with the TMAG—insights gained only through first-hand experience with the participants in the setting. The guided tours provided opportunities for the researcher to observe the ways in which participants engage with objects that hold personal significance for them, to explore feelings and

thoughts as they engage with objects, and to get a sense of the features of the museum experience that hold individual appeal. Experiencing the museum through the participants' eyes was a critically important feature of the research design.

The third interview, "Reflection on the meaning," focused on the meaning participants ascribe to their relationship with the museum, and on participants' anticipated future museum experiences (Seidman, 1998). During the third interview, participants were asked to reflect on previous conversations and experiences that took place during the inquiry process, and to share current understandings about their relationship with the TMAG. Conducting three separate interviews, each with a specific focus, generated an in-depth account of participants' experiences with museums and the TMAG.

Significant other and museum participants.

In concert with interviews with the seven key participants, a 30-minute interview was conducted with a significant other—a family member or friend nominated by the key participant. In order to develop a more complete understanding of the museum experiences of one of the key participants, 10-year-old Zoë, interviews were conducted with two significant others, her mother and her father (divorced). The significant other interviews took place at a variety of sites, including the TMAG café or other cafés, and SO participant's home. All interviews were audio-taped. Interview questions probed the significant other's understandings of the key participant's background, interests, and experiences with the TMAG. These interviews provided additional insight into the key participants' history and engagement with museums and the TMAG.

To gain an institutional perspective on the nature of the relationship local visitors have with the TMAG, individual 45-minute interviews were conducted with a representative of the FTMAG and a member of the museum Visitor Services staff.

The interview with the FTMAG representative took place at his home; the interview with the member of the Visitor Services staff was conducted at the museum. Interviews were audio taped. Questions during these interviews probed their understandings concerning the phenomenon of sustained visitor/museum relationships at the TMAG: how they form, develop, and are maintained; the nature of visitor engagement; and the benefits derived from repeat visitation. Data generated from interviews with significant others and museum participants strengthened the study's credibility by providing multiple perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation (Stake, 2005).

Observations

To more fully understand the ways in which participants engage with the museum, observations of participants at the TMAG were conducted. Participants were asked to contact the researcher prior to one of their visits to the museum so that the researcher could “tag along” and observe a typical museum visit. It is acknowledged that the researcher's presence may have influenced participants' behavior; however, valuable insights were gained by observing the participants in the museum setting. Observations of these visits were recorded using field notes (Creswell, 1998). Field notes focused on describing participants' personal, social, and physical actions and interactions. Tag along visits took place at a mutually convenient time in the research process—any time after Interview One. Observational data served to enrich the descriptions of the ways in which participants engage with the museum (Research Question 3) and triangulate data generated from interviews. Tag along visits were particularly useful with child participants in providing additional insights about the ways in which they engage

during visits to the TMAG, as data generated through interviews with the children were not as extensive as that generated with adults.

Although the data generation process varied somewhat for each key participant (due to participant availability and museum visiting schedule), in general, sessions were conducted in the following order:

1. Key participant – Interview One
2. Key participant – Interview Two (& Guided Tour)
3. Significant other Interview
4. Key participant – Tag along Visit
5. Key participant – Interview Three

Researcher's Journal

Throughout the study, I kept a journal of reflective notes, recording thoughts, ideas, and descriptions related to the phenomenon under study. Entries in my journal included thoughts about the literature I was reading, queries about the research process, and reflections on my participants' engagement with the TMAG. Reflective notes informed and guided the research, and provided insights that facilitated a deeper understanding of sustained visitor/museum relationships (Creswell, 1998).

Data generated from multiple data sources and through multiple methods provided rich information concerning the case and its setting, and a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Table 3.2 identifies which data generation methods were used to address each of the study's guiding research questions. Although the study's data generation design assigned a specific data method for eliciting information concerning each research question, in practice, during the different interviews, participants tended to move back and forth in their

life story. In successive interviews individuals would revisit issues often with deepened insight. Thus, information generated in particular interviews pertained to a number of different research questions. For instance, information generated in Interview Three provided insights concerning all five research questions.

Table 3.2

Data Generation Methods Used to Address Each of the Research Questions

Research Question	Methods
1. What factors contribute to the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews: Key participants (Interview 1) <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Significant others <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Member of TMAG Visitor Services staff <li style="padding-left: 40px;">FTMAG representative ▪ Researcher notes
2. What factors influence the development of sustained visitor/museum relationships?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews: Key participants (Interview 1) <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Significant others <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Member of TMAG Visitor Services staff <li style="padding-left: 40px;">FTMAG representative ▪ Researcher notes
3. In what ways do individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews: Key participants (Interview 2 & Guided Tour) <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Significant others <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Member of TMAG Visitor Services staff <li style="padding-left: 40px;">FTMAG representative ▪ Observations – Tag along Visit ▪ Researcher notes
4. What benefits are derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews: Key participants (Interview 3) <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Significant others <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Member of TMAG Visitor Services staff <li style="padding-left: 40px;">FTMAG representative ▪ Researcher notes
5. What personal factors contribute to sustaining a visitor/museum relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews: Key participants (Interview 3) <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Significant others <li style="padding-left: 40px;">Member of TMAG Visitor Services staff <li style="padding-left: 40px;">FTMAG representative ▪ Researcher notes

Data Analysis and Interpretation - from field to research texts

Data analysis consisted of crafting individual narrative accounts and identifying thematic connections within and between cases (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Seidman, 1998). The unit of analysis was the experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Data analysis occurred in two stages: Stage 1 – crafting individual narrative accounts; and Stage 2 – thematic analysis of narrative accounts.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative space served as the framework that guided the first stage of data analysis—crafting narrative accounts. This framework reflects the personal, social, physical, and temporal dimensions of museum experiences. For the purpose of this study, the narrative analysis framework incorporated features of both Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) "Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure" (adapted from Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and Falk and Dierking's (2000) "Contextual Model of Learning" (see Table 3.3). For example, in order to reflect visitor engagement with a museum, the personal dimension includes elements of Ollerenshaw and Creswell's narrative structure (i.e., feelings and aesthetic responses) and elements of Falk and Dierking's model (i.e., motivations, expectations, and interests).

Engagement is analyzed through the lenses of Interaction (personal, social, and situation/physical) and Temporality (past, present, and future). Personal interaction encompasses personal elements of participants' museum experiences—their feelings, emotions, aesthetic responses, motivations, expectations, interests, knowledge and skills, and the meaning and value they ascribe to their experiences. Social interaction encompasses the interactions participants have with others during their museum visits. Situational interaction pertains to the ways participants engage with the physical context of the museum—the setting, design, and objects. In addition to personal, social, and situation/physical interaction, engagement and

visitation are analyzed temporally—considering past, present, and anticipated future experiences.

Table 3.3

Narrative Analysis Framework

Interaction			
Engagement	<i>Personal</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Situation (physical)</i>
	Look inward – feelings/emotions, aesthetic reactions, interests, knowledge, skills, motivations, expectations, meanings and values (all data sources)	Look outward – interacting with others (all data sources)	Look at physical context – setting, design, objects (all data sources)
Temporality			
Engagement & Visitation	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>
	Look backward – (Interview 1) - Individual factors: personal characteristics and interests - Situational factors: socio-cultural and environmental influences - Prior experiences	Look at current experiences – (Interview 2, Guided Tour, Tag along Visit)	Look forward – (Interview 3)

Note: Adapted from Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, p. 340.

Stage 1 – Crafting Narrative Accounts

During the first stage of analysis, all interview transcripts (including guided tours) were transcribed. Interview transcripts, observation field notes, and researcher notes were read and re-read; guided tour videos were viewed and re-viewed. Drawing on all data sources, using the narrative analysis framework, key passages were identified along the dimensions of interaction (personal, social, and situation/place) and temporality (past, present, and future). In exploring the field texts, I first organized passages chronologically. I then searched for personal elements, looking for participants' personal characteristics and interests, knowledge and skills, values, motivations, expectations, feelings, and aesthetic reactions. I

reread the field texts searching for contextual elements (social and situational)—participants’ interactions with others and place. I identified themes and tensions that emerged. As I analyzed the field texts, I was mindful of the questions that guided the study. Working within the narrative analysis framework, I moved backward, forward, inward, and outward through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As I wrote the interim texts, I wove key passages from the transcripts of interviews and guided tours into the narrative accounts to retell individual stories using the participants’ words, moving back and forth between field and research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). During the writing process, I collaborated with the participants to gather additional information and seek clarification.

After the interim narrative accounts were written, I further collaborated with participants. I gave each participant their individual account and asked them to read and review them to ensure the accuracy of the account—a process referred to as member-checking (Seidman, 1998). In the case of the five-year-old participant with limited reading ability, I asked the child’s mother to assist her daughter in performing this activity. After participants read their stories, a meeting was arranged to talk about their “museum story.” During these sessions, participants were given the option of reading their narrative account alongside me. Although many participants declined, (and clearly, this was not accomplishable with Jasmine), two participants (Cecilia and Virginia) chose to engage in this activity. In the process of reading alongside, I was able to observe participant’s reactions to various parts of their stories, to witness emotions that ranged from tears to laughter, and to hear additional stories. Through this process, I gained further insights about the meaning these participants ascribe to their relationship with the TMAG.

The conversations that took place during these sessions (with participants who read their stories alongside me as well as those who did not) were critical to the meaning-making process. A wide range of issues were discussed during these meetings. Many of the participants requested minor edits be made to their stories, specifically to correct grammatical errors and remove fillers, such as “ah,” “um,” “like,” and “you know.” Another common request made by participants was to change the casual sounding “yeah” to the more formal “yes.” After discussing the proposed changes, my participants and I came to an agreement that the requested edits pertaining to the style of speech would be made to the stories as long as it did not change the intention, meaning, or feel of the conversation.

Other areas explored during these sessions included participants’ thoughts and feelings experienced while reading their accounts, their reflections on their sustained engagement with the TMAG, and the ways in which the narrative inquiry process affected them. Through negotiation and collaboration between me and my participants, details of experience were clarified, themes were identified, and new understandings about participants’ relationships with the TMAG emerged. As a result of these conversations, the narratives were re-worked to reflect the issues and threads that emerged during these sessions.

Stage 2 – Thematic Analysis

During the second stage of analysis, narrative accounts were analyzed to identify thematic connections—similarities and differences within and between cases (Seidman, 1998). This analytical process involved interpretation of the stories and interpretation against the research questions that guided the study. In accomplishing this, narrative accounts were read and re-read. During the reading,

each narrative was organized according to categories. The five questions that guided the research served as initial categories:

1. Form – What factors and circumstances contribute to the formation/initiation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?
2. Develop – What factors contribute to the development of sustained visitor/museum relationships?
3. Engage – In what ways do individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum?
4. Benefits – What benefits are derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships?
5. Sustain – What personal factors contribute to sustaining a visitor/museum relationship?

Key passages of the narrative accounts for each of the categories were identified and color-coded. Excerpts that related to each of the questions were compiled into separate documents. Each document was analyzed and thematic connections were identified. Themes and threads that emerged from individual stories were compared and contrasted with those that emerged from other participants' stories to identify similarities and differences in experiences.

All other field texts—interviews with significant others, representatives of museum staff and the FTMAG, observational field notes, and reflective notes—were analyzed using a process similar to the one described in Stage 2. Passages for each of the five categories were identified. Themes emerging from this data were compared and contrasted with themes identified in key participant interview transcripts.

As a result of the data analysis processes, participants' individual stories were re-told and thematic connections within and between cases were identified.

Employing both methods of analysis resulted in a thorough examination of the phenomenon of sustained visitor/museum relationships. Narrative accounts are presented in Chapter Four. Thematic analysis of the narratives is discussed in Chapter Five.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Strategies to address issues of credibility were built into the research design. Because the purpose of qualitative research differs from quantitative studies, terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used to address issues concerning validity and reliability (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Issues of trustworthiness/credibility are addressed by triangulation of data sources (key participants, significant other, and museum participants) and methods (interviews, observations, and researcher's notes). Triangulating data generated from different sources strengthened the interpretation of the data and enhanced the credibility of the research by providing multiple perspectives on the phenomenon (Robson, 1993; Stake, 2005). Member-checking of individual narrative accounts with all participants was used to ensure the data generated provided an accurate account of participants' museum experiences (Seidman, 1998). The research process was made clear and transparent to the reader (Polkinghorne, 2005) by providing the detailed account of data generation and analysis in this chapter.

Wakefulness

In narrative inquiry, the term *wakefulness* refers to the specific requirement narrative inquirers have to engage in "ongoing reflection"—to always be mindful of the study's significance, design, and uniqueness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 184). As an inquirer, I engaged in a continuous process of reflexivity throughout the inquiry—a process that is "essential to the integrity" of the research (Hatch, 2002,

p. 11). During each stage of the inquiry, I reflected on, questioned, and discussed ways to proceed. Additionally, I was keenly aware of the impact I had on the research and the researched. Through the process of writing my “narrative beginning,” presented in Chapter One, I reflected on the ways in which my background and history shaped the study. Through this process I came to appreciate how my past experiences influence the way I approach engagement with museums—positioned as an educator and a researcher. As a reflective practitioner, I also recognize the strong relationships that were formed with my participants, and view the relational aspect as central to the research process. I understand how the subjective nature of the research process influences meaning made from the experience, and appreciate the ways in which my encounters with participants shaped negotiated understandings of the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, careful attention was paid to ethical considerations; specifically, negotiating research texts to ensure narrative accounts reflected the participant’s voice, and leaving the field honoring the relationships formed with my participants (Clandinin et al., 2007).

* * *

Introduction to the Narrative Accounts

In the next chapter, I present the narrative accounts. The first narrative provides a description of the museum that serves as the setting for the study. The description of the setting is followed by individual narrative accounts of the study’s seven key participants’ life experiences with museums. All the participants are female, representing a wide range of life stages, from early childhood through the “golden years.” They are individuals who are not only at different stages in their

lives, but whose stories represent various stages in the development of a sustained relationship with a museum—from initial through advanced stages.

I start with Cecilia's story as she was my first participant and because she provided my first glimpse into the ways in which individuals engage with the TMAG. From her story, I move to the stories of her daughter, Sarah, and then to her granddaughter, Jasmine. Cecilia, Sarah, and Jasmine represent three generations of one family, and therefore have been grouped sequentially. Following Jasmine's story, the narrative accounts are presented chronologically—from the youngest participant to the oldest. Thus, Zoë's story is followed by those of Mary, Diana, and Virginia. Names used are pseudonyms chosen by the participants. The chapter closes with an account of my final encounter with the TMAG.

In the retelling of individual stories, the aim was to capture each participant's unique character and voice. Although the narrative accounts have different starting points, they are presented in a similar format, each with three main sections—history of involvement with museums, details of the relationship today (which includes portions of the guided tours), and anticipated future involvement. While they follow a similar format, there are differences in the ways in which the accounts are presented. For example, in Jasmine's narrative (due to her young age, although data generated through interviews were rich, it was not as extensive as other participants' interview data), a description of a typical visit to the museum was developed from an amalgam of data generated through interviews and observations of Jasmine and her mother at the TMAG. Additionally, although interviews with significant others provided valuable insights about each participant's engagement with the TMAG, in the cases of the adult participants these interviews, in many instances, served to support the views expressed by the primary participants. Thus, excerpts from significant other interviews have been

included mainly in the children's narratives as a way of providing additional context for and information about their museum experiences. Finally, Cecilia, Sarah, and Diana's narratives conclude with postscripts that provide details from conversations that took place after the third interview.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the study's methodology, research design, data analysis, and trustworthiness. This study is shaped by its narrative inquiry methodology—the study of experience over time and in relation. I have presented a rationale for the narrative inquiry methodology adopted in this study to investigate sustained visitor/museum relationships. Narrative inquiry methodology provides opportunities to gain novel insights from the visitor's perspective about the role museum visiting plays in the context of people's lives. Such insights extend our understanding of the museum experience. In this chapter, I have also provided a description of the study's methods and procedures. Field texts were generated through interviews, observations, and researcher's notes; data analysis consisted of crafting individual narrative accounts and identifying thematic connections within and between cases. I have addressed issues concerning the study's credibility and trustworthiness. Strategies such as member-checking, transparency, and wakefulness were built into the study's design. The chapter concluded with an introduction to Chapter Four—the narrative accounts of seven individuals' life experiences with museums and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS

The TMAG – “a quirky place”



Figure 4.1. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

My first encounter with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (see Figure 4.1) happened a year before I moved to Hobart, as a tourist. Visiting the local museum is always one of my first activities when I arrive in a new city. Before heading out to visit the TMAG, I remember locating it on a map and thinking it should be easy to find. It's centrally located on Hobart's waterfront, on Constitution Dock. In the 19th century this dock was the destination of trade ships sailing into port, and today is better known as the arrival point for the annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race. As I approached the museum complex from the east, the first building that caught my eye was a beautiful honey-colored sandstone building, the former Customs House—an imposing structure with a Baroque Revival façade that overlooks the picturesque harbor (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2007). As I

approached the front door, I noticed a small sign that read “administrative offices.” Recognizing that this was not the public entrance, I proceeded to walk along the east side of the museum complex. After passing by a chain-link fence, I came to a building constructed out of plain orange-red bricks. This very ordinary building looked conspicuously out of place as its architectural style was in sharp contrast to the grandeur of the stately structure standing next to it. As I walked a bit farther, I came across another entrance. An entrance also closed to the public. This entrance connected the brick building on the right with a beautiful two-storey sandstone building on the left. I strained to read the writing engraved on a brick above the door. It appeared to read 1863. I wondered if this might be the original museum building.

I followed the building around to the west side. From this perspective, I could appreciate the beauty of this part of the museum complex—the contrasting colored sandstone bricks used to construct the building and the beautiful arched ground-floor windows framed with burgundy paint. In front of the building, behind the green cast iron fence, stood a couple of eucalyptus trees, the species with large, gorgeous gum nuts hanging in clumps. After a brief pause, I continued to walk along the building until I came to a glass foyer tucked in-between two distinct sections of the museum. At last, I had found the main entrance. Bound on four sides by a multi-lane, one-way traffic system, the museum sits as a quiet oasis circled by a continuous flow of traffic, day and night. At the time, I had no idea of the historical significance of the buildings that make-up the museum complex or that the museum is located on one of the most important archaeological sites in Australia. All I saw was the odd mix of buildings that is the TMAG.

Shortly after I moved to Hobart, the museum became a site that I started to visit. At that time, all I knew about it was that it was the state museum and that it

had a diverse collection that included art as well as natural and social history specimens and artifacts. Although from my initial visit to the museum I knew it displayed a wide range of objects, I had no idea how unique the museum's collection truly was. The TMAG is one of only three combined museum and art galleries in Australia. And it has the "broadest collecting mandate of any single institution in Australia" (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2007, p. vii). Being new to the city, I wanted to know more about the museum and the community it serves. One of my first activities was to take a guided tour of the museum. I don't recall too much from that tour, only that the tour was not well attended—perhaps because tourist season had yet to begin in earnest. Over the next few months, I made regular visits to the museum. During those visits, I spent time observing people engaging with the museum. I wanted to get a feel for the people in the community and a sense of the history of the place. As I spent more time there, I found it to be a "quirky" museum, one that fulfilled the mysterious promise of my first encounter there.

When I enter the TMAG through the front doors, I immediately experience a sense of contrast between old and new. The modern glass foyer is enclosed on the right side by a beautiful brick wall, presumably part of the original museum building. From the front entrance, I sometimes head down a ramp to the left toward the recently renovated children's discovery space and Courtyard Café. From there, if there is a special exhibition on view, I proceed to the Commissariat Store (1808-1810) and the Bond Store (1823-26), spaces used to house temporary exhibitions. On other visits, I walk straight ahead from the front entrance and up a short flight of stairs that lead to the main part of the museum. The first exhibition area I come to is a gallery that, at the time of the study, housed the Huon pine exhibition (and now serves as the new Tasmanian Aboriginal gallery). It is a beautiful gallery space with

high ceilings marked by intricately designed fixtures. The tall arched windows are visible but shaded to block out the natural sunlight. As I walk through the gallery, I can hear my footsteps on the original wood floors. The room has a slight musty smell, probably due in part to the old furniture on display.

From that beautiful, bright space, I enter the dimly lit zoology exhibition where I am greeted by a cage displaying video footage of the last living Tasmanian tiger—a disturbing image of a distressed creature pacing back and forth in his small enclosure in captivity. As I stand there watching the video, filled with sadness about the treatment and loss of this species, I hear the soothing sounds of bird calls emanating from the sea diorama across the room. Scattered throughout the exhibition are a mix of hands-on displays and old style glass and timber museum cases displaying specimens of Tasmania’s unique fauna.

There are a variety of ways to proceed through the museum from the zoology exhibition. If I walk through the gallery and to the right, I enter a small room where the museum’s geology collection is on display. If I continue straight ahead from the gallery, I enter a formal-style stairway, where, because I know where to look, I find an Egyptian mummy tucked under the staircase. Or, I can climb a set of steep, narrow stairs located along the gallery’s right wall that lead upstairs to the colonial art gallery. Looking up from that stairway, lined with a red oriental rug and beautiful wood banisters, my eyes are drawn to the gallery’s red walls. Much of the colonial art gallery is in its original form, including the original Tasmanian cedar display cases built for the room. Opaque skylights in the room’s high ceiling shed some natural light into the gallery. The gallery showcases the major colonial artists of Tasmania, including works of John Glover (1767–1849), W. C. Piguenit (1836–1914), and Benjamin Duterreau (1767–1851). As I walk through the quiet space, I experience the paradox of the place that is Tasmania—

natural beauty set against the history of conflict associated with European settlement.

As I continue to make my way around the museum, I come to a small gallery that represents another chapter in Tasmania's history, *Convicts in Van Diemen's Land*. Upon entering the room, I see a black wooden box, a portable confinement box thought to be used as a dunking device—a punishment used to discipline prisoners while in transport. As I walk around the room, I am awed by the dark history of the place. From that exhibition area, I pass through the shipping room and then reach the newer part of the museum building, the 1960's wing. The second floor of this wing houses one of the museum's newest exhibitions, *Islands to Ice*. Unlike the museum's other exhibitions, this exhibition features many interactive displays, including a 3D theater where visitors can view Frank Hurley's photographs from his 1911–1914 expedition to Antarctica. Appropriately, the windows in the rear of the gallery overlook the port of Hobart, the passageway to the Southern Ocean. I come away from this exhibition reminded, once again, of the uniqueness of the place, its isolation and close proximity to the Antarctic.

If I make my way down to the lower level, via the lift or stairs, I enter the part of the museum that serves as the main section of the art gallery. It is a large area made up of four different gallery spaces. These galleries are primarily used for temporary exhibitions. The TMAG has an active schedule of temporary exhibitions, both in-house and touring. Many of these exhibitions were mentioned by the study's participants during our conversations, including *Creating a Gothic Paradise: Pugin and the Antipodes* (Sept–Nov 2002), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Nov 2003–Feb 2004), and *National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries* (May–July 2006).

Walking slowly back through the TMAG I wonder about all the stories this place holds—stories of the objects, and the stories of visitor's engagement with the place, and the quirkiness that marks its character.

Cecilia – “a place to lift your spirits”

It was a Monday afternoon when I phoned Cecilia to arrange a time and place to meet for our first interview session. Cecilia was very accommodating. She told me she was happy to meet me any time and at any location. She encouraged me to “get going with it,” referring to my study, which was exactly what I needed to hear. After a brief chat, we decided to get together at her place later in the week. As I hung up the phone, I remember thinking how fortunate I was to have Cecilia as my first participant, someone who said all the “right” things to me; someone who had helped put me at ease about conducting my first interview. As I continued to reflect on the conversation, it struck me that I was the one who was supposed to be putting her at ease. I hoped that she too hung up the phone feeling relaxed and comfortable about the journey on which we were about to embark.

On the day of the interview, I arrived at her flat huffing and puffing. It was a pleasant, brisk walk to her place, although a bit longer and hillier than I had expected. As I walked, my mind raced with thoughts about how the interview would go. Cecilia greeted me at the door and I entered her flat. She told me to find a comfortable place to sit. After a brief discussion about where it would be best to set up the recording equipment, we decided to sit at a small table at the window in her lounge room. As we were getting ourselves settled, I looked around the room. I wanted to get a feel for the sort of things Cecilia likes to have surrounding her. I was drawn to the works of art hanging on the walls, especially the large nature photographs. The first work that caught my eye was a photograph of five children on a beach. I assumed, and later learned, that they were her children when they were very young. In addition to the large photographs, other artworks and small photos of her family were scattered throughout the room. As I glanced at her bookshelf, I

noticed a selection of art books and an Italian dictionary. The room had a very comfortable, cozy, and artistic feel to it.

After giving her a brief overview of the study, I started the interview by asking Cecilia to tell me about herself—her family, interests, interests in the arts, and community involvement. From the outset of the interview it was clear that the arts play a very important role in Cecilia’s life. Her first words to me were: “I think I’ve always been interested in the arts, um, even as a young child though I wasn’t encouraged into it.” That statement set the tone for placing Cecilia’s museum visiting experiences in the context of her life history.

History of Involvement with the Arts and Museums

Cecilia was born in South Australia, and moved to Tasmania with her family when she was a very young child, around the age of two. She grew up in a small, rural, “picturesque” town situated approximately 35 minutes northwest of Hobart—the same location where four previous generations on her mother’s side of the family had settled. Cecilia remembers having an interest in art at a very early age, an interest she believes was sparked by the church-related experiences she had as a young child.

But I know where I started seeing artworks to begin with was ah, we had a [church] calendar at home, and I still buy this same sort of calendar each year, and it had, it has artworks from museums and art galleries all around the world. And that’s when I think I first noticed art, on church walls, and you know, I was taking it in that way.

She does not have any memories of visiting museums or art galleries as a child, with her family or with school.

Reflecting on her childhood, she paints a picture of growing up in a home where the arts and creativity were not valued. Although she cannot recall receiving any direct encouragement from her parents to develop her artistic ability, today she

believes her father, through his eccentric interests, demonstrated creative tendencies, “but in a very different sort of way, with junk.”

Cecilia’s school environment also lacked stimulation in the area of art. The only art experiences she recalls from her school days were doing “maybe some of that paperwork” and the three art lessons she had.

And I had about three art lessons at school. My friends’ mother was an artist, and I was so envious of the way they were drawing, and their mother came to the school to give art lessons and I got the feel of the colours, and (pause) you know...

By coincidence, she ran into that mother a few years ago while attending an art opening at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. During their conversation, the woman told her that she thought she had shown artistic talent.

One night I was at an art opening at the Museum and Art Gallery, this was about eight, nine years ago, and this same woman told me that she thought I was going to be good at art, and no one has ever said it to me (laugh). So it took me that long to hear that. I had to be in my fifties to hear what I would have loved to have heard [earlier].

Although formal art experiences were lacking in her childhood, Cecilia’s creative juices were fed by participating in other arts-related activities both in and outside of school—drama, singing, and playing dress-up.

When I was a young girl, I liked the dressing up part, but you know that’s artistic. And friends of mine, they acquired these theatrical clothes they found in a barn that a woman had had—these beautiful shoes to match the dresses, and organzas and silks and I thought I was in heaven.

She remembers attending ballet classes on Saturday mornings, and how devastated she was when the dance teacher stopped making visits to the “country towns.”

Cecilia recalls her formative years as being filled primarily with everyday issues of survival.

...but I wasn’t in the environment to participate in, other than getting along with life every day, you know, survival. It wasn’t about going to art school or, it was about getting a job and living and, you know, surviving.

At 16, after finishing three years of high school, Cecilia left home and moved in with her grandparents who lived in Hobart. Curious about this move, I asked her, “But did you go on to finish high school?” “Mmm, yes” she replied. “But it was only third year high school.” “And what did most people do?” I asked.

Cecilia replied:

They usually did four years. And I only did three years. Or six years—people did Schools Board which is the fourth year of high school plus matric,¹⁰ two years matric. But that wasn’t really encouraged much. You know you were sort of encouraged to leave school. You either went into nursing or teaching, or to secretarial school.

At the age of 20, after working “several jobs” and doing some interstate traveling, she returned to Hobart to get her certification as a “mothercraft”¹¹ nurse. After finishing her studies, she sought employment in Western Australia. It was there, at the age of 22, that Cecilia found her way back to art. While working full-time as a mothercraft nurse in Perth, Cecilia enrolled in an art class that she attended in the evenings after work. She can still recall how excited she felt when she first learned “how to hold the [drawing] pencil properly.”

After leaving Western Australia, Cecilia moved around a bit, returning to Hobart for a short time, then moving to Melbourne. While in Melbourne, continuing to work as a mothercraft nurse, she began mingling with the “performing arts crowd.” She became “involved more or less into the theatre, theatrical part of the arts ... just going to shows and that sort of thing, but not participating.”

After moving back to Tasmania in her mid-twenties, Cecilia again enrolled in an art class. During this time, she became romantically involved with an artist. As a result of that relationship, Cecilia started “mixing” with artists and became

¹⁰In Tasmania, high school includes grades 7-10. Years 11 and 12 are referred to as matriculation college or “matric.”

¹¹ Child care worker

more involved in the local art scene. It was during this stage in her life that Cecilia believes she had her first museum (or art gallery) experience. She has no recollection of visiting a museum or art gallery prior to this, despite her strong interest in art. Although she cannot recall any specific details, she believes her first museum experience occurred at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery when she was in her mid-twenties. She thinks it may have occurred while attending an art opening at the museum with her circle of artist friends.

When Cecilia was 27, she married the artist. Shortly after they were married, they started a family. After having children, Cecilia started making regular visits to the Museum and Art Gallery as a family activity. She selected the TMAG as a site for family excursions because “it was interesting, and it was free, (pause) quiet time.” In addition to outings at the Museum and Art Gallery, Cecilia took her children to art openings at other smaller (commercial) art galleries. She was determined to provide her children with the sort of experiences she wished had been a part of her childhood. The cultural experiences she had with her children were a way of making up for the experiences she missed out on as a child. “Well, once I had my children, I wanted to encourage them to go. So that’s when I would take them. So, I was sort of becoming the child I think and I was enjoying it through them (laugh).”

In her early forties, when her marriage ended, Cecilia found herself entering another stage in her life. Once again, she made regular visits to the TMAG, but this time it was without her children.

I used to be on my own every second weekend when the children used to go to their father’s and that’s where I’d go. I’d do the whole art gallery scene. ... I joined the Friends of the Museum too, after my marriage broke up, just to have connection with, (pause) like-minded people. And so most weekends I would do that.

For the next 15 years or so, Cecilia continued to visit the museum on a regular basis, primarily to view art exhibitions and attend exhibition openings; sometimes visiting on her own, and other times visiting in the company of friends. During this period she also helped arrange floral displays for the TMAG.

About three years ago, Cecilia ended her association with the Friends of the Museum because she “just sort of felt a bit saturated,” feeling as though she no longer had enough in common with people in the group. During the period after she left the Friends’ association, although her visits to the TMAG did not occur as often as they had in the past, she continued to take in new exhibitions, both museum and art-related. After a couple of years passed, Cecilia returned to a more active involvement with the Museum and Art Gallery. “Somehow ah, you know I’d get involved and then I drift away for a while and then I seem to want to be back.”

Details of the Relationship Today

Currently, Cecilia is involved in many activities, including attending art classes and talks as part of the University of the Third Age (U3A), learning how to compose haiku poetry through a class offered at the Botanical Gardens, and volunteering her time at a local thrift shop. She also attends “lectures at the art school each Friday,” something she had “been meaning to do ten years ago but just kept putting off.” In addition to these activities, Cecilia also makes weekly visits to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Her relationship with the TMAG today is multifaceted. She experiences it in a variety of ways: making visits as a member of the Arts Guides’ group, as a grandmother, with friends, and on her own.

Art Guides

Last year, Cecilia joined the Art Guides. She heard about the group from friends—friends who are or were members. One of her motivations for joining was

“to find out where” she “fit in the world.” Cecilia attends Art Guide meetings at the TMAG every Tuesday. During these meetings, a small group of people get together to discuss “what’s going on in the local art scene,” share information about their various art-related projects, and receive training for the delivery of public tours of the museum’s art exhibition areas.

To date, because she lacks confidence in the arena of public speaking, Cecilia has not yet conducted a public tour.

I come once a week. But I haven’t actually taken a guided tour. And um so I’m just sort of holding back because I don’t know how confident I will be taking people around. But, I’m really soaking up, you know, whatever’s going on...

Cecilia feels the meetings are “not a waste.” “So, even if I’m not guiding, I’m still reading about that particular person [artist] and I do like a personal story as well, that moves me in closer to the artist. ... Their life stories, you know, where they’ve come from, their journey.”

Cecilia has a number of motivations for attending the Art Guide sessions. “Because I’m learning more about art, they’re a nice group of people, and it keeps me connected, so I don’t sort of fall in a hole (little laugh).” Although it’s important for Cecilia to feel connected to people and the community, she prefers not to get too “buddy connected.”

Cecilia: I like to know what’s happening particularly in the art world and I think I’m trying to soak it up to inspire me to have, to make a move forward for myself, but I don’t know if it will happen or not.

Michele: In being an artist?

Cecilia: Yes. Yeah, but you know, I’m still just treading water (laugh).

Michele: But you are taking in—

Cecilia: Yes. ...

Michele: And so does that make you feel part of the community or the art community?

Cecilia: Ah, it’s not just the art community, not so much. I like smaller groups and I feel as though I’m still on the fringe of everything. I

don't want to get too sort of, really buddy connected. But I want to soak up what's going on in the group.

Though she does not want to get too tied into the group, the meetings do fulfill a need for social interaction in Cecilia's life. After the meetings she enjoys "sitting around and having a cuppa with them." She is "interested in what's going on in their lives mostly as far as art is concerned."

The Art Guide meetings have also served to boost Cecilia's self-confidence. Because she occasionally has to deliver short presentations to the group, she says, "It's giving me a bit more confidence to say a bit more. So, I didn't know I had the confidence to—I just made up my mind to stop being so hesitant 'cause I'm getting older." Cecilia describes the feeling she has after she leaves an Art Guide session as "Content, contented yes, and wanting to perhaps find out a bit more about something I've heard."

As a Grandmother

Today, Cecilia also experiences the museum with her only grandchild, five-year-old Jasmine. Upon reflection (of her experiences of taking her own children on many outings to the museum and art galleries), Cecilia feels that perhaps her children were over exposed to the museum and art gallery scene. "They [enjoyed going] for a while 'til I gave them too much. But now I'm starting on my granddaughter." These days, Cecilia makes sure her visits to the museum are on her granddaughter's terms.

Cecilia and Jasmine visit the TMAG together approximately three times a year. They have been making these visits for the last couple of years, since Jasmine was about three years old. Cecilia typically takes her granddaughter to the Museum and Art Gallery when she is looking after her. She hopes the visits "encourage her

to observe” so that “perhaps she will be creative later on [in life].” Cecilia likes to make their visits “a memorable occasion.” So, the last time they visited the museum, she “piggy-backed” Jasmine part of the way home.

Cecilia does not have any specific agenda for her visits to the TMAG with her granddaughter. She prefers to “just let it flow.” Visits typically involve spending time in the zoology gallery, children’s discovery space, the geology gallery, and on more recent trips, exploring the new Antarctic exhibition. Although Cecilia normally follows her granddaughter around, going wherever Jasmine wants to go, she admits that her own interests might influence the areas they attend to during some of their visits.

We stay with, um, the animals or the rocks. ... She loves looking at the rocks and how they light up and the colours. And then I suppose because I do too. So it, it is really influenced a little bit by your own preference.

Cecilia feels a personal connection with the rocks on display in the geology exhibition. Her father dabbled in rock collecting and she keeps his rock collection at her home. When Jasmine visits her flat, they enjoy spending time looking at some of the rocks from her father’s collection. “I have a dish of rocks at the front door that were my father’s. So um, she likes to play with them. And I have a dish of water so she can see the different colours...”

Because of her own interest in art, on a recent visit, she walked Jasmine through the art galleries “just to pass it by her.”

Cecilia: But I just walked her through the paintings.

Michele: And what was her reaction?

Cecilia: She didn’t want to stay with it, but I wanted her to see it, but I didn’t want to force it on her. So [I] just walked her slowly through it. So it might make an impact visually, and then I just went with her, with whatever she wanted to look at.

Michele: Did you make any comments to her while you were in there?

Cecilia: Yes. I might have said, “Look at this” a couple of times. But I didn’t over stress it. Like the illustrations for a book that someone’s drawn,

I think I picked her up to show her, and I might have said something about the paintings going through the gallery. But no, I didn't want her to be bored and I just wanted to have a sort of a, contact.

Michele: Does she draw?

Cecilia: Yes, very good.

The children's discovery space is another area of the TMAG that Cecilia and her granddaughter like to spend time in during a visit.

She loves to go in the play area for children and look at everything, and I look at everything with her and sit down and draw. And then she loves to build with blocks and so I participate with her if she asks me to. I don't force myself. So, I just sit there and let her play and observe her interacting with other children, sharing and that sort of thing.

When I asked Cecilia to describe how she feels after a visit to the museum with her granddaughter, she commented, "I feel content, there again. You know, that we've had a nice time together, it hasn't been stressful and um I think she would have liked to have stayed longer last time we were here."

With Friends

Cecilia also experiences the TMAG with friends. Her visits to the museum with friends do not happen as frequently as they did in the past, "Ah, that would only be a few times a year, people's lives are so busy." Because she is well informed about what is going on in the local art scene, Cecilia is often the one who initiates these visits. Occasionally, Cecilia and a friend stop by the museum on Saturday afternoons for the "Artists Working Live in the Gallery" program. The museum is also a destination when she has friends "visiting from interstate."

When exploring the Museum and Art Gallery with friends, Cecilia enjoys engaging in conversation: "About the artworks yes, or whatever the current exhibition is. It's nice, we can have a comment. And I like to hear their comments." But because Cecilia and some of her friends have different viewing styles,

conversation about the works on display may occur after they leave the gallery space.

Given the social nature of these visits, a visit to the TMAG with friends might include time in the café. “When I’m with friends, you know, I usually linger around. And we might have a coffee or a lunch. So make it a social sort of event when I’m with a friend.” With the recent addition of a café, Cecilia sees the museum as a “community space,” a place that has “a nice sort of ambiance” where she can sit and chat with people who share her interest in art.

Well, you can meet your friends there, and in the restaurant where they have the coffee and lunch, or I can meet the other people who are interested in art and talk about art, and so that’s when I connected as a community space—socialising, you know, with people who think the same way.

Even if she does not visit an exhibition with friends, she enjoys sharing information about current exhibitions with them. “I might tell my friends, you know, to go and see this, or go and see that. So I do pass on what I felt to some of my friends...” Cecilia’s preference for whether she visits on her own or in the company of others depends on what sort of mood she is in and the purpose for the visit.

On Her Own

The final way Cecilia experiences the TMAG today is on her own. She makes unaccompanied visits to the museum approximately “six times a year but, could be more, [it] all depends on the exhibition that’s on.” She learns of upcoming shows through her association with the Art Guides and by reading the local newspaper or gallery guide.

I usually read what’s on in the newspaper, you know or now I’ll read through this little guide book that the Guides put out. I go through that and I mark off what I really want to see, whether it’s here [TMAG] or in any of the other galleries and I try and get to them. And if I’m driving a certain way

and I think, you know, I'll just see that exhibition. If it's convenient for me I'll go in and look at it.

The main purpose for these visits is to view new art exhibitions. If it's an exhibition of particular interest to her, she may experience it on more than one occasion.

...sometimes it's for an exhibition and I might want to come back twice to see it, and other times I might just sort of wander in because I have nothing else to do, and just need to have another look at some of the older paintings that have been brought out of storage ... just sort of to take it, take it in a bit more.

When Cecilia goes to the museum alone, she "usually sort of might be already be in a, a sort of quiet thoughtful mood." Although she enjoys visiting the TMAG with others, she says there are benefits of going there on her own.

...just to absorb a bit more and, um think, think about it. You know I can stay with, take it in when I'm by myself. I don't have to have a conversation. And, I move—oh I know what it is. Some people move slower than me, some people move faster than me, so you can really go at your own pace. And what doesn't interest you, you can move on and stay with whatever interests you. That's the benefit of coming on your own.

On solitary visits to the museum, Cecilia experiences a range of sensations during her encounters with objects. When engaging with art, she examines the artists' techniques, judges the quality of the work, and wonders if she could produce similar works. It can sometimes be an emotional experience for her.

Cecilia: I'd be thinking about the brush strokes and where they're placed and where the light is and ah, going through it that way. And then I'd sort of, I might walk back from it to see how I can, what I can see, and how, you know, separating me from the painting, and how it sort of, and how I feel about it. Sometimes I might feel a little bit emotional about it.

Michele: What sort of emotions?

Cecilia: Like a bit sad.

Michele: If it's a painting about—

Cecilia: Usually a person (pause). When you've had to stop and really think about it, you're not sure. You've just sort of reacted at the time and you don't sort of process it as, as words.

- Michele: Do you think you have to learn certain skills to be able to connect or respond to an artwork?
- Cecilia: No. I don't think you have to learn it. Ah, either it's in you or it's not. (little laugh) Well that's my feeling anyway.
- Michele: So the sorts of experience, emotions you would have in an exhibition, um, would there be a range of emotions that you would feel as you were going around?
- Cecilia: Yes. Because sometimes you just say, "Oh that's not very good at all" or "That's wonderful" or, (pause) I like paths, looking at that painting over there [artwork hanging in the interview room] I think, can I, could I do that? (little laugh)
- Michele: So when you're looking, the way that you engage with the work is then coming back to—
- Cecilia: Yes.
- Michele: Could [I do that]—
- Cecilia: Yes. Yes. Yes.
- Michele: And so, sometimes is it inspirational, like encouraging you to, after you see a work to say, "Yes I could" and does it serve as an inspiration [for you to create your own artwork]?
- Cecilia: It sort of does, but I don't do anything about it. But I figure I might just sit there, (laugh) and sit there (laugh). But anyway I've enjoyed it there. Oh no, I sort of try to get in touch with their feelings too, the artist's feelings.
- Michele: How do you do that?
- Cecilia: Trying to, just seeing the way they work.
- Michele: And what they were feeling as they were painting it? Or—
- Cecilia: Yes, maybe—
- Michele: Or what they were trying to express—
- Cecilia: Yes. Yes. Well, both. Mmm. I think about it.

Cecilia describes the way she feels after she has experienced the Museum and Art Gallery on her own as, "Oh thoughtful I suppose, and just taking away a bit more of, head stuff (laugh)."

* * *

Although Cecilia's primary focus for visits to the TMAG when she is on her own is to view art, during the *guided tour* she led me through the art gallery and museum exhibition areas. We were unable to explore the entire museum that day

due to the filming restrictions associated with a traveling exhibition and the recent closing of a temporary art exhibition.

After a brief stop in the geology room, I followed Cecilia upstairs to the Antarctic exhibition, an area of the museum that she visits with her granddaughter, but wants to explore in more depth on her own.

Um, yes I want to read more and look at all the older things that were in Antarctica. And I enjoy looking at the old fossils and rocks because of the sense of history. To think that we've got something that is so, so old, you know, and if you can touch it, it's wonderful.

Just as I was asking her to tell me what she gets out of the experience of touching something old, she spotted a large rock and said, "Let's go over here and find out."

- Michele: Ok. (laugh) Oh my gosh, what is that?
 Cecilia: It's a glacial, rock. Isn't it beautiful? Come and touch it.
 Michele: It is beautiful. Oh my—
 Cecilia: And look at those colours, aren't they just superb?
 Michele: So what sorts of things do you, um, how does it make you feel when you touch it and look at it?
 Cecilia: Awww! You, you're touching something very, very, very old. And it's hard to comprehend.
 Michele: How old is it?
 Cecilia: Um (reading label) 18,000, no, here we are, formed about 18,000 years ago.
 Michele: So how would you describe how you feel when you touch that?
 Cecilia: That you're connected to something that long ago, and here we have it in front of us, and look at those superb colours...

Her desire to connect with the past was a theme that surfaced on the tour as well as during the interviews. I asked her to tell me about the feelings she experiences when she comes in contact with "really old" objects.

- Michele: What is it about the ancient Egyptian, Chinese that draws you to them?
 Cecilia: Because I want to try to understand them from the past. Because I don't think you can, ah, if you understand the past, and that sense of history, um you can really appreciate the present. And then you find connections like [I'm] reading all this about the ancient bee keeping

and the artwork and going to talks about the Middle Ages. I'm still seeing connections, you know to the present day.

Michele: That are relevant to your life?

Cecilia: Not so much necessarily to my life, but, taking in more that—like today what's been carried on, can be carried on for thousands of years. Without people really understanding and knowing it. But I just love that feeling because I haven't visited these places. I want to visit them to get the feeling inside me, you know what went on there thousands of years ago.

When she engages with old objects, she transports herself to that time.

I like to try and transport myself to that time that I'm looking at. I like to think, you know, what would life have been like at that time? And their thinking. And I think people in the distant past have been really more brilliant than now. They didn't have all this clutter around them. They had silence and, you know, being creative. And you can sort of almost feel it with their objects. Yes, I like to sort of transport myself ... and think how you would have behaved at that time and (pause) to bring that into the present day too. Could I do artwork like them? This is what I'm thinking you know when I'm actually looking at it. Yes. Trying to get into their soul, I think (laugh).

Cecilia believes that transporting herself to a different time serves as “another survival technique.”

It's sort of another survival technique for me. You know, if I'm not coping with the present day, you know, how would they have coped with it in the past? Or how would they have done it? And I'd figure, maybe, like if I'm doing an artwork, a copy of an artist, I feel as though I might be getting into them a bit, even though they're dead and long gone, I feel maybe they're just helping me a little bit. And it's not just with artwork, it might be with everyday things. So I have a lovely time having fantasy and you know, try to connect. ... And living in fantasy, I survived on fantasy as a child, because it was pretty stressful. So I was often laughing in the, you know, the darkest times. But I could, I could create pictures in my head that would make me sort of keep me going.

Throughout the guided tour, Cecilia engaged with objects and exhibitions that had direct links to her life—her family, interests, and surroundings. While we were in the Chinese decorative art gallery she commented:

I like to come here, because I like to feel the history and see how they worked and the colours they used. And my sons are studying Asian languages and I think deep down I've always had an interest in Asia and the objects and their paintings.

A few years ago she “had a go at trying to paint in the Chinese method.”

As we walked through the colonial art gallery, a gallery she typically does not spend a lot of time in, Cecilia drew my attention to some of the works she likes. “And I really love the colours they used, and also the wilderness areas are really connected to me in a way. ... I’ve been to some of these places, so I like to see them.” She pointed to a painting of Mt Wellington [Henry Gritten, *Hobart Town*, 1856] (see Figure 4.2). As we stood in front of the artwork she commented:

Mt Wellington of course is always beautiful. I never get tired looking at Mt Wellington. It sort of needs to be there, you know it’s like comfort, you see the weather coming. It’s such a beautiful mountain, we’re lucky to have it in our background.

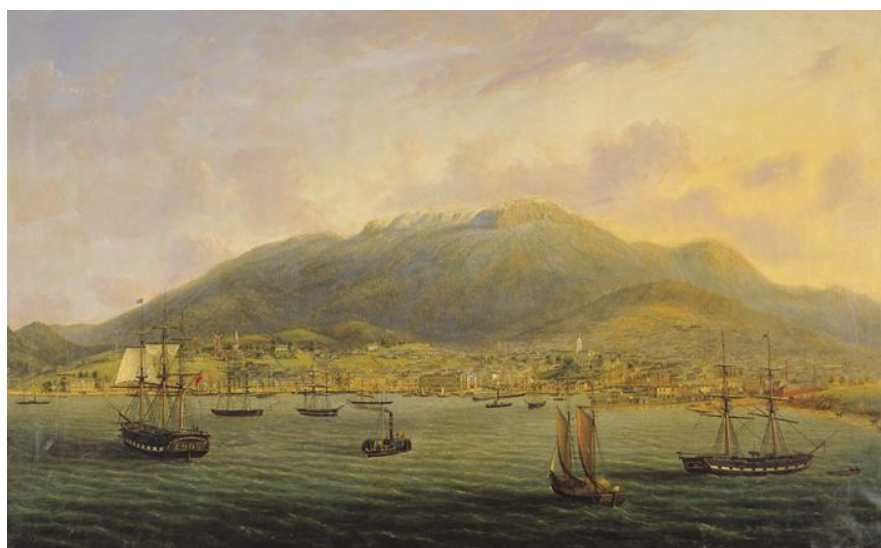


Figure 4.2. Henry Gritten, *Hobart Town*, 1856, oil on canvas, 94 x 153.2 cm.

Courtesy of the TMAG.

* * *

Future Involvement

Over the last thirty plus years, and through different life stages, Cecilia has experienced the museum in many ways. “Like in the beginning it was a social sort

of thing and, um for either for myself or the children and then for learning for the children and me as therapy.” Along the way, the museum has played a vital role in helping her get through some very difficult periods in her life. She describes a museum as “a place to lift your spirits. ... A place of spiritual, sort of, renewal.” The TMAG is a place where Cecilia feels very comfortable. She says, “It feels like another good place for me to be, like in a home, you know a comfortable home.” Besides the church, the museum is the one constant connection in Cecilia’s life. “And I think, yes, it’s one of my connecting, um, connecting solidly to something.”

Although she has had a long-term relationship with the museum, she does not feel a unique sense of loyalty to the institution. She thinks she would “feel the same way” towards another museum if she “moved to another city.” The one requirement however, would be that the museum also included an art gallery.

What will Cecilia’s involvement with the museum look like in the future? It depends on the direction her life takes her, as she reveals in the following conversation from our third interview.

- Michele: In light of your involvement with the museum over the last 30-plus years, what do you think your future involvement with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery will look like?
- Cecilia: I don’t know. I just go with the flow. I might stay with it, or I might sort of get bored with it.
- Michele: Do you think that because somehow you’ve always figured out a way, in different life stages, to somehow reconnect, that there’s a likelihood of you staying involved there?
- Cecilia: Yes, I might. Yes. (pause) But it might be because I get interested in the old, that I stay connected. You know if I get down there in the underbelly [referring to the collections area], and start finding all those objects and if there was something for me to do, I’d probably enjoy it.
- Michele: Do they have volunteers working in the collections area? Or—
- Cecilia: I think they do, but I haven’t inquired about that yet. ... Yes. I’ve been going to ask them. But I just haven’t got around to it yet. I’m just sort of cruising.

- Michele: And so the thing that'll determine whether or not you stay involved will be whether there's something there that holds—
- Cecilia: Really interests me. Yes. (pause) Or whether I decide to start painting myself. You know, it all depends.
- Michele: And so if you get back into doing that, you're less likely to have involvement there?
- Cecilia: Yes.
- Michele: Right.
- Cecilia: Each day's a new day.

Postscript

We sat at the small table in front of her lounge room window and discussed her thoughts and reactions to reading her narrative account. As she read the narrative alongside me, Cecilia shared new understandings about herself gained through the narrative inquiry process. Upon reflection on her childhood in the country and the influences on her love of art she said, “[I] realise I had landscape paintings in front of me all the time and was playing in them—hills, rivers, creeks, beautiful sunsets on distant hills, rock sculptures, clay soil.”

Sarah – “nature’s child”

It’s 6:30 on a Monday morning. Sarah gets out of bed and heads to the kitchen to make breakfast for herself and Jasmine, her five-year-old daughter. After breakfast, she gets her daughter ready for school, prepares a school lunch and then hops into the shower. After she’s dressed, she walks Jasmine to school, then returns home to “do a few chores.” At 10 o’clock, Sarah goes off to work at a sushi shop in the city. After work, she picks up her daughter from school, and depending on the day of the week, she either goes home to catch up on “cleaning and stuff” or she continues on to one of her daughter’s after school activities—swimming, piano, or dance. Sarah’s daily routine seems to be fairly typical for a single parent of a five-year-old girl. Perhaps what is not so typical is that her routine also includes making frequent visits to the local museum.

History of Involvement with the Arts and Museums

Sarah was born in Hobart 31 years ago. From an early age, she was exposed to art and culture through her frequent visits to the museum and art galleries with her dad and mom, Cecilia. In our first interview, we explored her museum visiting history.

- Michele: What are your earliest memories of visiting a museum or art gallery?
 Sarah: I know I used to visit the museum when I was young.
 Michele: TMAG?
 Sarah: TMAG.
 Michele: When you would have been how old?
 Sarah: Maybe five.
 Michele: And do you remember anything about that experience?
 Sarah: I remember they used to have a human skeleton in a big glass case or cabinet. And it was sitting on a chair or something, and I liked that. And I remember the Aboriginal part. And I remember being disappointed when I was a little bit older, like about eight, because they had some exhibition of shrunken heads and I had to go to ballet and I couldn’t go (laugh). ...

Michele: Do you remember who you would have been with on your initial visit to TMAG?

Sarah: Ah, no. I probably was with my mum, maybe with my dad. But I don't, like I know I used to go there when I was little, but I don't have—remember lots of things about it.

As the conversation continued, Sarah recalled additional details of her childhood visits to the museum.

Michele: Did it have a children's section?

Sarah: No. But the things you can do. Like they used to have this button you could press and hear this Aboriginal woman [Fanny Cochrane Smith¹²] singing. I liked that.

Michele: What did you like about the Aboriginal woman singing?

Sarah: Well, that was, it just sounded so old, like it was all crackly and it was interesting. And probably 'cause it was just a button you can press (laugh) ... and just 'cause it sounds so old. 'Cause it was such a long time ago. And it had a nice photo, like just a really old black and white photo of her in a dress with the gramophone. Yeah, so maybe because it was such an old thing, recorded so long ago. ... And like all kids, I liked pressing the buttons so you could see the lights on the animals downstairs.

Michele: Were they the same buttons that light up—

Sarah: Yeah, I'm pretty sure they were the same.

Michele: Has the animal exhibition changed much?

Sarah: No. (laugh) But I'd like the buttons ... and I suppose I remember that. I'm trying to think. The mummy's always been there [referring to the mummy on display in a glass case located under a staircase]. And I have a memory of that (pause). And I always remember, they had this huge painting; but they might have put it away now. And I don't know who's done it, but it was kind of like of dead birds and stuff and kinda their guts or something and it's huge! But it was there forever.

Michele: In the art gallery part?

Sarah: Yeah, in the art gallery bit.

Michele: And so, it was just kinda gross or?

Sarah: Well I didn't think, ugh, that's gross. I think I was just kind of a bit fascinated by it.

¹² The recording of Fanny Cochrane Smith, thought to be the last of the Tasmanian Aboriginals, was made in the late 1800s, early 1900s. It was commissioned by the Royal Society of Tasmania, and it is the only recording of the Tasmanian Aboriginal language and song (TMAG personal communication).

Sarah also has memories of her parents taking her to openings at smaller, commercial art galleries.

And I remember art galleries when I was really little. ‘Cause my parents used to take me. But I think I’d find it really, kind of boring, ‘cause it was all adults. But I remember crackers and cheese (laughs) and that was good.

As Sarah recalled her experiences visiting galleries with her parents as a child, I thought about Cecilia’s comments to me about fearing she had overexposed her children to the museum and art gallery scene when they were young.

In her teen years, Sarah’s visits to the TMAG tapered off; she presumes because she “would have thought it was boring” and “would have seen everything” during her visits to the museum as a child. And like many teens, she would have been “more interested with just hanging out with friends and doing other things.” One of the things Sarah and her friends were interested in was art. Consequently, they would attend gallery openings and “little school [art] things.” She recalls, “I used to go to lots of galleries then. ‘Cause they’d have all the gallery openings on the same night. [I’d go] with friends and it was really social and fun.”

At the age of 19, after completing one year of art school, Sarah moved to Sydney. “I always just wanted to get out of Tasmania (little laugh). So as soon as I finished school, I just went.” She spent the next six years of her life in Sydney. During that time, Sarah worked full-time as a florist. One of her free-time activities included making visits to museums and art galleries. “Yeah, like I’d just be at work during the week and I think it was just, it’s just a thing to do, like if you’ve got nothing to do on a Sunday afternoon. [I’d go] with friends or by myself, yeah.”

Some of the most memorable museum experiences Sarah had while living in Sydney occurred at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). It was there that she attended exhibitions featuring the works of Jeff Koons and Cindy Sherman. I asked her to tell me about those experiences.

He [Jeff Koons] does sculpture and photography, but it's kind of pornographic. He's married to this Italian woman called Cicciolina. ... It's just his crass, oh, like it's really kitsch I suppose. Like he's done like big marble white sculptures of Michael Jackson. But I was impressed by that really because out the front of the building he had made this massive, like this tallest building, you know like one of those white fluffy little dogs. But it was made out of a, a hedge or something. But I like that art gallery 'cause they have new things, so it's really exciting. ... And I remember seeing a Cindy Sherman exhibition there. And I quite like her. She's a photographer too.

During the interview, Sarah mentioned a number of artists. I asked her to tell me what it is about those artists' work that appeals to her.

- Michele: So why do the works of Koons, Sherman, [Vivienne] Westwood, [Norman] Lindsay, why do they appeal to you, or do they?
- Sarah: Um, they're the ones that stuck out, the things that I saw when I was there. But I think I always like those ones—like Westwood is fashion and I love fashion. And Sherman is photography and I love photography. And Jeff Koons, I think that just stuck out 'cause he's so silly and kinda shocking but it's just silly and golden and shiny (laughs).
- Michele: ... And what about Lindsay?
- Sarah: Lindsay, Oh!
- Michele: 'Cause that's older.
- Sarah: Yeah, it is. I've always liked that. And I think I just like that old, that kind of old romantic kind of stuff. And just him and his beautiful house in the Blue Mountains with the beautiful girls he would paint or whatever.
- Michele: Were you exposed to his works when you were younger, or, is there a connection there?
- Sarah: Yeah, my mum gave me a book on him ages ago that I haven't really read properly, but I kind of always knew what his pictures kind of looked like. And as a child you'd know about the *Magic Pudding*.¹³ I don't know (little laugh). ... It's kind of like a nice kind of fantasy, like a garden or, I don't know, I suppose, yeah, the girliness [sic] of it.

In addition to visiting museums and art galleries in Sydney, during that period in her life, Sarah also traveled to Europe where she experienced the Louvre.

¹³ *The Magic Pudding*, first published in 1918, is a classic Australian children's book written and illustrated by Norman Lindsay (Hunt, 2001).

- Sarah: Oh, when I lived in Sydney I went overseas, not for very long. But I went to Paris and I went, “Right, let’s go to the Louvre.” And I went there for two days. Like I just went there and came back—
- Michele: Were you by yourself?
- Sarah: No. I think one day I was, and then I met up with someone that I knew from Australia and her German husband, and went with them. But it was too much. Like I hardly saw any of it and it’s so exhausting. Like I felt like I didn’t see anything ‘cause there’s so much to see. Like I was walking around and you kind of get tired and don’t absorb, a, a, I can’t even say the word, but—
- Michele: ‘Cause it’s too overwhelming?
- Sarah: There’s just too much and too much I wanted to see and, but it was great, but it was just so big. And I remember I went to see the *Mona Lisa*. But I went into this room and it was full! (laugh) It was like, why is this room full? But everyone was looking at the *Mona Lisa*. And I think I remember in a basement, they had, it was dark and nice and they had all this ancient Egyptian stuff. I remember being interested in that. And, but I’d love to go there again. But you’d need like to go back every day for a long time, I think.
- Michele: And just do—
- Sarah: A little bit. Because I think after a while in an art gallery, it kinda gets boring or, you’re just kinda over it. And, or there’s—you just kind of can’t take in all that information.

At the end of her time living in Sydney, Sarah gave birth to a baby girl. A couple months after her daughter Jasmine was born, Sarah moved back to Hobart.

Um yeah, ‘cause I had my daughter. She was a couple of months old and I didn’t have any money (little laugh), and a stupid boyfriend and, (little laugh) and it’s nice here. Like it’s nice with a little kid. So yeah.

Sarah settled back into life in Hobart with a new focus—raising her child. In addition to caring for her daughter, she attended art classes at the university, studying photography. After three years of study, she quit university and found a job, the job she has today. When her daughter was about two, Sarah returned to the museum, this time as a young mom. She decided to take her daughter there because she thought that it was “just a good thing to do with kids.” For the next few years, they made regular visits to the museum, nearly once a fortnight. Since returning to

the museum as a mom, Sarah only experiences the museum with her daughter; she never visits on her own.

Details of the Relationship Today

Today, now that Jasmine is in school, Sarah and her daughter visit the TMAG about once a month. The routine they follow when they're there has changed very little over the years. Most visits include having a bite to eat in the café, playing in the "kids' room," and walking around the exhibition areas. Sarah typically follows her daughter's agenda, revisiting favorite areas and objects, echoes of the way her mother, Cecilia, experiences the museum with Jasmine. She says although her daughter never gets "sick of looking at things ... as an adult, you can only look at things so many times."

Sarah admits that because she is so familiar with the museum, she does not view the experience as one in which she is engaging with objects, but rather as a place to have a nice relaxing time with her daughter. Relaxing was a feature of the visits to the TMAG that Sarah mentioned on a number of occasions during the interviews. During their visits, she enjoys finding places where she can sit and relax. "Like my daughter loves the bit where the seal and everything is and there's a really comfy chair there."

Sarah: I enjoy it here, but I, I kinda relax when I'm here. So I enjoy it, like I don't care how long we stay, we can stay for hours and I enjoy myself here.

Michele: ... So the sorts of experiences you're seeking when you're here are relaxing?

Sarah: Yeah. And interesting. Like finding out about things, but just kind of relaxing.

Although Sarah does not go to the museum with the intention of learning something, she will read the text panels if Jasmine asks her a question or if something of interest catches her eye. Occasionally, there might be a new exhibition

that Sarah wants to see. In those instances, they finish their normal routine, and visit the exhibition of interest at the end of the visit. On one of their recent visits, they “stumbled across” the *National Treasures* exhibition, a temporary exhibition displaying some of Australia’s iconic artifacts. Sarah found that exhibition very interesting.

There was just so much interesting stuff in it from the past. Like Ned Kelly’s helmet with a bullet hole in it, and just looking at old books and stuff. I think, I just, like it’s a piece of history, like, he wore that helmet, that’s amazing (laugh)! And there were some paintings in there I liked as well, but I don’t know who they were by. Just, of flowers in a vase and like really vivid colours. But I just like old things and can’t remember what else. But there were lots of things that I found interesting.

Because Sarah has experienced museums on her own and as a mother, I wondered if she has a preference for the way she experiences a museum, particularly along the lines of social interaction.

- Michele: Did you engage differently with objects when you used to visit museums on your own as opposed to now, how you—
- Sarah: Yeah, because I would speak to her [daughter] about it. Like she’s really independent and will look by herself. But if we’re looking at something together um I’ll point things out to her or she’ll say “What’s that?” and we’ll have to read about it and so there’s more communication.
- Michele: And for you is it enjoyable both ways?
- Sarah: Yeah. Oh I think yeah probably—
- Michele: Or more so, one way or the other?
- Sarah: Probably more with her. Like it’s interesting and she learns some things, like new words and stuff.

Although Sarah and her daughter usually visit the museum on their own, they occasionally go there with friends. “Especially if Jasmine has a friend over. I find it easy (little laugh) to look after children here. ‘Cause they kind of look after themselves (little laugh).” Sarah also enjoys visiting the museum with other moms and their children. She sees those visits as being beneficial for both her and her child.

Sarah: Like if we came with friends, just, it's not about the art or the museum. Just like chatting and like catching up with another adult (laugh). Like I kind of talk with the other parent, and the kids kind of look at the things that they want to look at.

Michele: But the talk, like you said is not focused on—

Sarah: No.

Michele: It's just chit-chat about other stuff.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah (laugh).

Michele: And so, the social part of coming here, is it important?

Sarah: Oh, it's great. It's good to like see a friend. Especially too like at the, not so much now, but when Jasmine was little, as a single parent you can be really isolated so it's like, it's nice to have that kind of adult time, and the kids can do what they want. Well of course, if they're like, well behaved (little laugh). But um, and it's good for them too to look at things together as kids, not as adults telling them what to look at or whatever.

* * *

Even though Sarah thinks about the museum today specifically in terms of her identity as a mother, during the *guided tour* I experienced the museum with her outside her role as Jasmine's mom. During the tour, we strolled through many of the exhibition areas—some permanent exhibitions that she is very familiar with and other temporary exhibitions that she was viewing for the first time.

One of the first rooms we visited on the tour was the zoology gallery. As we entered the space, Sarah commented, "As an adult I'd walk straight through here, but my daughter likes this room and I used to like it lots when I was a kid." While on our leisurely walk around the room, Sarah recalled her experiences in that exhibition as a child, looking at the "stuffed" animals and "pressing buttons." During our conversation, she told me that when she was a young girl her nickname was "nature's child."

Oh, my dad and my grandma were really into nature and, and I kind of lived in the bush. But I have a friend, that I'm friends with now, that would tease me and say, "You're nature's child." And like she remembers us being little

and me kind of saving her from a snake. And I don't remember things like that.

She says that although she continues to enjoy nature, she was more interested in it in the past because of the amount of time she spent “doing stuff like that.”

As we continued to wander through the galleries, Sarah, like her mother, was drawn to old objects.

Sarah: But I'm interested in like these old baskets [woven and twined baskets made by Tasmanian Aboriginal women] and things. I just think they're kind of beautiful. And I love the necklaces [Tasmanian Aboriginal shell necklaces, 1800s].

Michele: So what sorts of things do you think about when you're looking at them?

Sarah: Um, like I like to read about things like this and just how old they are and that someone used to wear them. And they made them. And they're beautiful!

Michele: And so what is the old part of it, the old that is interesting to you?

Sarah: I think just I've always had an interest in history. And that they used to belong to somebody.

In addition to old objects, Sarah engaged with a series of large black and white photographs by Lisa Garland that were on display as part of a contemporary art exhibition [*Register: Tasmanian Artists 2006*]. The portraits featured Tasmanians in their home environments. It was Sarah's first time viewing the works.

Michele: So tell me what's going through your head when you're looking at this. [Lisa Garland, *Craig*, 2004]

Sarah: I think that's so like Tasmanian (little laugh). That one like, I can just see myself being in that room and just the old fireplace and—are there some old animal skins or something on the walls?

Michele: It looks like it.

Sarah: I don't know. It's just like in the back of the bush somewhere (giggle) and it's so um Tassie. (She moves to next work.) Oh I like that one. [Lisa Garland, *Mr & Mrs Dick*, 2003] (see Figure 4.3)

Michele: What do you like about it?

Sarah: I love like the roses. They're so like white. And their wall is crazy (laugh). What is that made out of? (laugh) (She moves in to have a closer look.) I love, and [look at] their poodles. It's such a nanna

room, (pause) and the children, their grandchildren. Yeah, I love that one, and the carpet.

Michele: So when you look at it, are you looking at the content more than the technique?

Sarah: The content (pause). But maybe the technique a bit too 'cause like the white's really good and the black's really good.

Michele: That's what you notice. Because you know about photography, that you would actually be able to pick up on the contrast...

Sarah: Yeah, I like that one. (She moves to next work.) Is it all old people? No, he's not that old. They're old (little laugh). Yeah, I like these 'cause I love portraits. ... 'Cause it's about people and I love people when they're in their space and seeing their stuff.



Figure 4.3. Lisa Garland, *Mr & Mrs Dick*, 2004, silver gelatin print, 100 x 100 cm.

Courtesy of the artist.

Sarah was fully engaged the entire time we spent looking at the photographs—looking closely at the works, smiling, laughing, pointing, and asking questions. In the interview that followed the guided tour, I asked her to tell me how seeing that exhibition made her feel. “Like I loved those big black and white photos. ... Yeah, it made me excited. And ah, kinda felt passionate, like oh I should take some photos, yeah. ... Not that I did anything about it (little laugh). But yeah.”

As we continued on the tour, Sarah commented that although she likes the museum building and its “musty old wood” smell, she does not have any favorite areas of the museum. While walking around the colonial art gallery, we discussed the reason for that and the pros and cons associated with being so familiar with the place.

- Sarah: I don’t know if I have a favourite area because I don’t kind of think about it, what I really like most ‘cause I’m always here with my daughter. But if it was a bigger museum, like if I was in a bigger city I might do it by myself sometimes ‘cause museums are fascinating. There’s always new things to look at. But because this one’s kind of small and I’ve seen it millions of times—
- Michele: But because you’ve seen it millions of times, it’s comfortable, so do you feel more comfortable here than you do in other museums?
- Sarah: Yeah, but I suppose less interested, because I’ve seen it a lot (little laugh). But I’m still getting something, like I like looking at these paintings with the flowers and the dead rabbits (laugh). [W. B. Gould, *Still Life with Tasmanian Wildflowers*, 1840s; W. B. Gould, *Still Life with Hare and Pheasant*, 1840] ... ‘cause it’s like traditional still life. But I really like the vase of flowers.
- Michele: ‘Cause that’s what you did, you worked with flowers—
- Sarah: Yeah, I look at all the different flowers and think about what they’re called and I like how brightly painted they are.
- Michele: How come, you just decided you didn’t want to do that [florist] anymore?
- Sarah: Um, yeah, I did it, and then I had my daughter and (laugh) I don’t really make decisions, I just see what happens (laugh).
- Michele: ‘Cause you noticed the flowers in the photograph down there as well—
- Sarah: Yeah, I love flowers...

On our way out of the colonial art gallery, Sarah turned to me and said, “But I think I kind of like this room ‘cause it’s like a BBC drama (little laugh). It’s like a big kind of English house or something.”

* * *

Despite her personal history with the TMAG, Sarah thinks she could have a similar sort of relationship with a museum located in another city. “I’d go to like

wherever I'd be, I'd go to the museum there." She attributes her continued visitation to the museum to factors other than having a sense of loyalty to the institution. "I suppose it's something I've always done, and I'm interested in history, and nature, and art. But as a parent, I want to take my daughter there and she enjoys it so um, that's the main reason that brings me back now."

Future Involvement

As far as plans for visiting the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in the future go, Sarah says she and Jasmine will probably continue visiting until her daughter's interest wanes. After that, it's likely that she'll go to the museum to view exhibitions that tie to her interests.

- Sarah: Well as my daughter gets older, 'cause she'll be interested I reckon until she's about ten, and depending on what she's like as a teenager, I probably won't go there very often unless you know there's an art exhibition that I want to see. Then I'll go by myself and do that. But yeah, it's more about my daughter and as she gets older, I'm sure she'll get bored with it and I won't go as much as she gets older.
- Michele: So as long as you're in Hobart, you will still be going there, I mean not as frequently as you are now, but if you hear of a show that's of interest—
- Sarah: Yeah, yeah, I'll definitely go. Yeah.
- Michele: Can you think of reasons why you would stop visiting?
- Sarah: No, only if they made it really dull (laugh). No, there's no reason I would stop visiting it—or if they started charging heaps to go in there. 'Cause that's why I go too, because it's a free thing to do with my daughter (laughing), because I'm stingy (laugh).
- Michele: Are there things the museum could do that would encourage you to visit more, either with Jasmine or on your own?
- Sarah: Um, yeah, just change the exhibits and put more in it. Like I know it costs money and stuff, but they could make it a lot more interesting.
- Michele: Like what sorts of things would bring you in?
- Sarah: Oh, maybe, I know they've had things like costume kind of things before, but then they get rid of them. And I know they have, like I'm really interested in clothes, for me it would be like the history of fashion and stuff. And they have done little bits like that, but I think they could do more. And yeah, open up the non-public bit every so often to see what's in there. That would be fascinating, just of what

they've collected. But I suppose that's tricky (little laugh). I don't know. And yeah, maybe different art exhibitions. But they probably do have some good ones, and maybe I just don't really notice when things are on there.

Michele: And a good one to you would be what? A good art exhibition would consist of?

Sarah: I think not just art like paintings, but a variety of things, like objects and photographs.

Michele: So not just contemporary, but any kind of art would appeal to you as long it was something of interest?

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Postscript

Four months after Interview Three, I ran into Sarah and her daughter at the local grocery store. Sarah told me that they had just returned from a trip to Melbourne. She reported that the Melbourne Museum "was great" and half-jokingly remarked that because it was so good, she is "never going back to the Hobart Museum!"

Jasmine – “I just love it”

Jasmine is a five-year-old girl who loves to go to the park, jump rope, dance, draw, listen to stories, and visit the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. She has been making regular trips to the museum ever since she was a toddler, around the age of two. Today, having a full schedule, attending school five days a week and participating in extracurricular activities, Jasmine continues to make frequent visits to the museum.

History of Involvement with the Museum

How did Jasmine’s interest in visiting the museum develop? According to her mother, Sarah, “It was just something we did.” I wondered to what extent Sarah’s experiences of going to the TMAG when she was a child contributed to her taking her daughter to the museum at such an early age.

I think, yeah, I didn’t really think about it. I just thought it’s somewhere to go with kids. Maybe so, because I’ve got one good friend and she didn’t take her daughter there ‘til she was like about four. And she’d never thought really to take her there, so maybe she didn’t really go there when she was little. I don’t know. Yeah.

Seated at her kitchen table over a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits, Jasmine in the next room curled up on the couch watching television, I asked Sarah to tell me about her early visits to the museum with Jasmine.

Michele: In the beginning, when she was 2 or 3, what would you do when you were there?

Sarah: Just go to that [children’s] room. They used to have it upstairs and she’d just draw and we’d do puzzles... And she would just entertain herself for ages. ... She’d spend a lot of time in that room. I’d have trouble getting her out of there.

Michele: What was in there that she liked?

Sarah: Just the drawing and they had a video screen up there and they used to have this thing where you could put your hands in. And there were things that you could feel, like a rock, or a, and it was kinda scary. And they had scales she could stand on. Like old fashioned scales

and you could see if you weighed like 40,000 bumble bees or if you weighed as much as a dingo, or—

Michele: And she'd never get tired of it?

Jasmine: [From the couch in the lounge room] I was a dingo.

Sarah: Were you a dingo? You loved that didn't you? No, she'd never get tired of that. ... And she makes friends really easily. So there'd be another kid or something or she'd see someone she'd know and they'd do some drawing together. Yeah.

In addition to spending time in the children's room, Jasmine and her mom would walk around and explore the other exhibition areas. Jasmine especially enjoyed touching the animal pelts in the zoology gallery, the same fur she makes sure to touch during her visits there today. Although changes have been made to the museum over the last couple years, including a new children's discovery space, an Antarctic exhibition, and a café, the routine Jasmine and her mom follow when they're there has pretty much stayed the same.

Details of the Relationship Today

Even though her visits do not occur as frequently as they did before she started school, today Jasmine continues to visit the TMAG approximately once a month. She goes to the museum with a variety of people. She continues to make regular visits with her mom. During those visits, typically it's just the two of them, but, on occasion, they might invite friends to join them. She also goes to the museum with her dad. She spends every Sunday with him and the museum is one of the places they like to visit together. Occasionally, Jasmine visits the museum with her grandmother, Cecilia. And earlier in the year, she made her first school trip to the museum with her class.

Jasmine's relationship with the museum has evolved over time. Initially it was her mom's idea to bring her there, but now it is often Jasmine who initiates a visit. When I asked them who typically comes up with the idea to visit the museum

Jasmine's mom said to me and Jasmine, "Maybe it was my idea and now you just like to go, so it's your idea usually."

Why does Jasmine like to visit the museum? Because she "like[s] to look at the stuff." Her mom thinks she enjoys visiting the museum because she has "a good time there" and "yeah, it's a nice thing like to do with her mum." Given that Jasmine has been going to the museum from an early age, visiting the TMAG is "something that she just knows to do, just a normal thing for her to do. But it's her interest as well, because she's never bored there. She's always doing something." When she gets tired of exploring one area, "she can go and do something else."

Sarah says the main reason they go there is to have enjoyable experience, not to learn. "No, not educational or anything, it's just something that we like to do." Although Sarah does not have a learning agenda for their visits, she views the museum experience as educational.

There's a lot to learn in there and it's a good thing to do as well on a rainy day rather than, if you can't go to a park. ... Yeah and to make her interested in the world, I think. And not just, like I love watching TV and so does she, but you don't want to watch TV all afternoon or something like that. ... She's obviously learning things. ... I think she learns a lot without noticing, without realising it. ... It's just a nice thing to do like that's good for her. I think it's good for her.

■ ■ ■

The following description of a typical visit to the museum is derived from an amalgam of data generated through interviews and observations of Jasmine and her mom at the TMAG.

A typical visit for Jasmine and her mother would most likely start at the café, particularly if they arrive at lunchtime, feeling hungry. At the café, Jasmine orders two mini meat pies and an iced chocolate. If they arrive at teatime, she orders a biscuit and a "babychino." She is especially fond of the biscuits with the "Smarties" on them. Jasmine finishes eating and is eager to get to the children's

discovery space, located directly across from the café. As they enter the “kids’ room,” Jasmine and her mom find a place to sit at the puzzle table. Jasmine asks her mom to help her make the one with the Aboriginal design on it. After they finish the puzzle, they move to the drawing area. Jasmine selects two color-in sheets, one for her and one for her mom. They sit there quietly and discuss the colors they should use in their drawings.

After the drawings are finished, Jasmine’s mom says, “Do you want to have a look in the funny mirrors?” At the mirrors, Jasmine and her mom smile and laugh. They strike silly poses—bending, pointing, and jumping. Jasmine says, “Look at your legs. They’re so fat.” Then it’s off to the building blocks area. Once there, Jasmine’s mom makes herself comfortable on the foam-padded bench and watches her daughter build a space rocket out of brightly colored foam blocks. Jasmine wants to be an astronaut when she grows up. After taking one last look at her creation, Jasmine kicks it down and turns to her mom with a big grin on her face. As Jasmine starts to head off in another direction, her mom says, “Put them away, please.” After the blocks are back in their box, Jasmine and her mom spend a little time experimenting with the science interactives. They try to figure out how the camera connected to the kaleidoscope works.

After letting “her have a pretty good play there,” Jasmine and her mom head to the zoology gallery. As they enter the large dark room, Jasmine heads to the Tasmanian devil exhibit. She pushes the button to turn on the light in the display. As she looks at the “stuffed” animals, she tells her mom that her friend’s dad brought a poster of a Tasmanian devil to school. Next, they stop in front of the possum display where Jasmine hops up on the step and presses the button to turn on the light. As they peer through the window at the backyard scene, they count the possums foraging for apples in the dark of night. “Did you see the one down there?”

her mom asks as she gently strokes her daughter's long blond hair. After they're fairly sure they've spotted all the possums, they move to the seascape diorama where they spend time looking at and pointing out many different animals that make their home in various coastal habitats, seeing things this time that they've never noticed before.

Finished with her investigation of the diorama, Jasmine makes a beeline to the animal pelts. Once there, she makes sure to touch her favorite one, the sugar glider. From there, they continue on to the sea life display. While at that exhibit, Jasmine asks her mom to tell her the names of several different species of fish. She also counts the starfish, "One, two, three..." As they slowly make their way past the old-style glass cases containing sea creatures and insects, they encourage each other to look at the animals that they find interesting. Jasmine especially likes "the big moth" and "the big crab." After sharing a quick hug, they continue their leisurely walk around the exhibition. They make one final stop at the snake display. While looking at the snakes, Jasmine asks her mom if there is a rattlesnake in the case. Her mom tells her that rattlesnakes are found in North America and the case contains snakes found in Tasmania.

From the animal exhibition, they enter the small geology room to look at the crystals and rocks. Jasmine heads to the fluorescent mineral case and pushes the button to make the rocks light up. She comments on how she is especially fond of the pink and red ones. Before they head upstairs, Jasmine makes a stop under the staircase and takes a quick peek at the mummy. On the way up the stairs, Jasmine gazes up at the large paintings hanging high on the walls in the formal-style staircase. The "big picture of the angel" [Adolphe-William Bouguereau, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1889] (see Figure 4.4) is one of her favorites. She says she likes it because

of its shiny gold frame. She also likes looking at the painting of a pride of lions [William Strutt, *The British Lion and His Sturdy Cubs*, 1901].



Figure 4.4. Adolphe-William Bouguereau, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1889, oil on canvas, 200 x 116 cm. Courtesy of the TMAG.

Once upstairs, and heading to the Antarctic exhibition, Jasmine stops in the shipping gallery to have a quick look at the model of the boat crashing into the Tasman Bridge.¹⁴ They continue through the Indigenous cultures room where Jasmine points out her favorite boomerang. As Jasmine leaves that exhibition area, she stops in the hallway to have a brief look at a large “funny” wood and wire sculpture [Bill Yaxley, *Nuclear Family*, 1994]. She thinks it looks like the two heads at one end of the sculpture are “biting a noodle.” Today she notices something new, another head at the other end of the animal-like figure. As she takes

¹⁴ On 5 January 1975, the *Lake Illawarra* crashed into the Tasman Bridge bringing down the roadway onto the vessel below. Seven crewmembers and five car occupants were killed. The bridge reopened 8 October, 1977 (TMAG text panel).

a closer look underneath, she says, “Look, there’s another one [head] there!” Her mom replies, “Is that one, or is that a penis?” Jasmine pauses for a second to think about it, then heads off to explore one of her favorite areas, the Antarctic exhibition, *Islands to Ice*.

Islands to Ice is the newest of the permanent exhibitions, opening to the public in 2006. It highlights Tasmania’s links to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean and contains many interactive displays. During the **guided tour**, Jasmine led me around that exhibition.

* * *

“Where are we going next?” I ask. Jasmine runs to the entrance of the *Islands to Ice* exhibition and heads straight to the stuffed seals. “You can touch these,” Jasmine says as she touches the seal. “Seal, you can touch it. You can pat it.” “Can I pat it?” I ask. After a quick press of the buttons to hear the animal calls, Jasmine looks around the room, and then approaches the drawers that contain a variety of rock, plant and animal specimens. She opens one of the drawers. “Rocks. That big rock,” she says pointing to the big rock, tapping her finger on the Plexiglas covering. She closes the drawer and starts jumping from one ice shape on the floor to another. “Are you hopping on ice? Is it cold? Are you slipping?” I ask. Jasmine looks back at me and smiles. She makes her way to another drawer, opens it, touches a penguin and says to me, “And those are the daddy’s [penguin] feet.” I ask her how she knows that. As she opens another drawer, she replies, “Mummy told me and this is baleen.” “What’s baleen?” I ask. “Um whale’s teeth. What’s that momma?” she says pointing to another specimen in the drawer. Her mom, reading from the label, explains, “That’s a different kind of whale’s tooth, from a sperm whale.”

After showing me how to use one of the interactives, a sliding magnifier, she runs to a large round tabletop exhibit that features a map of Antarctica made of ice. She places her hands on it, looks back at me and her mom and smiles a big smile. “Makes my hands cold,” she says. Jasmine attempts to climb up the side of the display to reach for a better feel of the ice. “Ah, very cold.” Next, she runs to the computer and starts manipulating the roller ball. She is very focused on what she is doing when all of a sudden she says, “I know where it is! I know where the wheel is.” Jasmine runs to the large steering wheel from a ship. She hops up on the captain’s platform and starts turning the wheel, which, judging by the strained look on her face, is not an easy task. “Is that the wheel? Is that the wheel you said used to be in the other room?” I ask. “And this is a compass,” she says. After she has a quick play with the compass, she runs to the case where the stuffed dogs are displayed. She points and says, “Huskies.”

From there she moves to a large glass case that contains various artifacts and novelties associated with the Antarctic. Spotting something of interest, she points and excitedly says, “Pingo, Pingo!” Her mom tells me Pingo is “a TV show about a penguin.” Jasmine walks around, scans the room, then runs to the fiberglass model of a giant sea sponge. Once there, she bends down and touches a replica of a ray. “Oh my gosh! What’s that?” I ask. Jasmine replies, “Mmm. Manta ray. I never noticed that there. There’s some fish in here.” Jasmine climbs up on the giant sea sponge to look inside for fish. “There are fish in there and you can touch these fish,” she tells me. She touches the fish. “Are they real fish?” I ask. She laughs and says, “No, it’s rubber.” She instructs me to go to the other side of the sponge. “And there’s a fish in here as well.” She points to and touches another fish. As she climbs up on another giant sea sponge, her mom says, “I don’t know if you’re meant to

climb up there.” After a quick look inside the sponge, Jasmine reports to me, “There’s no fish in there.”

Next, Jasmine walks past an animal diorama and reaches to touch a bird. “Oh, that’s so soft,” she says. Her mom asks her if she knows what kind of bird it is. Jasmine replies, “No.” Her mom tells her it’s an Albatross. On the way out of the exhibition, Jasmine shows me the map that her friend’s father made and then runs off to the large orange donation fixture located outside the exhibition. We join her there, and she asks her mom for a coin.

* * *

Jasmine and her mom typically spend “a lot” of time in the Antarctic exhibition, taking their time and engaging in a range of activities. Although they keep to a similar routine when they’re at the museum, doing the “same” sort of things—revisiting Jasmine’s favorite places and seeing and touching her favorite objects, they will explore new exhibitions if they happen to come across them. For example, on a recent visit, they walked through a temporary exhibition displaying one of the largest collections of Huon pine furniture.¹⁵

They slowly walk around the exhibition, and engage in conversation about various pieces. In front of the *Miniature Chest of Drawers* [1850], Jasmine’s mom asks, “What do you think people put in the little drawers?” Jasmine replies “little socks.” While looking at the blue lounge [*Drawing Room Suite*, 1860] on display in the corner that Jasmine describes it as “velvety,” they share a comment about how much they wish they could sit on it.

¹⁵ *The Museum of Old and New Art, State Collection of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery* is an exhibition that displays the George Burrows collection of Huon pine furniture, dating from the early 1800’s (Hughes, 2006).

By now, Jasmine and her mom have been at the museum for at least a couple of hours. When Jasmine's had enough, they slowly make their way back through the museum building. Along the way, they make a brief stop in the Chinese decorative art exhibition. While in there, Jasmine points out her favorite object, the *Sancai Glazed Horse* [Tang Dynasty, 618-907]. As she approaches a brightly colored banner with a menacing looking dragon painted on it she asks her mom, "Is it real?" On their way to the stairs, they walk through the colonial art gallery. Jasmine lifts the red velvet cloth that protects the artifacts in the glass case. She knows she is allowed to do that because she has been in that gallery on a number of occasions. From there, they walk down the stairs. Upon entering the entrance foyer, Jasmine stops to look out the window. She likes the large, multicolored, cone-shaped metal sculpture in the courtyard [Peter Taylor, *Leap of Faith*, 1997]. As they continue walking, she points to the big *Muttaburrasaurus* dinosaur skeleton and asks, "It's not a real one isn't it momma?" Her mom explains that "It's a model of the dinosaur skeleton." They make their way to the museum's side door exit and head to the carpark.

■ ■ ■

What part of the visit does Jasmine like the best? Although she likes many areas of the museum, Jasmine is particularly fond of the Antarctic exhibition. Her mom thinks she likes "the whole experience. 'Cause she wouldn't want to do one bit without doing another bit." Jasmine says she feels "good" when she's at the museum. Her mom uses the word "happy" to describe the way her daughter feels during a visit.

I think she's happy. I think she's relaxed and (pause) I don't know. Well she's definitely not sad or angry or anything like that. She's having a nice time. And she probably feels safe there. 'Cause it's familiar. I don't know.

Jasmine expresses the way she feels after she leaves the museum as “still good.”

Sarah believes her daughter derives additional benefits from going to the museum on a regular basis. “[Y]ou couldn’t see everything in one visit. And even though it doesn’t change that much, she, I’m sure she notices different things every time she goes back.” When I asked Jasmine what is it about the museum that makes her want to go back over and over again, she replied, “I just love it.”

Future Involvement

It is difficult to predict what Jasmine’s future involvement with the museum will look like. Her mom thinks that her interest in visiting is likely to wane as she gets older, but that she may find her way back to it as an adult.

I think she will [visit] like for a few years now. And I kinda don’t imagine she will when she’s a teenager or ‘cause I think that’s really boring for a teenager. Unless there was some exhibition on there like a particular artist or something that she liked. But I think she seems to have a genuine interest in, I think as an adult she’ll go back to it. Maybe, hopefully, but yeah, while she’s a young child, I think we’ll keep going a lot.

When I asked Jasmine if she thinks she will continue to visit the museum as a grownup, she nods her head “yes.”

Zoë – “time with dad”

I arrived at Zoë’s home on a warm, sunny spring morning. As I approached the front gate, I remember thinking how important it was for me to make a good first impression on the 10-year-old girl I was about to meet. I placed my hand on the gate and tried to open it. It wouldn’t budge. I struggled with it for a bit, and it still wouldn’t budge. After a brief moment of panic, trying to figure out my next move, it came to me. I’d ring her, tell her I’m here, and ask her to open the gate for me. So much for first impressions!

As I was digging around in my bag, searching for my mobile phone, I heard a voice. I looked up and there inside the fence, on the footpath, stood a beautiful, brown-haired girl accompanied by a medium-sized, brown dog. The young girl was a vision of “hipness,” wearing off-white, “stonewashed” skinny jeans, a pink striped jumper over a red top, and pink Converse tennis shoes. “Are you Zoë?” I asked. She replied, “Yes.” “Hi, I’m Michele and I’m here to meet you.” She walked down the steps to let me in and introduced me to her dog Spot. As Spot barked, I assured her that I like dogs. She led me up the path to her home. When we reached the front door, her mom came out to greet me. I entered the house and followed them to the dining room. As this was an introductory meeting, a chance for Zoë and her mom to meet me and learn a bit more about the study, the three of us sat at the table and had a brief chat. I can remember how happy I was to hear her mom say how excited her daughter was about participating in the project. Before I left, Zoë showed me her room—a room filled with books, stuffed animals, clothes, and some knitting supplies.

By the time we sat down for the first interview (later that day at my flat), I had already learned a fair bit about Zoë. She is 10 years old, in fourth grade, and likes her school. She has two older brothers—ages 17 and 19, is in the process of

knitting her teddy bear a pink and green scarf, and loves to read. She is currently reading *The Secret World of Wombats*. And she stays at her dad's place every other weekend.

I started the first interview by asking Zoë to tell me more about her interests and school.

Michele: You've already told me some things, but tell me a little bit more about your interests, what you like to do and that kind of stuff.

Zoë: Um, well I like singing—

Michele: Do you? Do you take lessons or anything?

Zoë: Oh, um we have a choir at school and I just do that. And yeah, I like drawing a lot.

Michele: Where do you do the drawing?

Zoë: Oh well, we do it at school a lot and I have a few drawing sets at home.

Michele: What do you like to draw?

Zoë: Everything (little laugh).

Michele: No favorite things to draw?

Zoë: I like animals, to draw animals, yeah.

Michele: What else do you like to do?

Zoë: Um I like bike riding, yeah, and shopping (little laugh).

Michele: And shopping. And what sorts of things do you like to shop for?

Zoë: Clothes and shoes and—

Michele: So you're kind of a fashion type of girl. I kind of guessed that about ya.

Zoë: Yeah. Um, I like playing soccer.

Michele: Do you?

Zoë: Yeah.

Michele: Do you have an organized, like a soccer league?

Zoë: Oh we um, our school has a team, but our soccer ended for this year, a few months ago.

Michele: So what school subjects do you like the best?

Zoë: Art and um, English, and drama, and music.

During the interviews with her mom, Rose, and dad, Oscar, I asked them to describe Zoë and to tell me why they think she enjoys visiting the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. For Oscar, everything could be distilled down to one word, "curiosity."

Well, there's not much that she isn't interested in (little laugh). But in terms of the museum I would say, that ah, there's one word that sums it up. Curiosity. And she's just curious. I mean every time we come here, she, she does have favourite things at the museum, but she's curious. I mean she does it with all things. I think she does, without being too biased. But um she's ah, I could be reading an article in the newspaper for example, and she'll want to know what it relates to. Like this morning, even this morning—she stayed with me last night—and there's an article in the paper about the um, I think it was the climate and nine trillion dollars to environmentally correct the climate. And she saw the heading and she asked what that was about. So, there's a curious thing there, I think.

When I asked him if any of her interests relate directly to “things at the museum,” he replied:

Now when I say interest probably, yeah well this is part of it. But her interests in kids' term, the arts. Because she loves music, loves dancing, loves performing, as you no doubt discovered. And consequently, I think that is part of this, you know.

Her mom Rose thinks her daughter's interest in visiting the museum stems, in part from Zoë's curious nature, but also from the environment in which she has been raised and her engagement with interesting people.

Because she's just a very bright, curious, little girl. You know she loves to learn. She says to me, “Mummy, I love to learn. I love learning” (little laugh). And I think, I think she'll be quite an interesting adult actually, when she's you know socially fully developed, and she wants to go to university and I just think she's got a very curious, you know she's an intelligent, little girl. And I think she just likes the stimulation of it all and she's curious, a curious mind and she's—I mean having two older brothers too I guess that's given her, you know stimulation. ... But we've never sort of talked to her in a baby way. We treated her intellectually at a good level, not like an adult, but treated as her age or whatever, but she's just um, I just think she's interested in life. And I think that comes from, you know, seeing me study and their father doing what he does. We're involved. He's always been involved in the community. We're engaged citizens, really. We're not sort of dormant sitting in front of the TV all the time, and so interesting people, you know. And they've got interesting relatives. I mean their grandmother's fantastic. I mean she's incorrigible and she's difficult and she's dramatic, but she's travelled the world. And my brothers have travelled the world. And Oscar's family are an interesting mix of people, so it's not just a normal sort of life that they're living. So there's a lot of interesting dynamics that come from all different areas. ... So there's this constant, you know engagement with the world and learning, and the stories that Granny can tell. The kids love it. So that's a stimulation in their life and something to aspire and look up to. So I think that's had an influence in a sort of indirect

way. Not that I've travelled, but the fact that I've engaged in studying and got a career and you know I'm doing interesting—you know we know interesting people and you know life's interesting. Yeah and I think that stimulates them, gives them something to aspire to, look to and say, well anything is possible.

History of Involvement with Museums

Zoë's been visiting the museum ever since she was four or five years old.

Although her mom and dad both remember taking her to the museum when she was younger, her babysitter may have been the first person to take her there. Her dad recalls, "She'd [babysitter] ring up and say, 'Would Zoë like to come to the museum today?' or you know so ... yeah, she would have been little." Her mom remembers taking Zoë and "the boys" to the museum "to get them out of the house (laugh). [I'd] take them down to the museum and let them run around in there. So it was a bit like that." She also remembers her own visits to a museum in the north of the state with her mom when she was a child.

Zoë's recollections, although hazy, reflect her parents' views about when she would have started visiting the museum.

- Michele: When's the first time you went to a museum, any museum?
 Zoë: I can't remember, but it was probably when I was very young and um I've only ever been to the Hobart museum, so yeah.
 Michele: And so the first time you can remember going to that place, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, would be when?
 Zoë: Mmm (pause) well I went with my dad when I was about four and that was good. But it um [it] wasn't as advanced as it is now.
 Michele: So, when you were four, do you remember anything at all from that visit?
 Zoë: No, um but I remember a few things were changed around.
 Michele: Like?
 Zoë: The children's room was in a different place. And there wasn't the big um the *Islands to Ice* exhibit and everything.

Zoë thinks she probably "would have gone quite a lot, about 4 or 5 times a year." From those early visits, she remembers pressing the buttons in the zoology

gallery and the “children’s room.” It wasn’t until late in the first interview that her mom reminded Zoë that she had visited other museums—a science museum in Canberra when she was two, and two visits, one of which was fairly recent, to a combined art and history museum in Launceston, a city located 2 ½ hours north of Hobart.

Details of the Relationship Today

Today, Zoë continues to make regular visits to the museum, approximately three times a year. Most of her visits these days are with her dad. Her dad has a background in theater and the media and has been visiting museums and art galleries on a regular basis since he was “a kid growing up” in Melbourne. Zoë says they go to the museum when they’re “not really doing anything. And we think of things to do, and I just say the museum and we think it’s a good idea, so we’d go. And it’s just like when um Saturday or Sunday when we have nothing to do.” Sometimes Zoë makes the suggestion that they go to the museum, and sometimes a visit is prompted by her dad reading about a new exhibition in the newspaper. Her dad says he enjoys going there with his daughter because it is somewhere they can go to spend “quality time.”

Yeah well in one respect apart from the cultural aspect, it’s um the father-daughter thing too because she loves it. She just loves being with me, yeah. Loves being with me and likewise, I enjoy her company, so it’s, it’s a buzz for both of us. And there’s no interference from any other [siblings] or, you know, girlfriends and things like that. It’s a bit of quality time I suppose. ... Because you get more quality time at a place like this than you would with quality times at the movies. See the interaction that’s between her and I comes from what this place produces. Whereas if you go to the movie, you get nothing out of it. She wouldn’t know who was sitting next to her, you know?

Upon reflection, he sees the impact the time he spent focusing on work had on the amount of time he spent with his older children when they were growing up.

Fathers when my kids were young, ah I spent too much time working. It was a bit of a wake up. So I think a lot of fathers ah, back in our days—I'm talking, well, I'm talking ten years ago—were more concerned about their work and that. And then on the weekend I'd want to relax, you know. But now there is a role model change. I think more fathers are starting, even young fathers, now spend more time with their kids are realising that work isn't a be all and end all. It's good to see that happening in the workplace. You know, do your 25, 30 hours or whatever, and then enjoy the rest of life with your family. So, I've seen that with a lot of young families now.

When Zoë and her dad visit the museum, typically, they do not plan ahead of time what they will do while they are there. They prefer to be “spontaneous.”

During their visits, they take turns following each other around, looking at things together and on their own. Zoë says:

At times he follows me. At times I follow him. It's kind of mixed. ... I like going where dad likes to go and I think he's likes to go where I like to go. So it's good. At times we're together and at times I've wandered off and he comes back, but then you know I wander back. ... Yeah, we stay together. We don't like, I don't go around the museum by myself (Zoë and Michele laugh) yeah.

Zoë describes a typical visit to the museum with her dad this way:

Well first I'd look at like everything in the gigantic [zoology] room and we'd just had a little look. And there's these fur animals which you're allowed to touch and I like that. That's good. Yeah. And then, go have a look at the rocks, and we go upstairs to see the convict area and the *Islands to Ice* exhibit and yeah, then we go back downstairs and we look at everything else, and the upstairs too, and then we go to the children's room and usually we have a bit of lunch then too.

Zoë likes to engage in conversation with her dad during their visits, talking about “just exhibitions and what we like.” Zoë's dad says there is a high level of social interaction between the two of them when they are there.

Yeah, you're interacting with, yeah, of course we do, yeah, yeah. 'Cause she'll say, “Come over here and look at this.” And she'll say, “What's that?” Like the minerals, you know she's fascinated by the colours in the rocks and the minerals and that, and she'll say, “I wonder what that one is.” So you've got to read it and find out what it is. We might only be there for 10 seconds or you know, and she's distracted by something else. But I think it's that interaction between, you know, parent and child as well.

When I accompanied Zoë and her dad on one of their typical visits to the museum, one of the exhibitions they explored together was a temporary exhibition developed by the National Archives of Australia entitled *Summers Past: Golden Days in the Sun 1950-1970*. The exhibition featured photographs of the Australian “summer lifestyle from days gone by” (“What’s on,” 2006). During their time exploring the exhibition, I observed Zoë’s dad sharing stories with his daughter, about his years growing up on the Melbourne coast. At one point, he drew Zoë’s attention to a photograph of a beach and told her that was where he used to swim when he was a boy. Zoë mentioned that exchange in her response to a question I asked her in the third interview, about whether she thinks it’s important that we have places like museums.

- Michele: Now, um, do you think it’s important that we have places like museums to visit?
- Zoë: Yeah.
- Michele: Why?
- Zoë: Um well for children to learn and maybe like there’s the *Summers Past* um thing and old people or just people might just want to go back ‘cause there might be some memories there and yeah.
- Michele: Right, like with your dad. Remember?
- Zoë: Yeah (little laugh).
- Michele: What did you think when he showed you those photos of where he grew up?
- Zoë: Yeah, I thought that was really good.

During that same visit, I also observed Zoë and her dad laughing together and joking with one another on a number of occasions. For example, while they were in the *Summers Past* exhibition, Zoë and her dad took turns sticking their heads in the male and female surfer cutouts. They laughed about how funny they looked. While in the *Islands to Ice* exhibition, after touching the ice map of Antarctica, Zoë placed her cold, moist hands on her dad’s face. He appeared to be amused the first time she did it, a little less so the second time she tried it.

Now that she's older, Zoë also enjoys experiencing the museum with friends. Occasionally, she invites a girlfriend to join her and her dad; sometimes she accompanies a friend and one of their parents. Earlier in the year she made a class trip to the museum. Exploring the TMAG with friends was a feature of the visit that made it a very enjoyable experience for her.

- Zoë: Ah, well um, I went with my school and my friends and I, we explored and that was really fun.
- Michele: When you went this year?
- Zoë: Um yeah. It was friends, with just my friends and me 'cause we got to explore everything together so it was really good.
- Michele: So did you have an adult with you?
- Zoë: Yeah, we had, ah teachers.
- Michele: Did you have any free exploration time?
- Zoë: Oh, um, in the *Islands to Ice* we were allowed to run around.
- Michele: And go wherever? You didn't have to stay in a group or anything?
- Zoë: No.
- Michele: And so did you just go around with your friends?
- Zoë: Yeah, and we got to write about the animals and what they do and everything so it was like, it was great.

* * *

During the *guided tour*, Zoë showed me her favorite areas and exhibits. We started the tour in the zoology gallery, a room displaying Tasmanian animals. As we entered the exhibition, we stopped to watch video footage of the last known living Tasmanian tiger that died in the Beaumaris zoo in Hobart in 1936. "But I do like this. It's about the Tasmanian tiger and the last time it lived. So that's pretty cool too." When she looks at the video she says she feels, "Oh, sometimes a bit sad because there was only one left and it died so, pretty sad."

Zoë prefers to be actively engaged with the exhibits. Although "at times" she will read the text, she's "a bit more interested in what you can do with it." Throughout the tour, she never missed an opportunity to engage with the

interactives. As we approached the Tasmanian devil display Zoë said, “Um I like these sorts of things here.” She pressed the button to turn on the light. “I like to press the buttons and everything.” As we looked at the animals in the display she told me about the plight of the Tasmanian devils.¹⁶ “And the Tasmanian devil which is pretty bad because it’s got the tumour disease now. It’s really bad.” She knows about the disease because she “did research on it at school.” While at the possum display she commented, “Yeah and this is ah, one of my favourite things.” She pressed the button to turn on the light. “I love possums. And sometimes when I come here with my friends, we count the possums.” From the possum exhibit, we headed to the area of the exhibition where the animal pelts are displayed. “Yeah, um this is really cool. This is my favourite. You get to pat the animals. And my favourite’s the sugar glider because it’s so soft.” After she had a quick pat of the fur, we made our way to the geology gallery. We entered the room and she led me to the case where the florescent rocks are displayed.

- Zoë: This is my favourite bit in here. The minerals ‘cause I like pushing this (button) and the light comes on and you can see them glow. Which is awesome. Yeah.
- Michele: I wonder what makes them glow.
- Zoë: I think it’s like a purple UV light thing. Um I like, my favourite one is that purple one just there.

As we left the geology gallery, we made a brief stop under the stairway to have a look at the mummy.

- Michele: So has this mummy always been here since you can remember?
- Zoë: Yeah, since I can remember.
- Michele: And why is it, what can you tell me about it?
- Zoë: (Reading label) It’s 2500 years old.
- Michele: I wonder why this museum has that mummy.

¹⁶ Tasmanian devil populations are rapidly declining due to facial tumor disease, a fatal condition, transmissible between devils that is marked by facial cancers around the animal’s mouth (“Save the Tasmanian Devil,” 2008).

Zoë: I don't know. But I think it's really interesting 'cause it's sort of freaky and sort of cool, you know.

On our way upstairs Zoë remarked, "I don't really um, look at the paintings on the stairs. I'm usually rushing up the stairs." Once upstairs, we entered the convicts in Tasmania room, a gallery she does not frequently explore during her visits. I was curious to see the models of the convicts she referred to in one of the interviews. While we were in there I asked her why she thinks this exhibition is in the museum. "I don't know," she said, "I reckon it's for the children to learn about what the convicts did and for some people just to remember and everything like that."

From the convict exhibition, we walked through the shipping display where she pointed out the model of the ship that ran into the Tasman Bridge. As we continued through the Indigenous cultures gallery, she commented, "Um here, in here, I don't really stop and look at this. I don't know why. I just, I do like the artwork, but it doesn't really appeal to me very much." She was eager to get to her "favourite exhibition ever, the *Islands to Ice* exhibit," the new permanent exhibition about Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

As we entered the *Islands to Ice* exhibition, Zoë pointed out the small theatrette. "I don't know what it's about, but it's interesting." She walked over to the stuffed seal, glanced at the label and said, "We did the Australian fur seal which is that one (pointing), with school. We drew pictures. That was really great." She looked around the room, and then led me to one of the interactives. "You can press a button and the sound of the animal comes up." She pressed one of the buttons and a loud king penguin call was heard. She smiled and said, "That's pretty cool too." As we continued making our way through the exhibition, Zoë opened drawers—pointing out and touching her favorite specimens, including the South Georgian

diving petrel and the emperor penguin chicks. Next, we walked past the 3D theater, a room where visitors put on 3D glasses to view Frank Hurley's historic photographs of an expedition to the Antarctic. "It isn't very interesting to me," she commented. "I don't, it just doesn't really appeal to me."

As she approached the map of Antarctica made out of ice, Zoë smiled and said, "Yeah, I like, I like, this is sort of my favourite bit of the exhibition 'cause it [ice] makes you feel so, it's awesome, yeah." She found it hard to believe that the map hadn't melted since the last time she was there. After having a feel of the ice, she moved to one of the computer interactives. "These are computers that tell you about astronomy, the climate change, ozone and everything like that. And this is pretty cool because you can go like this; you move around Antarctica." As she demonstrated how it works, I asked her how she knows so much about the displays and interactives. She replied:

I went with my dad. Yeah, um, ages ago. And um, yeah, I just kind of had a little play of it. We didn't really spend that much time here. Then I came with my school and we explored a bit more which was totally cool.

From there, she headed to the steering wheel from a big ship. She pointed to it, smiled and said, "I love this because it's just so much fun to play with and you can imagine whatever you want." After a quick turn of the wheel, we moved to the case displaying a miniature model of the living quarters Mawson used during an expedition to the Antarctic. "It's awesome," she said. The next stop was in front of the frostbite display.

Zoë: Yeah and um over here's really interesting. 'Cause it's frostbite. Which I think is really cool but gross.

Michele: What did you say? Cool but gross?

Zoë: Yeah.

Michele: What's cool about it? (laugh)

Zoë: I don't know but it's really interesting to find out. You just want to learn more, but it's still gross.

After pointing out the Huskies, and telling me she liked “Coppo” the best, we made our way back through the exhibition. On her way out, Zoë stopped to have another feel of the ice map of Antarctica, hopped on the ice patterns on the floor and explained a couple more of the interactives.

Although Zoë likes the routine of revisiting her favorite areas and exhibits, she also enjoys seeing new things.

Michele: Do you like doing and seeing new things or do you like revisiting the old things?

Zoë: Oh, I like doing both because, you know with the new things you can really find something great. And, but with the old things you can do what you love again.

Michele: How beautiful is that? You have a way with words. So new things, can you remember any new things, any temporary exhibitions?

Zoë: Oh, I remember this um, one with all these bugs. It was beautiful. There were all these like Christmas beetles and they were all shiny and beautiful. That’s where the *Islands to Ice* exhibit is now. It was awesome. It was cool.

Zoë does not have one favorite thing to do at the museum; she likes “everything.” The only exception to that is spending time in the art galleries. “It’s good, but not as exciting as some of the other parts of the museum.” One gallery she steers clear of during her visits is the colonial art gallery. “I never go there. To be truthful, (little laugh) I just, I don’t appeal to that sort of art, yeah. It isn’t very interesting to me. I don’t know why.” Her dad thinks it might be because “she hasn’t got patience for [looking at] the art.”

During the tour we did, however, wander through two temporary exhibitions of contemporary art [*Register: Tasmanian Artists 2006* and *Vivienne Binns*]. Zoë seemed surprised to see that everything looked different in those galleries. “Yeah, but this is really pretty interesting to me ‘cause I’ve never been here while this has been going on. This is so different from what it used to be.” As we walked around, she engaged with the art. Upon entering the *Register* exhibition, Zoë approached a

work of art by Mish Meijers, entitled *Byte* (see Figure 4.5), a large floor installation comprising of multicolored sugar cubes representing pixels of a computer game.

- Zoë: Wow. [Mish Meijers, *Byte*, 2006]
 Michele: What do you think that is?
 Zoë: Sugar blocks. Wow. That's sugar, huh. That's amazing.
 Michele: What's amazing about it?
 Zoë: That's sugar blocks sprayed (little laugh) with colour. That's really impressive. That would take so long to make.
 Michele: Do they have to dye them or something?
 Zoë: They have to spray them with spray paint.



Figure 4.5. Mish Meijers, *Byte*, 2005, sugar and dyes, 240 x 270 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

As we stood there looking at the installation, Zoë appeared to be unaware of the content and contradiction of the work—the guns, the shooting, and use of sugar cubes to express computer game violence. She commented, “Yeah. Um I, I mean I’ve never been here [in this exhibition], but I do like this sort of stuff. I think that’s really nice.”

When I asked her if she thinks she would have the same reaction to art in the colonial gallery she said, “I, I don’t—I think I’m more into modern art than I am

old. I don't know, see I like that sort of stuff" [Vivienne Binns, *Nylon over the Lachlan*, 2006]. After I drew her attention to the photograph of the artist on one of the text panels, she commented, "Oh wow, that's awesome. ... Yeah, awesome. But I do like the materials that she uses."

We left the art gallery space and slowly made our way to the children's area. In the children's discovery room, Zoë had a quick play—posing in front of the distortion mirrors and manipulating some of the other science interactives. Then we were off to the last stop on the tour, the Bond Store, a historically significant building where temporary exhibitions are housed.

Zoë: Yeah. Um I have no idea what's going on in the Bond Store anymore but dad loves to take me into the Bond Store and I like it too. And there's usually paintings, and there was a convict thing here before which was great and there's, there's just heaps which is totally awesome. And people doing drawings, I think.

Michele: What's that set up for?

Zoë: I think it's a drawing competition of some kind. It's amazing how many good artists we have in Hobart.

Michele: I know.

Zoë: Yeah. Well um, that's about it.

The tour ended and we headed to the museum café for lunch.

* * *

Zoë likes to visit the museum "because it's a really interesting and fun place. I mean there's lots to do and everything and it's really great so ... you can learn a lot." When I asked her if she comes primarily to have fun, learn, do, or see, she replied, "To have fun and do and see stuff, not as much learning, but a little. Yeah, it's good to find out things." She says she finds out things in a variety of ways—sometimes by reading the labels, "Sometimes I have no idea what they are and they tell me what it is, and sometimes I just work it out, and sometimes I know what it is and I don't really need to know." Although she doesn't see learning as a primary

goal for her visits to the museum with her dad, she describes a museum as “just a place where you know, you can come and learn about everything but still have fun at the same time which is really great.”

In addition to having fun and learning, “being with family” is another important reason why Zoë likes to visit the museum. The “relationship side” of her visits is something both of her parents mentioned in their interviews.

Oscar: Um, well as I’ve mentioned to you before, the relationship side, it strengthens that, which is great. It’s something that she’ll remember for years. And hopefully she’ll do it with her kids. You know I think, she will, I’m pretty sure she will. So the ongoing relationship family side of it’s important.

Rose: Um, I think probably being with a parent, whoever it is, just having that companionship and that closeness. ... And it’s the outing, doing something together and what’s in the museum, just curious, you know of the experience you know. It’s not just what’s at the museum and what she can do, it’s just having mum or dad there with her there doing it, and us all together. And you know if you go and have a cup of coffee or a milkshake or something after, the whole little excursion is part of the experience. It’s not just—so I think there’s a lot of that in it as well.

Zoë says she “never” gets tired of visiting the TMAG “because (pause) you just love it and yeah so.” The only thing she doesn’t like about her visits is:

Ah, sometimes I don’t enjoy some of the exhibits because I don’t find them very interesting. ... Ah well, no offence to the pine [furniture] one, (little laugh) but I didn’t find that very interesting, maybe when I’m a bit older. Children like exciting things I’d say.

During her visits to the museum, she experiences “happy” emotions. “Ah, um happy because and fun because it’s really great and I don’t—I have all the great emotions not like the bad ones or anything because there’s nothing bad about the museum.” Her dad also thinks she experiences happy emotions during her visits to the museum. “Oh, I think she, well happy emotions, she’s happy to do it.” When I asked her if she experiences feelings there that she doesn’t experience elsewhere

she replied, “Yeah, I like ah, I have a fun feeling and an interested feeling and yeah, just enjoy it a lot.”

Zoë says she feels “optimistic” after she leaves the museum.

- Michele: What kind of a mood are you in or how would you describe how you feel after a visit?
- Zoë: Optimistic and happy.
- Michele: What do you mean, optimistic?
- Zoë: Ah, it means um, looking through life with rosy red glasses.
- Michele: How do you know that [expression]?
- Zoë: We learnt about it at school and I’ve just been using it since ‘cause it’s, it’s great to use.

Her dad used the word “relaxed” to describe the way his daughter feels after a visit.

- Oscar: I think relaxed, yeah relaxed—not that she wasn’t when we arrived. But I think she feels peaceful ... she’s peaceful. This is when she’s just with me.
- Michele: And so life outside of here is not always peaceful so this is—
- Oscar: Oh, when you say it’s not peaceful. It can be full on like you know, back into the mainstream, let’s get back up to pace again. So but as you said you’ve noticed it, she talks a bit softer when she’s here so, I don’t think it’s a courteous thing (laugh), I hope not (laugh).

Zoë, her dad and mom all expressed the view that there are additional benefits associated with making repeat visits to the museum, derived primarily from opportunities to build on prior experiences and make new connections.

- Michele: Do you think you get more out of this place than other kids who come here only once?
- Zoë: Yeah.
- Michele: And what do you think you get out of it that they don’t?
- Zoë: Oh, because, maybe some children don’t pay as much attention as I do when I come back again or they just, I just like coming here. And if they just come here once, they won’t learn much about the museum or anything.
- Michele: Yeah, because one thing that interested me, lots of things did, but during the tour you said that was the first time you noticed that Tassie tiger in the jar.
- Zoë: Yeah.

Michele: And so do you find yourself seeing things you didn't see before?
 Zoë: Yeah and we've studied the Thylacine at school.
 Michele: Recently?
 Zoë: Ah, well we did famous Tasmanians and a friend of mine did Mary Roberts, I think who did Beaumaris Zoo, had the last Thylacine. And I heard that she treated it really badly. She kept it in a cage and it just—and I felt really bad for it. And they just laid on cold concrete. That's why I'm really concerned because if they knew that they were going extinct, they'd look after them better.
 Michele: And so seeing that?
 Zoë: It really interests me. I wish the scientists would do something to help.

...

Michele: So do you think she gets additional benefits or she gets more out of it because she comes here repeatedly, like on a regular basis versus a child who only comes here once?
 Oscar: Ah, I think she gets more out of it every time she comes here. Sort of like a brain food for her. ... I think it's a brain food because she just um, sometimes she'll find something different. I don't know whether you've, but sometimes you'll see something different that's been here all the time, but you might just look at it from a different angle, you know. You know, it could be one of the animals, I don't know. But I've, sometimes there's—the curiosity's always there, you know? I mean she never leaves the place bored.
 Michele: Yeah, why doesn't she get bored?
 Oscar: I don't know. I've got no idea. I mean I don't know. Probably for the same reason that you and I come back again. I don't get bored every time I come here. 'Cause you know you could spend a lifetime coming here and you're still not going to see everything. I mean you look at a painting and I can come back at it a couple of weeks later and look at it differently, you know. Um (pause) yeah.

...

Michele: So do you think there are benefits to being a repeat visitor to that place, for a child?
 Rose: Oh yes I think so, 'cause they'd see something different every time. I mean what they're learning in life might raise questions, and they might see something at the museum, so you might focus on it. We wouldn't go to the same area every time at the museum. I mean I'd want to look at something and she'd get bored and you know like the coins and stuff like that.
 Michele: The what?

Rose: The coins, all the coins and the antiquities, you know, ancient antiquity stuff. Um, I think each time you'd probably see a different focus depending on what's going on in your life you know. Yeah. So I couldn't say, I mean I'd go into a museum when I've been with her, there'd be a different reason as to why we'd be going. It wouldn't be to go back and see the marsupial thing again. There'd be a different emphasis. Yeah.

What is it about her visits to the museum that keeps her coming back? Zoë sums it up as “the experience.”

The experience, the experience of coming here and learning about new things and about how people can just do, like the [Huon] pine exhibition. I mean I said it was a bit boring, but how people can do that it's amazing, and how people can paint their beautiful pictures. ... I love coming here and, like the *Islands to Ice* exhibition, I like it because it's very interactive and I have a lot of fun.

When I asked her if there are other places she goes with her dad where she has experiences similar to those she has at the museum, she replied, “Yeah, there's definitely no other place. There's only the museum.”

Future Involvement

As far as the future is concerned, Zoë and her dad think she will continue to visit the museum. Her mom cannot predict what the future holds.

Oscar: I think this is going to be a memory for her life, you know when she grows up. Yeah, she'll remember it. She'll remember the good times she had here with Rose and dad and then she'll, then she'll probably pass it on to her children. I'd be surprised if she didn't. She'll want to bring her daughter here. ... I hope she carries, I think she will carry it on. I mean I did it as a kid, Rose did probably.

Michele: But what about as a teen, when she gets a little older do you think it will hold her interest?

Oscar: Ah, no, ah, unless there's some good looking boys there (laugh). That's in the genes. You tell me. I've never seen a teenage girl yet spend time here (laugh) by themselves or with a girlfriend. Dressed up as The Veronicas in the art section, no way. ... Yeah, they've got too much on their mind. In the entertainment world we've given them too much to choose from...

■ ■ ■

- Michele: So given her experiences at that place to date, what do you think her [museum] visiting will look like in the future?
- Rose: Um, it's too hard to know. ... Um, she loves drama and she loves her reading and all of that. So, it might come out in some way, but you know what you think of your children, they might just completely prove you wrong. ... Zoë's doing a drama presentation at the moment and ... she absolutely loves it. So I think it will be big part of her life, and how a museum visit might fit in, I'm not sure. You know it's within that realm of arts and culture which she seems to be gravitating towards so if you know, possibly that interest will develop whatever direction she goes in life. But I see her heading in that way. So as far as museum engagement, depending on what museums do, where they're heading, I mean you know they've got to—my sense of a museum from when I was growing up, they're old and sort of, but the Launceston one is very good, but it doesn't have a lot of interactive stuff going on. And I think the more museums head down that road, the more engagement they're gonna have. 'Cause this young generation are doers and they get out there and they're explorers. You know this "Y" generation is full-on and they need stimulation. I mean that's how I perceive them anyway. I mean my kids, they get bored quickly. They want to be engaged and they're used to instant communication, instant gratification. Going to a museum wandering around without any of that, you know, you may lose them.

■ ■ ■

- Michele: Do you think you'll continue to visit the museum as you grow up?
- Zoë: I'll continue and I'll even take my children there.
- Michele: And when you're a teenager do you think you'll still be—
- Zoë: Yep, definitely.

Mary – “quest for knowledge about history”

“I hope my story’s interesting enough to turn it into something” Mary said as we started our first interview. Within the first few minutes of our chat, I knew her story would be very interesting indeed.

I was born in 1972 on the 24th of February in New Norfolk which is a little town in the Derwent Valley, on the Derwent River. And my family has been in that one little place for five generations on both sides, with the exception of my father’s father who was an Irishman that came out here from Cork and unfortunately passed away when my father was only five. So, my sense of Tasmanian history is very strong, a very strong sense of it from the family always being in that area.

When I was a little baby, my father became the maintenance man at the Hayes Prison Farm. So I actually grew up in the grounds of the prison farm which is just a little way out of New Norfolk. And it was fantastic. People laugh when I say that because they assume that my mum must have been an inmate but, (laugh) it was just wonderful growing up in the country out there. It was a really productive working, rehabilitative sort of prison in those days. So, my father taught woodwork skills and other skills to prisoners that then, when they were released from prison, could actually go on and get jobs and that kind of thing. So it was actually a really good prison once upon a time. So I grew up there surrounded by the beautiful undulating hills that rolled down to the Derwent River. And I think it was a really lovely place to have spent my childhood years, surrounded by lots of animals, yeah.

History of Involvement with the Arts and Museums

Mary’s experiences with the arts and museums started relatively early in life. She thinks she has always loved art and drawing, despite the fact that at an early age she was told that she was not very good at it. “I can remember being told in primary school that I was terrible at art, and I was really upset because I always really loved it.”

Her first museum experience occurred on a school field trip to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery when she was in second grade.

I can remember coming here to this museum when I was in primary school, from New Norfolk Primary. And (little laugh) the outstanding memory for me was being able to touch the pelts of the possums and things in the animal display. ... [I remember] being overwhelmed. It felt like a wonderful,

exciting, secret place to come into because of the dim lighting and the buttons you could press to have interactive sounds—all that is exciting for a child.

I was curious whether, as a child, Mary was brought to the museum by her parents.

When I asked her, she commented, “No, my mother and father are not museum people. I don’t think they’ve ever taken me to an art gallery or museum in my life.”

Wondering if her parents may have influenced her interest in museums and art in other ways I asked, “But do your parents value the arts in any way?” Mary replied:

My dad is from the old school of bush skills craft. He’s a craftsman. So what he can turn out in his shed, I’d call him an artist, but no, they’re very much um, they wouldn’t feel that they’re the sort of people that would go to a museum or an art gallery necessarily. ... But my dad, even though he doesn’t visit museums, I know that his family history is very special to him too. So he’s the sort of man that takes a lot of pride in um, you know, he loves to have things like old fly fishing kits that used to belong to his uncle. So my dad really appreciates his family history.

Before starting high school, Mary and her family moved to the “township” of New Norfolk. “Yeah, we just moved into a house in the town when I was 13 ‘cause it was just a bit more convenient to get the bus to high school,” a private Catholic college located in New Town, a suburb of Hobart. While in high school, a “lovely art teacher” recognized her artistic talent.

My art teacher, while I was in high school said, “I want you to all go home and do a drawing of your teapot.” And mum had this really awful aluminum teapot that had little reflections on it and I just tried to really draw it. And then when I took my drawing to school, the teacher said, “Have you got an artist in the family? Who did you get to do this drawing for you?” And I said, “No I did it.” And she didn’t believe me. And then she rang my mum and mum said, “Oh no, Mary did that.” Um from then on she really encouraged me to pursue art. So it really makes a difference if you have a good teacher I think.

During her high school years, she made her second visit to the museum, again on a school excursion.

And then in high school I distinctly remember coming here to look at the Tasmanian Aboriginal diorama. Seeing how the lost race of people, as we were really taught (little laugh) lived. You know that little scene they had of

the man and the woman sitting around the fire? We definitely weren't educated at school that there are still descendants of Tasmanian Aboriginals in Tasmania.

After high school, she decided to attend a matriculation (matric) college where she could pursue her interest in art.

Mary: I went to Elizabeth Matric where I had a strong art interest. So I did subjects like painting and drawing... That's why I didn't continue matric at Sacred Heart College because they didn't offer art. Girls were meant to do secretarial studies or other subjects but art was for dummies.

Michele: Even as recently as—

Mary: 1980, what year was it, 87? Well they were a private Catholic college, not a public school so they didn't have a strong emphasis on arts as a career path really. Maybe they were right (little laugh), I didn't end up doing it. It was a strong, strong passion. In fact I could have been offered a scholarship that would have paid for two years of matric. And my parents weren't very wealthy. But I didn't want to do that because I couldn't do art. So I went to Elizabeth Matric because I could. So that's how strong it was.

After completing two years of matric, Mary enrolled in art school to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. As part of her studies, Mary made frequent visits to art galleries.

I think [I started to visit galleries] when I started going to matric. And then at art school I was continually going to galleries and looking what local artists were doing. Um, so I think I've really always done that, from about the age of 15, 16.

She “did nearly two years of that degree before dropping out.” After leaving university, Mary moved to Sydney.

Mary: I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I just knew that it was going to be pretty difficult to be a famous painter in my lifetime (laugh). So I was just footloose and fancy-free. I moved to Sydney to, just to live in a different city for a year.

Michele: When you were how old?

Mary: Nineteen. And just did waitressing and that kind of, crappy jobs.

During her time in Sydney, Mary visited museums and art galleries, “‘Cause when you’re really poor, it’s a free thing to do (laugh). So that, you know, I hadn’t really hardly any money, but that was something I could do.” It was also during this time that she “fell in love” with a man who she later married and from whom she is now divorced. “He was a Tasmanian, so we came back [to Hobart] after a year.”

When she returned to Tasmania, she started working for a not-for-profit children’s theater company as an administrative assistant. She “learned a lot working there ... and then made the crossover from children’s theatre, educational entertainment to working in children’s television for a year with WIN TV in Hobart.” In 1996, she started working for the ABC TV.¹⁷ “So I just worked there ever since really. I started as a researcher, then going into directing.”

In 2004, she left the ABC and Hobart to take a job as a television director in England. During her time in London, she visited “the National Gallery and the Tate.” From those experiences she recalls:

the overwhelming feeling of being part of that history almost, by standing in front of the famous paintings I’d only ever seen in a book before and looking at it and thinking, “Wow this is the real thing. Isn’t it even more fantastic than a book would show it?”

After spending a year living in London, she returned to Tasmania.

I kind of did the whole thing. Well I might move off the Island for a while, but then, Tassie always brings me back. My dad got really sick. So after a year, I decided to come back to be with the family. Yeah, and started working back with the ABC.

Her experience of living in London provided Mary with a greater appreciation for Tasmania.

After being in London and just seeing cars and money and concrete jungle and the fast pace of life, I just missed Tasmania and thought I just want to go and sit somewhere in the bush and appreciate it. Mmm. Seeing the ecosystem in its natural form, in some places you can still see that without

¹⁷ ABC TV is Australia’s national public television channel.

the interference of humans is really a wonderful, wonderful privilege to have now.

Although initially it was her love of art that drew her to art galleries and museums, over the last few years Mary has developed a strong interest in history, a subject she wishes there had been more emphasis placed on at school.

I wished I'd had better history education at school than I did. My problem was that at high school (little laugh) I was in the church choir and a lot of the time, instead of learning history, I was practicing songs for nun's funerals in church. So you know, they didn't really teach history very well there, I must say. ... 'Cause now it's one thing I really wished I'd been able to learn more about at school and take an interest in. Because I don't think there's enough time left in my life to possibly learn all the things I want to learn now about just Tasmanian history.

I asked Mary what sparked her interest in history.

When I got out of my teenage angst years and I started to think about where my family had come from, their history dating back to convicts—two brothers were my maternal ancestors. That's when I realised they'd been on Norfolk Island as prisoners and then released to settle and be allowed to live in New Norfolk. Ah yeah, I guess that was a start for me, and just thinking as you grow up. You get older and things become more significant that aren't significant to you when you're young. You're sort of thinking, wow, what's gonna happen when I grow up? And then you reach a stage when you think, well I am grown up, what about the rest of the world around me? Yeah.

Although she has an interest in Tasmanian history in general, her feelings for the Derwent Valley are particularly strong because of her family's rich history in the area.

Michele: So do you have strong feelings for Hobart in particular or Tasmania in general?

Mary: Tasmania in general, but particularly the Derwent Valley and that area, because of my family connections there. I mean I've just recently read the journal of Martin Cash, the bushranger, and in that there's a description of him holding up my great, great, great, great grandfather's house. So, you know, I have to have this love of history now that I understand, you know, it involved my ancestors. Yeah, I often think about what life was like for them when they got here. I never used to think about it, but I do now.

- Michele: But what stimulated your thinking about it? Did someone in your family tell you about it? Or was it just as you grew older, you wanted to know more about it?
- Mary: Mmm, I think in every family you get snippets of oral history given to you. And you don't really think much about it. And then as you get older, for me what happened, I thought, my god, that innuendo that my father used to always say to my mother about her being 'touched with a tar brush' as a joke—does that actually have an ounce of merit in it? Was there an Aboriginal in my ancestry? It's fascinating to think that there might be now.
- Michele: Did you find out? Or have you found out?
- Mary: No, but there's a lot of rumour that suggests, you know, different old-timers in the town. You know these sorts of rumours just persist. And if in a town like New Norfolk where the families are still all there, it's like being privy to little bits of history that people normally wouldn't carry. But my father, for example, grew up with a lot of older uncles after his dad died. And he's been told stories about when his ancestors were dealing with the problem of the natives in that area. So, it's a shameful history, but yeah, it makes me want to find out more about it because that's where my family has come from.
- Michele: Have you talked to your parents about that?
- Mary: My parents aren't, really, they're not academic people, if you know what I mean. And um, yeah, I've tried to sort it out, but no one's ever researched anything properly. And so it's just sort of stories carried on, people remember things that their grandfathers told them. But you know there are rumours that—my dad has told me a story that the two brothers from Norfolk Island came out, settled in New Norfolk when they were released from that horrible, horrible prison um one of them apparently, this is the rumour, (laugh) met up with a convict girl he was going to marry and the other brother stole her away from him. Apparently the jilted brother went up into the black hills of New Norfolk and apparently, what's the term my dad uses?—shacked up with an Aboriginal gin. And so these are just, I don't know if there's much truth. When I look at photos of some of my mother's family I think I can perhaps see that there is. But you know we're all a mixture of so many different races and histories too so I like to think, I'd like to find out about all of them, the Irish, the English, yeah. And I feel very proud of being an Australian mix because of it.

Her aunt's passing a few years ago also contributed to Mary's interest in learning more about her family history.

Yeah, um, I suppose the other thing I should say too about the whole thing of the families having stayed in one place, is that the history, my family history became very tangible for me after my aunt died, and my sister, myself and my cousin were left the household items. And my Nan had had things in that house that she'd kept from her great grandparents. So suddenly I was the custodian of items of furniture and personal belongings of relatives that date back to the mid 1800's, 'cause they always lived in the same town and just kept everything. So that really sparked enthusiasm for me to want to find out more about these people because at home, I sit in the same chair that perhaps my great, great grandfather sat in, in 1850 or 1880. So that was quite amazing. ... And my cousin wasn't interested in keeping any of the items. He didn't want any of the furniture or stuff like that. My sister has some things, but she doesn't like old stuff. And so I feel like (excited) there's one in every generation, the custodian of history, and I'm it in my family, in this generation. ... And I think thank goodness that that all didn't happen earlier in my life or I would have been the same, and thought, "Oh it's only old stuff, get rid of it." I just really value things because of their stories now.

Another event that fostered Mary's interest in Tasmania's history was reading Thomas Keneally's book, *The Great Shame*.

A really important book that sparked a lot of my interest, to be honest, in Tasmanian history again was reading, or just added to it, was Thomas Keneally's *The Great Shame*. Ah, the story of the Irish rebels in Tasmania. For me to think that William Smith O'Brian, hailed as the hero of Ireland, had been living in the same areas that I grew up in, the great man was there. I couldn't believe it you know. And that story isn't known by many Tasmanians.

In addition to her personal experiences, Mary's work has also played a role in raising her level of appreciation of history. As part of her job, she works on the Collectors show, a weekly television program on the ABC that delves into the world of collections and collectables. Among the show's regular features is a "mystery object" segment where visitors to the TMAG try to identify odd objects from the past. Working on that show provides Mary with opportunities to visit museums and research artifacts.

She says her burgeoning interest in Tasmanian history has affected the way she engages with the TMAG.

The museum, I grew more to love as my interest in history developed. I always had a strong arts interest, but not necessarily a strong understanding of history, Tasmanian history. And it just all developed through me maturing, um, my family, finding out more about just my own family, and ah, the work I was doing with the ABC. So I just love to come here to look at things again, if you like, that I'd not paid much attention to when I'd been younger on visits here—see it with different eyes because I understood, um the context. ... But then I think the change happened as well in my museum visits when I was working at the ABC, and sometimes when I was just really busy, as a break in the day, a lunch break, I just loved to come over here and walk around the colonial art gallery and look at the paintings again. And I just loved doing that. It was a really good break in the day. Um, took you away from the everyday sort of stress, and so I used to do that quite regularly, like once a month come over and just wander around or look at any other exhibitions that were on, particularly the colonial paintings.

Details of the Relationship Today

Currently, Mary experiences the museum in a variety of ways: socially, professionally, and on her own.

Socially

Mary uses the museum as a site for social interaction in various ways. She has recently become involved with the young Friends of the TMAG group, the TMAGgots. “So there are social events that I come to, ah, like cocktail parties or special previews for things.” In addition to attending TMAGgot events, she occasionally meets a friend for lunch at the museum’s Courtyard Café. “Because,” she says, “it’s a nice place to meet people and so it’s become a bit of a social place for me as well as a museum. So quite often, I might come over for lunch here and not actually visit the museum itself, but eat in the café.”

Professionally

Although she visits the museum from time to time for social reasons, she says, “Probably the majority of my time that I spend at the museum is through my job at the moment.” As a result of her work on the Collectors, Mary finds herself at

the museum “almost on a weekly basis for one reason or the other,” researching objects and filming segments for the program.

As a producer, my role is to conceive story ideas—to follow them through with a cameraman and a sound recordist, to go and record the story, and then to go back and then work with an editor to edit the segments for our half hour weekly program. And a lot of the time there might just be incidental things that I come to the museum for. For example, last week I came over and filmed two images that I knew were in the print room collection. ... I wanted to include them in a story, even though it’s only a 15-second spot in this story, it was really nice knowing that the images were here on hand and we could film them and weave them into that story. Yeah, so that was good. It was about the furniture from Woolmers, an estate in the north. So the story was about the furniture, but because I knew these images existed and I knew that the furniture had been transported from England all those years ago, I filmed some fantastic images of the early Hobart Town wharf with goods being unloaded to remind viewers that everything did make that long journey from England to Australia. ... By the way, if we’re talking about what else I do here at the museum for work, I’m always over here, meeting visitors that come to the museum, filming and asking them to guess what our mystery object from the museum is. So I do that on a regular basis too.

Mary enjoys many aspects of her work on the program. Because she is at the museum nearly every week, she often has the opportunity to get a “sneak preview” of exhibitions.

But whenever I’m here if there’s something on, of course I’m gonna sneak and have a look. Like I was really lucky that when the *Hobart Prize* was just hung, I was able to have a little sneak preview. One of the curators gave me a quick look while I was here. So yeah, I’m always interested to see if there’s something new. I’ll always come and have a look.

Another benefit of her work on the program is that it keeps her in close contact with her friend Ellie who works at the museum.

Yeah, I come over and I talk to Ellie and we look ahead for the mystery objects. ... Ellie and I, having grown up together in the Derwent Valley, share a similar family history. We have a similar perception of our place in the society and in history and our families. And it’s wonderful for both of us to find through our working lives that we’re here in the same organisation. So yeah, sometimes we almost pinch ourselves and say “Can you believe it? Can you believe you work here in this fantastic place? Can you believe you have this great job and you come over here all the time?” ... So it’s wonderful that we have that friendship to start with, and that it’s also something that’s a bond with the museum.

Occasionally, Mary and Ellie experience an exhibition together.

So sometimes we will walk around. I think the *National Treasures*, the treasures from the library exhibition, ah Ellie and I together went for a wander through and we loved it. We both are lovers of history and we enjoyed talking about that exhibition together.

Ellie provided the following account of their experience of viewing the *National Treasure's* exhibition:

- Ellie: When the *National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries* exhibition was on, we did part of that exhibition together. So yeah we did it as a social experience and we went around talking. And I don't know if you remember, or if you were here, but it was really full-on. And we pointed out the obvious, and Mary was noticing things that I wasn't which was part of the whole—most people do that. But um, some of the objects on the display reduced her to tears almost, so obviously she connected with it. So it was quite a personal exhibition. Things like Azaria Chamberlain's¹⁸ little name plate and there were letters and just, you know, quite a lot of treasures I guess. So that was yeah, good. It really heightened my experience of a very full-on exhibition.
- Michele: So when you were walking around would you usually stay together, 'cause I was noticing when you two were in the Bond Store at the TMAGot's function and just the talk between the two of you and the comments back and forth.
- Ellie: That's how generally we'd do it. I mean occasionally, especially like with something like *Treasures*. 'Cause there's just so much, we'd be reading different things, but we'd go back and talk to each other. ... And I'm much more social, I enjoy being with a curator or being with somebody and talking about it much more than looking at it myself. I know it's a really individual thing. And I don't know, I think Mary gets benefits both ways. Because I think she does come in here on her own, from what she tells me, or has done. And so I think she can do it both ways.

On Her Own

Apart from her work-related and social visits, Mary also experiences the museum on her own. Typically, during her unaccompanied visits, Mary will view one exhibition or even just one or two works of art.

¹⁸ Azaria Chamberlain, a nine-week old baby girl, disappeared on a camping trip at Uluaru in central Australia in 1980. Her parents reported that the child had been taken from the tent by a dingo. A sensational trial resulted in the conviction of Azaria's mother for her murder. The charges were later dropped ("Azaria Chamberlain," 2005).

And most of the time I'm on limited time for visits, so I'll come and look at one particular thing. It's very rare that I'll actually walk through the whole museum and look at everything in the whole place. I tend to look at one particular gallery, one particular exhibition, or one particular area of the collection. ... Yeah, so if, you know, I might come for a visit and just sort of really look at the one [painting] for a while. When I came in my lunchtime, I often might just come and sort of think of one or two paintings at a time rather than try and look at everything in the room.

Her primary reasons for visiting on her own are best captured by the words “inspiration” and “reflection.”

It can be for different reasons, I might go because I need some inspiration because I want to do a painting myself, which I probably never end up doing, but I go there and um (laugh) try and be inspired on that level. I also go there just because, I think they're just amazing things to be able to see—to look at a painting and you know that the artist's hand has actually touched that canvas, it's not a print, that is the work. I find that awesome and inspiring. And of course the subject matter of the paintings is always inspiring thinking, trying to remember back to the time that they were created and what it was really like, for all people, whether it'd be the Aborigines portrayed in the Glovers, or what was it like for John Glover to be in this new place, in there? So, yeah, definitely go there when I need a bit of inspiration I guess is the best way to say it, or reflection.

When I asked her to describe the way she engages with works in the museum, she replied, “[it's] very much emotional for me I think a lot of the time.” The emotional quality of her engagement with the objects was evident during the *guided tour*.

* * *

The tour started in the main foyer of the museum. Our first stop was in front of a recent acquisition, the Hamilton Inn couch¹⁹ (see Figure 4.6).

Probably the first thing that has been very special is the story of the Hamilton couch. We were privy to filming the auction that this couch was sold in, and didn't know at the time that it had been purchased by the museum. And then I filmed follow-up stories on the previous owner of the couch and we tried to show our audience, through the program, the

¹⁹ The Hamilton Inn couch was purchased for the TMAG at auction in 2005. The early colonial double-ended couch is constructed from Australian red cedar, eucalypt (blue gum or swamp gum) and iron. The exact date of the couch is unknown, but it was probably made in the 1820s or slightly earlier (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2007).

importance of what some people might think is a crappy old piece of furniture. So I think this is a very special thing, and I'm really pleased to see it here in the museum in the foyer, and in its state of dilapidation. I would personally ah, not like to see it restored. I think it's great to look at it the way it is. I think there's been some debate as to whether it should be restored to its former glory or left in that current condition. And for me to look at it, you imagine the people who have sat on it over the years and the story of that one piece of furniture being in a pub and then in someone's shed and nearly covered in tartan cushions, so yeah I think that's a wonderful thing to observe. Mmm. So yes, [I] enjoyed the story of the couch.



Figure 4.6. Maker unknown, Hamilton Inn couch c. 1820, Australian red cedar, eucalypt, iron, 98 x 283 x 73 cm.

From there we made a brief stop to look at the Huon pine furniture exhibition.

This is the last exhibition that I came to see here personally, nothing to do with work, the wonderful Huon pine furniture collection. And, you know, it's just gorgeous and what a great story that um, the museum can be home to a collection like this—one person's passion. That person could have sold off each piece individually, and how wonderful that the museum is seen as an important enough institution for it all to be donated to. Yeah. ... I think for me the overwhelming thing is that it is one entire collection and one person was foresighted enough to see the value in it and collect it and now we can all share in what was his foresightedness.

After we left the furniture exhibition, we had a quick walk through the zoology gallery. Although she enjoys the memory “from being so young and it still being here,” she says it doesn’t have much of a draw for her today. As we walked up the stairs, she called my attention to one of the paintings hung on the center wall of the stairway [Adolphe-William Bouguereau, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1889].

And you know this painting up here? The beautiful one of the angel, I can’t think of its title, but I remember there was discussion of it being sold and I remember feeling a bit sad at the time because I really loved to see that every time I come towards there and look up the stairs. ... I’m not saying I’m particularly inspired by that painting itself. I think it’s very beautiful, but you know it’s just part of this place and part my experience of coming here. ... I can remember it from a long time ago. ... Because it’s so romantic, it’s one of those images that really stays in your mind. ... I think I like the frame on that one just as much as the painting to be honest. But yeah, it’s just one of those things I associate with being here at the museum. So I was really pleased that it wasn’t sold.

Once upstairs, we entered the convict gallery, a room she only occasionally visits:

Especially with work if I’m um, oh, I don’t know, thinking about a mystery object for the program or I’ve been reading a bit of literature about convicts. Um yeah, I’ll go in there just to remind myself or see something tangible as a real reminder of the story or the history seeing you know, the outfit a convict wore rather than just reading about what it was like.

As we walked around that exhibition, Mary expressed her disbelief at the cruelty the convicts had to endure.

Mary: So yeah, I mean I’m often appalled when I read about the treatment of convicts especially because on my maternal side my ancestors were on Norfolk Island, so it’s very sad to come and see evidence. You know you read these stories, “Is it true?” Well, yeah, you know you can look here at the shackles, the ball and chain, you know it was true. Actually I remember as a child coming in here with school and being absolutely horrified by the dunking box. You know, how people could have treated each other so cruelly ah, you know I still can’t believe that that’s what happened.

Michele: And your ancestors who came here originally—

Mary: Yeah, my great, great grandfathers. Ah, apparently Norfolk Island was the worst of all the penal colonies, sorry, the prisons. So yeah, god knows what they endured and survived it and were able to settle in New Norfolk, as have generations of family ever since.

Michele: Are there any records of what they went through?

- Mary: I've read reports on Norfolk Island. Um read the reports of when Bishop Wilson went to Norfolk Island and basically wanted to shut the place down because of the terrible cruel nature and all the other sort of desperate things that were going on there at the time.
- Michele: So this exhibition obviously has more meaning for you than for people who don't have a direct—
- Mary: Yes, I think because of my family, yes. They were my grandmother's great grandfather and uncle. So yeah you really think if they hadn't endured all of this torture and being sent out here, I wouldn't be here. Yeah, so it's sad. I find this a really sad but important collection in the museum. Mmm. And thank god in some ways, like we've got such a dark history um, that you know to look back at this now, you thank god, thank god people don't treat people the way they used to. You know, maybe we have advanced (little laugh).
- Michele: Has there been a change in um, that Tasmanians are now embracing their history?
- Mary: Definitely. The reason it was always a joke in my family that there may have been Aboriginal blood or it was a shameful thing, in my generation now, if I actually knew more about it and could track the history, I'd be proud of it. I wouldn't be ashamed of it. And I think that's just a general change that's happened across society, yeah. Because we can be proud of their efforts and what they went through rather than shamed, you know we're not a class-based society [referring to Australia], so there is no shame in having a convict or Aboriginal ancestor.

The last stop on the tour was the colonial art gallery, a gallery that holds special significance for Mary.

Alright we'll start in this area. You know as soon as I come in this room I just feel an overwhelming sense of awe. Um, to be able to look at paintings like this one, the Haughton Forrest [*View of Hobart from Rosny Point*, 1886], you know for me not only is it a wonderful record of history as far as what Hobart and the river looked like at that time, it's just a beautiful painting as well. So I get a lot out of it. I can think about the history or I can just look at it purely as the image that it is and enjoy it on both of those levels. So yeah, I really love looking at the old wharf scene. The way the mountain's been represented by so many different artists I find really interesting as well. I have a very strong association with the backdrop of Mt Wellington, having lived in Hobart and always had that sense of the Mountain as a landmark. And I think when I've lived in other cities that don't have that backdrop I um get lost for me, can't kinda get my bearings. So yeah all these paintings, I don't have one in particular that I think is my favourite out of these but yeah, I just love looking at them. And look here (gestures with hand), you can look here, [Henry Gritten, *Hobart Town*, 1856] you can look at this one and see the museum building that was the

Customs House. So I just think that's really special too that I'm standing here in the building that's depicted in these paintings. Mmm, yeah.

Next, we moved to the works of Pigenit.

Mary: And I think of all the paintings I love to see, the Pigenit paintings that show the colours of the sky are the standout ones for me. Mmm. So this is a Pigenit [*Port Esperance: Faith, Hope and Charity Islands, Tasmania, 1887*] and that misty sort of cold winter's afternoon, morning when the pinkish colour of the sky. You know that painting was painted when? (reads label) And apart from the tall ships or whatever might give the time away, that could be what we'd see tomorrow if we woke up in Dover. So I really, yeah, I just find that people way before my time have been inspired by the same things that I'm inspired by now in this beautiful landscape that I live in.

Michele: And is it important to feel connected to those artists?

Mary: Um, I don't feel connected to the artists necessarily, I feel that there's this very, very special landscape that we've all been lucky enough to live in, these artists and myself. So it's a connection with the landscape more than with the artists I think and yeah and the history of the place. Mmm.

Michele: And thinking ... putting yourself in that time or?

Mary: Just letting the painting wash over you I guess, and really being absorbed by the image in front of you and the feeling that it can give you. And um, you know they can almost come to life. You can almost feel like you're really there when you're at the location, when you're looking at them. I can almost feel what it's like to wake up on that particular type of morning or be there at that particular time of day—the feeling of the cold air that would be there in Tasmania, the smell of the ocean. It's just um, I guess I've spent a lot of time in different parts of Tasmania and yeah, always having been inspired by the light and the beautiful landscape um you know I think, "Great I'm glad someone painted [it] really well, because I probably haven't" (laugh) yeah. ... And often you know you think about the marks humans leave on the landscape and how as the population grows a lot of the environment is being lost. And back then it was not even, I guess when this painting was painted people were thinking more about survival and conquering the landscape than trying to retain some natural environment for the future. You know, bringing their cows and everything out here and slaughtering Tasmanian tigers and whatever else was going on. Yeah.

As we made our way to the other end of the gallery Mary's thoughts turned to the history of "Tasmanian Aborigines."

Mary: ...but then when we come down to these paintings at the other end it's a totally different experience, I think. You know this is incredible. This is a race of people that 200 years ago were living here harmoniously. You know I can't believe sometimes that our history is so dark, what happened to the Tasmanian Aborigines actually happened. Um, so to look at these paintings you really—I think you can see in them, the ignorance of the people that came here and painted them. They're really static. It's almost like how you see a botanical painting of a new species. They're sort of painted in the same way. Um and I find it really, really sad (pause) to think about what these Aboriginal people went through. How incredibly overwhelming it must have been for them when white people arrived, and then changed everything so quickly and caused so much destruction and yeah. So I mean these Duterreau paintings are one thing, like as I said, you can really see it's white people trying to understand or trying to record information about them. But then this painting, this one I've looked at a lot of times um [Thomas Napier, *Woureddy and Trucanini*, early 1930s] (see Figure 4.7), I find this the most incredible painting in here because (pause) I don't know, unlike these where they're very sort of set up like in a studio sort of style, this one, you really think you can see the real character of those two people and doesn't Truganini²⁰ look pretty upset? You know really, this is an emotional painting for me.

Michele: So it's sadness—

Mary: Oh yeah, incredibly so. Yeah, look at the look on her face. And I really want to know about this artist Thomas Napier. Was he empathetic towards the Aboriginal people? I think from that painting he, it seems to me that he probably was. And it's incredible to think you know, it was only 200 years ago, not very long. And this beautiful land and the way these people lived on it without needing to kind of conquer the landscape, um you know, makes you wonder who was right and who was wrong or who had the better way of life. Yeah, so I find that painting really, really special and even though it's only a little one, um I've probably looked at that and thought about that one more than any other painting in this exhibition. 'Cause they seem real...

²⁰ Truganini (Trucanini, Trukanini) (1812-1876) was once believed to be the last full-blooded Tasmanian Aborigine. Her life represents the struggle and survival of Tasmanian Aboriginals ("Truganini," 2008).



Figure 4.7. Thomas Napier, *Woureddy and Trucanini*, early 1930s, oil on canvas, 30 x 38 cm. Courtesy of the TMAG.

Michele: And is it because of you possibly—

Mary: Well even if that wasn't part of you know possibly in my ancestry, I'd still feel the same, yeah.

Michele: Does it change in any way how you feel knowing that—

Mary: Um, no. I just think there's a lot of people like me that have that same story. I mean Tasmania had a small population. Um, I feel incredibly um (pause) proud of the people that speak up for the community of Tasmanian Aboriginals that are still here, yeah. And no, it's just part of our common history of this place. And say if I'd just moved here from Melbourne and I wasn't necessarily born here into a family that have been here on both sides for so long I might not feel as strongly about it, but I certainly do.

Mary then led me to the works of John Glover.

Mary: This one [John Glover, *Mills Plains, Ben Lomond, Ben Loder and Ben Nevis in the Distance*, 1836] and this one [John Glover, *The Western Tier of Mountains, Thursday Hill and the South Esk River from Mr. Wedge's Farm*, 1833] are quite similar to the Glover [referring to a painting in the John Glover exhibition]; like 'cause I'd looked at these a few times. But in the exhibition, there was the most beautiful one of, at nighttime of sunset. And I thought it was a stunning painting. Um and yeah, I mean I love to look at this because, (lets out sigh) if he didn't record what the Aboriginal people were doing in this painting there'd be fewer sources left for

us to get an idea of how these people lived in this landscape. And I love looking at the way gum trees were such a new thing, and the way they were painted were you know, trying to get a grasp on um, you know this new variety of tree, and you can tell they haven't been painted in true form to a gum tree, but he's probably trying to break the mold with all the paintings of European trees he's been taught how to do. I don't know. But they're just beautiful.

Michele: So with Glover, is it the technique or an emotional—?

Mary: I actually, the paintings are just as paintings really beautiful and the painterly quality of them I really enjoy. But I think about this man, at the time, John Glover you know he must have (pause) I like to think that he was also empathetic towards the Aboriginal people um rather than thinking of them as savages—he was obviously, he could, well, find merit in them enough to want to paint them and record what they were doing. ... Yeah so I often wonder about the man, John Glover I must say. But then again he could have just recorded it, you know, just seeing what was in the landscape truly without having any emotions about it. I don't really know.

Michele: I wonder if his thoughts are recorded anywhere.

Mary: Yeah, they probably are. I just haven't read them. They might blow the myth for me if I read them (laugh). And also I think, that's what I like about art. I don't like it when people try and theorise too much about what the artist was thinking. Because, especially with artists that are now deceased, we'll probably never know ah, so what it says to me is enough.

The works of Glover hold special meaning for Mary. During our conversations, Mary recalled the experience of viewing the *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* exhibition with her grandmother and aunt.

Um yeah, with the Glover exhibition, I came here with my grandmother and my aunt on one occasion. ... Ah, yes, that's the only time I can remember three generations in my family of females being interested by the one thing. Yeah, it was great. ... It was wonderful because the nature of the Glover paintings, being very much about the early Tasmanian landscape, having visited with my grandmother whose family, as I said, have got strong connections in the Derwent Valley, they've always lived there, yes it was really nice. There was something in common there that we all shared and that was the beautiful Tasmanian landscape and the history of this place.

Mary came back on her own to view that exhibition on two other occasions. She finds value in coming back to revisit artworks, particularly works in the colonial art gallery.

I like the fact the colonial art gallery is pretty much an unchanging permanent display, and I really like being able to have repetitive visits because you might look at a painting and go away and think about it and then you have a question about it and want to come again. So the fact that they're always here to see is wonderful. They're like your friends after a while (little sigh). Yeah. ... Um, well it might have been, say, a few months since you've seen a painting and you know that you love that painting so you just want to come back and have another look so it stays in your mind. The Duterreau paintings I find fascinating really, and often, the more I'm reading stories about history, the more that painting becomes more relevant to an understanding I might have of history. Yeah, so I guess, you know, I might have seen that painting once and then read a little bit more about that era of history, and so the painting takes on another meaning almost if you come and look at it again too. Mmm.

At the end of the guided tour, as we headed out of the colonial art gallery, Mary took one more look at Thomas Napier's *Woureddy and Trucanini* and said, "Yeah, I think that's probably all I can say about it now, unless you've got any other questions."

* * *

The words she uses to describe the way she feels after a visit are "relaxed" and "inspired."

- Michele: How would you describe how you feel after a visit?
 Mary: If it's in the context of coming over when I've been busy at work for a little lunchtime escape, I usually feel really more relaxed and generally the best word would be inspired when I leave the museum.
 Michele: So do you think about things you've experienced here after you leave?
 Mary: Yeah, sure. And especially within the context of artworks, I often might want to come back for another look.

Mary believes she receives a wide range of benefits from her visits to the museum.

Well, there's so many [benefits]. On one level learning. ... I guess it's like, the museum to me is sometimes like the glue that's sticking pieces of a puzzle back together. Because I haven't studied formally, history or art history, and I'm picking up snippets all the time. Sometimes to come to the museum can really put that history in context in almost a timeline. Or you'll just see an object that relates to um the story of early settlement here that

you might be reading about, what life was like when they settled in Tasmania, and you might come here and suddenly see some old tools that they used to use, or built their house with and that really just ties it all together for me. ... On another level inspiration. On another level, you know it's even just (pause) enjoying the company of other people that work here that are also interested in history and the role of the museum. You know when I come over and chat with [museum staff], I just really enjoy their company as well. But yeah, I find it obviously a wonderful thing for learning and you look back at things. Like if we're talking about say some convict memorabilia, to look at it you just go (sigh); it's just a reminder of how things were and I find that that's really important, to not forget the past. And I find it really inspiring if I've been looking at an art exhibition yeah. And um, I just also really enjoy it from a work aspect too. When I'm here filming and we're able to, through our program and the visitors that come, remind people a little bit about history through these mystery objects as well. It's great fun.

Her friend Ellie thinks Mary also receives "therapeutic" benefits.

I think she gets a real, as I said, I think it's an emotional connection so she goes away being moved, you know, I think from some of the things that she sees and some of the things that she witnesses. Um, I think too it's just, uh, I don't know. I find it quite a calming place to be, even when I'm at work. I think that most people that visit here get that impression too. They can just wander around and get lost in it. Mmm. So, I mean Mary's never actually said to me, though, what she gets out of it, but I do know that she enjoys coming here on a whole. So I can only say that it's therapeutic, if that's the right word, yeah.

Mary described the relationship she has with the TMAG as being mutually beneficial.

Well it gives me a place that I can feel proud of my own history in, as a Tasmanian. Um, I also like the fact that perhaps I'm a bit of an advocate for the museum, now, with people in my peer group that may not go along in that sort of mmm, you know, people that are going out to socialise, that kind of thing normally wouldn't say, "We'll go to the museum for fun," people in my age group. So, I feel like I've been able to share that with a couple of friends. ... I know my way around the building ... and yes, if I'm taking a new visitor, a friend, I feel quite proud that I can point some things out within the museum they might want to look at that are part of the permanent displays, yeah. ... So it's two things. Like I'm really proud to be an advocate for the museum, and I enjoy what it gives me back as a local Tasmanian person understanding our history, and to an extent, some Australian history as well, not just Tasmanian.

Although Mary enjoys visiting many different museums, because of her “family history being Tasmanian,” her feelings for the TMAG are stronger than those she has for other museums and art galleries.

I could be an advocate [for museums and art galleries located in another city], and understand the importance of the organisation, say if they were going to experience funding cuts. But no, it's that Tasmanian connection that makes it feel really special about this one. It's almost like it's my building too. Yeah because you feel like you're, in a way we're all looking after our history. I can't put it into words, but these items are donated to the museum for the good of other people to learn from, and I'm one of the people that has really learnt from it, and I really respect that. So if suddenly someone wanted to say, well we're going to sell off half the collection, I would be very passionate that that shouldn't happen, or yeah, so I guess I like to, (pause) yeah, I think I'm a bit of an advocate for the role of the museum locally and what it can give to local people in their lives too, understanding their own history.

Her appreciation of the historical significance of the building also contributes to the way Mary feels about the TMAG.

I love the mixture of buildings that is the museum here, the fact that we've got the Bond Store there; this was the first Customs House for Hobart. Even the much contested 60's wing of the museum ... I don't mind it. I really love the fact that this building within its grounds encapsulates the history of Tasmania too, the different eras of architecture. ... It might be a bit too subjective for us in the year 2006 to say that's ugly architecture. ... Imagine if they'd said “knock the Bond Store down” in the year 1900 because it's old and daggy, you know, we wouldn't have it now. ... And I kind of feel like it's got a life of its own, the museum. It's from the building inwards. You know some days you just drive past and look at the great big façade of Customs House and imagine, how imposing was that for the ships to pull up to the dock? So it's not even just what's inside, it's the actual building itself ... so it's a site and what it contains.

Mary attributes her continued relationship with the museum to her insatiable “quest for knowledge about history,” particularly her own history.

Well, it's the fact that, if you like, I can never run out of interesting things to see or find there personally, especially with the changing exhibitions and new displays coming through. Um, I mean even if I didn't work there, I'd still want to go to the museum. Ah, so what sustains it is my level of interest and my quest for knowledge about history, um and my appreciation as I grow older of more of our cultural relics, antiquities, if you like. Time passing makes things seem more special. So suddenly, you know, something from the 1950s that you might see on display again, you're familiar with,

but it takes on a new context over the passing of time. So I think that's, it's always going to be relevant to me, with new acquisitions and new things they do, yeah.

Future Involvement

In the third interview, we discussed Mary's future involvement with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. During our conversation, I asked her to comment on the direction she sees the TMAG heading in the future.

Well, I don't know what it [TMAG] will do. But um, if you look at other museums around the world, and I've been to a few, especially the ones in London, it's always about an add-on activity, if you like, or something else for people to engage with beside just the exhibition—so a series of talks or children's event weekend based around an exhibition that's on which, I mean are great, it draws a lot of people in. For me I don't know if that makes the actual experience any better or worse, but I think that's probably a trend that you can see happening at the moment. For me personally, it doesn't draw me in, it wouldn't be an added bonus for me, ah, depending (pause), I guess I joined the TMAGgots because I like the idea of having a behind-the-scenes talk about an exhibition that's coming up or some of those little, extra information, but not extra fluff. Yeah I'm more into the information rather than the entertainment aspect of things...

Concerning her anticipated future involvement with the museum, Mary thinks the relationship she has with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Galley will be an enduring one.

Yeah, I ah, I think it [my involvement] wouldn't lessen. It would be the same, I would hope, because after all it doesn't cost to go, ah, unless I moved. Um, if I was a parent, I would love to take them [children] there and start them off young. I'm a member of the TMAGgots so that social level of interaction I expect will continue. And any new exhibitions, I'm sure I will want to go and see. And my work, in the near future, will keep me being there as well.

Her friend Ellie also believes Mary's relationship with the museum will be long-lasting.

I guess I would confidently say that she'll continue to have some sort of involvement with it. Um and that's also just beyond work, obviously with work, our commitment continues so she'll be back here with that. But I can't imagine Mary living in Hobart and not coming to the museum with friends or without friends. It's just you know, for the reasons it's what it is, you know since she was a little child. So I can't imagine that ending. You know

I can see her coming back lots ... it's sort of a natural place for her to end up.

The part of Mary's story that she feels is perhaps the most important, is that she found her way to the museum "on her own."

I feel really lucky to have um, been given the opportunity to understand what a fantastic place the museum is. Um, it's something that I really, you've heard my story about my past, but I really found it on my own, I guess, if you like. ... Well I think that, really, some people through their family social backgrounds, like we were saying before, they've come from a family who understand the arts, or are philanthropists, an introduction to the museum would have happened a long time ago when they were a child. But, I really think the most interesting thing from my point of view is I was one of those people that was probably never going to appreciate a museum unless I'd, you know, just found it myself. ... Mmm, I didn't listen to classical music when I was growing up, you know we had um, (little laugh) Hank Williams and Shakin' Stevens. Like my family weren't into cultural institutions and that. I guess you can say there's a bit of a stereotype of people who are into museums. They seem to be slightly well educated or better educated and have more money and that kind of thing. Well, I'm not from that background and that's why I appreciate what it genuinely is, not just some place I sort of think I should go. ... It's been a really personal thing to um, to find the museum a place of interest. So I like that fact, because there's a lot of other people out there like me who may have, you know, not been privy to many visits or maybe feel like it's not the sort of place for them, when it can be. ... Yeah and I just think it would be really sad if other people were put off because it seems like, you know, something out of your league...

At the end of the third interview, I asked Mary if anything has changed about the way she feels about the TMAG as a result of sharing her museum visiting history with me.

Being asked to talk to you about my feelings for it [TMAG], was the biggest thing, because I really didn't realise, until we started chatting, how strongly I do feel about the museum. Um, and I guess to think about (pause) you know, how I've developed as a person, and how I've come to embrace my family, Tasmanian history a bit more as I've grown up, um and therefore understand the museum differently. Yeah, I can look back and think, I'm glad I've got to where I am now, and I'm really glad I'm the sort of person that appreciates the museum, and want to go and visit, yeah. So it just reaffirmed, if you like, having chats with you about it, reaffirmed, for me, um, you know, why I do think it's a special place.

Diana – “appreciation for nice things”

After having their fill of “servants” and “cocktail parties” and living an “unreal” life in the Philippines, Diana’s parents decided it was time to “start again.”

So I was born in the Philippines. And then when I was three, we came to Australia and lived here. ... And my parents were—my mother’s Dutch and my father’s English. And they met and married in Singapore and so lived a lot of their time in all those sorts of countries, I guess, the Philippines, Indonesia, that sort of thing. ... And then at about 40, well he [father] would have been 43 then, he was tired of that sort of socialite life and he wanted something a bit more than that. ... So then I guess it was a decision to either go back to England, or to go to Australia because the children were there, the other children, not me. ... Once they turned seven, the colonial company my father worked for said you couldn’t actually keep your children in the country, so they were in Melbourne at boarding school. ... So then [my father] made that decision to resign from [his job] and they just came to Melbourne and sort of just set themselves up.

After a short stay in Melbourne, Diana and her family relocated to Sydney.

So we lived in Sydney from when I was three, and grew up in a suburb, a leafy sort of suburb. And my brothers and sisters were a lot older than me, so not many of them were really at home. ‘Cause by the time we moved to Sydney, my eldest sister was about 17 and she went to teacher’s college then. And the next, my brother kinda left home, decided he’d had enough of school and he went to be a jackaroo on a farm. And my next sister finished a little bit of school and then she went to be a nurse. So a lot of the time it was only me at home.

History of Involvement with the Arts and Museums

Diana remembers having an interest in music from an early age. She started playing the recorder “from about grade three, two or three.” She started learning how to play the clarinet when she “was in grade four or something like that, and then piano a little bit older than that.” She believes her parents’ interests as well as having “nice things” in her home influenced her interest in the arts.

I just think my, both my parents were really interested either in the creative arts or in history. ... There was pretty much music playing a lot of the time, classical music. My mother and father both liked really nice things, you know. They had travelled a lot and so they had pieces of furniture and nice bits and pieces around the home. So there was that sort of thing and [it] was very tasteful. They liked rugs and bits of artwork, although I don’t really ever remember (pause) art itself. Although, I mean, that’s probably not quite

right because then in later years they had, they probably didn't buy pieces of art that were [by] individual artists and expensive, but they might have had prints or copies of things that were really nice, or photographs. You know I remember a really beautiful photograph that my father had of an Indonesian woman sitting by a reflection pool. And it was a black and white study of her, which I now have since he's died. And it's a really beautiful painting. And so ... things like that were around...

Diana attended high school at the Conservatorium of Music where she "studied two instruments," the clarinet and the piano. Because the Conservatorium was located close to the Central Business District in Sydney, she would make the trip into the city every weekday.

We lived in this suburb that was out of, not out of Sydney, but not very close to the city. And when I auditioned for the Conservatorium and I got in to the school, my parents then thought well, to make everything a bit easier, they would sell their house and move to Mossman, which is on the harbour and not far from the city, so that I could then catch a ferry to school. And my father worked in the city too. So we used to catch the ferry together. He and I went on a ferry together in the morning. It was really lovely. And they bought a sort of bush block right on the edge of Sydney to retire to. And they were building a house, so they sort of thought oh well, it would all kind of fit in that we'd move to this flat, they'd keep building their house, and then eventually they'd move there. So that's how I got to school and, mmm. It was great.

Diana presumes it was during this period of her life that she first experienced museums and art galleries. She thinks her first experience visiting a museum or art gallery "was probably something she did as a teenager."

And so in Sydney, the Conservatorium is located in, just on the edge of the botanical gardens. And the art gallery [of New South Wales] is pretty close by to that, and the museum is a little bit further on. So it's all in the city. And I guess, ah, that gives it a bit of an artistic flavour to your life and sort of your leanings to that. ... It was like, you're there, you know, the art gallery's down the road. So I think that kind of sets that up for you. I would have gone then in those high school years to the museum and the art gallery.

During her time at the Conservatorium Diana met William.

I met him when I went to—my parents were pretty concerned that I meet the sort of people who weren't, people who weren't so obsessed with music really. So I went to a local Girl Guide group. And I used to do that on a Friday night, go to Guides and things. And they did things with the local, the other Scout group. We sort of did "combined activities" they use to call it.

And that's where I met William, 'cause he was in that group. And we did lots of camping things and things like that through them.

In addition to participating in outdoor activities, Diana and William also visited the art gallery together.

But I know, I can remember William and I used to always go to the art gallery together sort of as teens. When we met each other in our teenage years, and then we would have gone to the gallery. ... We were both probably interested and yes, we must have just done it because it was there.

These visits to the art gallery with William are the only memories Diana has of visiting museums or art galleries in her childhood and adolescent years. She does not have any recollection of visiting museums with her family or on school excursion.

After finishing high school, Diana and William moved to northern New South Wales to attend university. Although she did not pursue her interest in music after she left high school, she says it is still a part of who she is.

I was interested in being a music therapist and working with children, you know with additional or special needs. And so that's kind of what I thought I might do. And then I kind of got so carried away with the whole thing about children with additional needs, that I just went into teaching. I didn't do the music therapy. And so music has kind of faded out as being—I don't practice music anymore, but it's still pretty much part of who I am.

During "uni holidays" she and William would visit Tasmania, to go "bushwalking and doing those sorts of things." One of the places they visited during their trips to Tasmania was the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

And particularly when we first came here on holidays, we went, I can remember going to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery then. Because it was renowned for collections about Antarctica or about particularly Tasmanian things, so we went to learn more, here. So where do you go and find out a bit more? You go to the museum and art gallery. ... I remember looking at things like, there were often um displays about the penal settlement, Port Arthur, those convicts, and Antarctica was always sort of a current theme, and we were always coming and looking at that. That was always really interesting. ... And maybe not spend a huge time, but we would have done that each time we came.

Because they enjoyed Tasmania, they talked about moving there someday.

While Diana was completing her studies at uni, receiving a “Bachelor of Art majoring in psychology and special education,” an opportunity to work for the Education Department in Tasmania presented itself. So in 1979, Diana packed up her belongings and moved to Oatlands, Tasmania. A year later, she and William married and he joined her there. The following year, they moved to Hobart.

When Diana and William first arrived in Hobart, they found it easier to make friends with people who had moved to Tasmania “from outside the state,” people who were “more inclusive.” Now, after having lived here for nearly 30 years, “longer than anywhere else,” she feels passionately about Hobart.

Oh, I love Hobart. I think it’s the most beautiful place. It’s a lovely place to live. It’s a lovely place to bring up children. I mean where else can you live in the sight of a mountain, beside a river? And you have all the benefits of a big city, really, on a smaller scale. And for someone like me, I’m always late, ‘cause I try to put too many things in a day. So it’s great, you know you can leave home and in five minutes you’re there and bingo, done it. But you can have a museum, you can go out to dinner at a beautiful, superb restaurant, you can go to a show or a theatre or concert that’s just as good as you can get anywhere else. So, no I love it. I think, I’m probably passionate about Hobart.

In 1984, Diana and William spent a year abroad, traveling through Asia, Europe, and the United States. During their trip, they visited many museums and art galleries.

We went about it as a bit of a world sort of trip so we were in places like the UK. And we went in London to a range of different museums like the National Gallery and there’s a few others there but I can’t really remember. But we went to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and there’s um, the Jeu de Paume, I think in France, and ah, the Louvre, we went there, we would have gone in Paris. In Madrid we went to this big gallery, but I don’t know what it’s called, but it’s very well known. And that was really lovely. That was almost, very stunning. William would remember what it was called, but I can’t. Ah, where else would we have gone to galleries? (pause) Um and also, we did sort of natural history also in Italy. In Rome there were sort of galleries that were, not galleries but museums about the past. And in Greece there was a lot of that. We went to lots of places in Greece on each island that would have those sorts of relics of the past. It was just great.

A couple years after they returned from their yearlong adventure they started a family. During the time their children were growing up, Diana and William would make family visits to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, “probably only a couple times a year.”

Probably just to walk around. Mmm. If there were new exhibitions, we would have all come. Sometimes I brought them just in the holidays. You know when you’d think, well where would we do something? We’d come here.

Diana and her family continued to make regular visits to the TMAG until her children’s interest in visiting the museum started to wane. Concerning her visiting pattern over the years Diana says:

...maybe it’s not ongoing all the time, you know you go in and out of that time. I probably would say there was a period of time when I didn’t come here for several years in a row. That would probably be when my children were, you know, a busy time of life, children are at a sort of an age maybe, maybe 10 years ago, something like that. But it’s not that I didn’t want to come, it just didn’t happen.

After the family visits ended, she and William continued to visit the museum on their own. “Certainly when there’s visiting exhibitions and then we’d always come to things like that.”

Details of the Relationship Today

Although her life is very busy these days, working full-time and raising two teenagers, Diana’s visits to the museum have become more frequent. Today she experiences the TMAG in a couple different ways. In addition to her “normal” visits with William, she has recently become involved with the young Friends of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the TMAGgots.

TMAGgots

Diana’s initial contact with the TMAGgots occurred over a year ago when she attended a behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum and Art Gallery. The event

was held as a way of encouraging “younger people” to get involved with the museum. She found out about the tour from a close friend’s mom who serves on the FTMAG committee. She attended the event with her girlfriend, Sophie, and two of their children. She thinks it “was actually one of the best things [TMAG has] ever done.”

That was so brilliant because we saw, you got a tour through everywhere. You go on the roof and you go in these funny little places and you see Tasmanian tigers in bottles and amazing beetles and oh furniture things. Where did we go? And all these little doors get opened and you go ‘round up and down and so that was really great! And that’s when I thought aw this is so good. I thought I’m gonna join this thing because then I can get to go to more secret places. That’s what really kind of pulled me [in].

At the end of the event she filled out a questionnaire, and as a result, she now serves on the TMAGgot’s committee.

...and then they finished up and gave you a questionnaire, a survey that you filled in. And on it, it said, “Would you be interested in being on a committee?” And I said to Sophie, “Do you want to do that?” And she said “yes,” but she never ticked it. I said “yes” and ticked it and that’s how I ended up doing this.

One of her primary reasons for joining the group was to expand her social network. She saw it as “a social opportunity, to meet other people. It starts to broaden your network a little bit.”

But now, that’s why I look to the TMAGgots or something. ‘Cause I thought now maybe I’m getting to that age where I maybe have a bit of time for art and things like that. I’d love to go and find out a bit more. I’d like to learn a bit more and maybe I could make friends...

As she has become more involved with the group, she has realized, however, that it might not be a perfect fit for her.

But that’s why, you see, the TMAGgots isn’t probably gonna be the place that I’ll make friends because they’re much younger than me. See, it’s tricky. It’s just a cusp thing. And then in the Friends of the Museum, they’re a little bit too old. ... And I thought, there are people probably out there that have the same needs as me. They’re in that niche thing between, they’re not 20 and they’re not 60, but they’re in here and they want to be part of it. ... I said to her [TMAGgot president], you know you don’t want to put people

off. Because there are people out there who want to do, and they don't want to be fuddy, dudding around. And they think they're pretty groovy (motions to herself) and they, you know, they want to be in there doing a groovy thing, but they're not, they're not the sort of, "Hey there I'm 20" sort of thing.

Although her work with the TMAGgots may not serve to broaden her social network, there are other aspects of her association with the group she enjoys. For example, as a committee member she has access to areas of the museum that are typically off limits to the general public.

So you come in for those meetings in a different door. So it's a very different coming to the museum. It's not like you're coming here to what the museum is. You're coming to something that's behind it. You come in this door and it's very beautiful and it's a lovely sort of circumstance. ... I feel oh, this is quite different ... it's almost that you're a bit different because you're in that group. You come in around the front there and it's almost like you're treated to some secret things that are a bit different and special...

Her work with the TMAGgots also provides her with a sense of contributing and "belonging."

I started saying to you before when I drove up here, I sort of felt like I had a sense of belonging when you drive up here. Because you know, yeah, I'm, I'm a part of this because now, I'm in a group that sort of contributes. So that's a really interesting sort of thing, feel a bit more valued.

The issue of being valued was also raised during our conversation about her experience volunteering at this year's Friends' Christmas barbeque.

I think, well how is it gonna happen if everybody's sitting around eating? The thing [barbeque] can't happen. And then we [she and William] stayed and cleared up and put stuff away and did all that sort of thing too. So that's great, 'cause you feel, that's good. You like to help out. And that's a way you can really feel like you're part of it and then you're a bit valued again you see. And, he's [the member of the FTMAG who organises the barbeque] somebody that, he really values people. Now *that* is how you work with people. So he emailed me on the day. And then I rang him just to say, yes I'm coming and William will be here, that was great. And I didn't need to ring him. But I thought oh it's nice he's contacted me, so I'll ring him. And he was very supportive that whole time. And then at the end of the day when we'd finish packing up, you know he thanks you.

Ongoing Visits

In addition to her work with the TMAGgots, Diana continues to make her “ongoing” visits to the museum, primarily taking in new exhibitions with William, and on occasion, visiting the TMAG with a friend or with out-of-town visitors.

During the second interview, Diana reflected on how the nature of her visits to the museum has changed now that her children are older.

Then I have the ongoing sort of come here. And it’s interesting now I guess my life has changed a little bit because my children are getting older. And so it’s more now that William and I would come here. Whereas in the past we would have gone, “Oh let’s go,” we’d go to the museum and we’d bring the children because they were with us. Now we’d say, “Do you want to come?” and they go, “No.” So we’d go by ourselves. And so we would see mostly ah, I guess the impetus for us would be the advertised bigger events. It’s less the sort of “Oh, we got a bit of spare time let’s go to the gallery.” We don’t tend to do that so much. Because we’ve probably got busier, which is an awful thing to say.

When she goes to the museum for one of her regular visits, she says she goes there without having any specific expectations.

I don’t have an expectation except that (pause) sometimes I think the museum part of it, I think could be boring. I don’t mean, you know it’s a, mmm. I shouldn’t probably’ve said that. Not boring but it’s ah, not so stimulating and then you become surprised because like then they had all that furniture I told you about, you know, somebody’s Huon pine thing and you think, wow! That’s great, it’s not that boring old dinosaur or something. So, expectations? I don’t think I really do have any expectation other than (pause) well I guess every time we come I think, well you could just come here and you know that you’re gonna have a good time. It’s gonna be good because you’ve got that past experience. You know there are certain things here you can see and think oh, that’s lovely, great, really interesting. And then there’s that back sort of feeling that maybe I’ve got to walk through that boring old bit with the stuffed animals. But they’re gonna fix all that so that’s gonna be fine.

Typically, Diana and William do not plan ahead of time what they will do during a visit.

Michele: Do you plan ahead of time what you’re gonna do when you’re here or just—

Diana: No, definitely not, definitely not. Unless we come to a specific, but we would always go to the specific exhibition say and then still just

have a little flick, maybe go to something else and see what's happening there at the same time. So we wouldn't just solely go in and out to that exhibition. We'd just sort of do a little waft along something along the way.

Michele: But you wouldn't typically do the whole thing?

Diana: No, very rarely do the whole thing. But you see, I wouldn't do that anyway. Even in a new place because I think, it's a bit, it's too much. And I don't want to, you know I don't want to get, sort of physically tired. I don't want to stand around. And if it's too slow, you know reading the things, that's when I want to sit down and that sort of thing. So I wouldn't ever do the whole thing.

During their visits, they mutually decide on where they want to go and what they want to see.

We both, both [decide]. He would often have some sort of oh well he wants to look at such and such. And when the kids were little they'd go "Awww no he's gonna look at this and it's gonna be all that stuff." 'Cause they know he's gonna read everything too. But no we would share it.

Although Diana and William have very different viewing styles and preferences for how they like to experience museums, they find ways to accommodate each other's needs.

Yes, look and come together probably. We start together but you see, he's reading the things. So I keep on going and I might come back to him and say "Hey you got to look at this." And he's still reading. Or I sit in the middle and look. And particularly, I really remember that in Sydney a lot because in Sydney they've got—they must have them here—they've got these beautiful big ottoman things. And I would often sit there thinking, "Oh, I'm so tired. I can't stand up in here anymore" and he's (expressing exasperation) ugh [reading] everything! He's got to read it all before we go. ... I don't read the things. I might read one thing if it really interests me. I'm a bit shallow really you see. I just like to take it all in you know. I love to look at and be there. ... So he would spend hours more than me. He's a big long visit person, see the lot. When we went to the Louvre in Paris, you gonna see the whole damn thing? And I said, "Oh no, I'm not walking 'round to all of that." They offer this thing there where they say, "OK here's this piece of paper and you can see the main highlights of the Louvre." And I said, "Yeah that's me." Walk all around, see one or two things and feel lovely about it ... and then go, "That's nice, OK." So it's an interesting different feeling. But we definitely like the same things—old furniture, old buildings and things. It's just how we do it that's different. ... And he puts up with me—going and sitting and closing my eyes and taking it in, you know feeling it all and I put up with him having to read it all. ... So yeah, together we look

around and you know, love the things and look at everything, yeah. ... Well it's a lovely thing to do together. So that's a lovely thing to do together.

* * *

During the *guided tour*, Diana showed me the kind of objects that interest her, old furniture, romantic and historical paintings. Our first stop was in front of the Hamilton Inn couch located in the entrance foyer.

Well here, because it's all like it's just come out of someone's old shed, which it did you know. It was at an auction, and it's the auctions I go to and it was auctioned there. And this lady found it in a shed, in her old family shed. And she thought oh, well she'd just get a couple hundred dollars. I can't remember now. William knows the whole story of it, but see, I don't know the details, I just know what I like about it. And she auctioned it and she got thousands and thousands of dollars for it because it's this Hamilton couch, and it's really rare. But that's why I think it's just great. And what I really like is that they've left it like this and the reason it's really valuable is because it's been left in this sort of terrible state. And 'cause it's original. Whereas somebody could have bought it at the auction and you know recovered it and done all their little renovating business to it. ... But that is kinda like wow! That's the museum to me. That's that thing that someone's had in their shed. The museum [went] and bought it. They've got it here. And here you are. You can look at it and feel it and love it, right here. That's that sort of gorgeous thing. But then I love old furniture.

As we were standing there, I asked her to tell me what, if any emotions she feels when she looks at old objects, like that couch.

Diana: Well, just it's gorgeous. And I guess of a time of who used to use that. And the time when they had that. I often think I'd like to be a time traveller and go back, see that couch, where it was, who was on it and then come back again, you know.

Michele: Like letting your imagination—?

Diana: Yes, exactly. I read a series of books that were just amazing like that of a woman that went through the stones and travelled in time and it's really a load of rubbish but it was just, it really appealed to me. I just, oh wow. You know, I love history, light history. I like reading sort of fictional works in an historical setting. So it's not pure history, it's someone's interpretation of historical times, written. Yes, I do like that. So emotionally, aesthetically yeah I'd sort of think about oh that's lovely and I covet that piece or those things, and I want to have it. That sort of feeling. I love the lines, the way it's made, how it feels, those sorts of things.

After viewing the couch, we entered the Huon pine furniture exhibition where she led me to an intricately made work table (see Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8. Maker unknown, *Work table* c. 1845, Huon pine, blackwood, musk, casuarinas, silk, iron, waxed board, paper, 72 x 53 x 40 cm.

- Diana: And then all the gorrgeous stuff. Oh I love this one here. This is one of my really—I love this sort of thing [Work table; c. 1845]. ‘Cause I love boxes and drawers and little secret hiding holes and things. And that’s just beautiful Huon pine and I love all of that, so.
- Michele: Do you have any Huon pine pieces?
- Diana: I do have some Huon pine, beautiful Huon pine wardrobe and a Huon pine dresser, and yeah, I’d love to have more. I’d love to have things like this, they’re beautiful.
- Michele: Tell me some of the things you think about when you’re looking at this.
- Diana: Oh, well I don’t know. I just think it’s so lovely. It’s in your heart [taps hand on heart], that is what’s lovely about that. And then half of me thinks I’d love to have a box like that with all those little holes.
- Michele: What would you put in it?
- Diana: Oh, I probably wouldn’t put anything in it, but you know then you could if you wanted to. And I’ve always wanted to have one of those boxes that [has] the secret drawer, so that you hide special little

things in there and no one would know. But then, all your family would know anyway, so.

From there we headed towards the staircase to see the “huge painting of like a naked sort of lady flying” that she mentioned in one of the interviews. To get there, we had to walk through the “grungy old fauna thing,” a room she doesn’t like, but feels sentimental about.

It’s the one thing [zoology exhibition] that’s been here all the time I’ve been here. ... Well, I don’t really like it, but it’s got, it evokes emotion, I guess. It evokes that feeling of (pause) ah, time. There’s a big timeline in that from when I first came here when I just visited here on a holiday right through to now.

As we entered the stairway, she looked up at the painting and said, “Oh, well, I really like that. I’ll just go up here and check what it’s called. I’ll just check. I’ll tell you.” She walked up the stairs and read the label. “Oh, that’s the *Cupid and Psyche*. And I thought there was another one, but I don’t know, they may have moved that. That’s gorgeous though. That’s French (reading the label) 1889. So that’s lovely.” When I asked her to tell me what she likes about that painting, she replied, “It’s a romantic thing you know and it’s old. ... It’s evocative of another time. I love angels and things like that and it’s kind of a bit like that. So yeah, it’s the feeling of, mmm.” Diana says that painting is typical of the works of art that appeal to her.

I love sort of Renaissance paintings. I really like that. I don’t really like landscapes, but William loves landscapes. So if we’re going to buy something, he’ll always go and buy a landscape. That’s what he’d want to buy. And I’d say, aw, no, I don’t want to buy that. I’d love something that gives you a meaning or, you know, for a while there I really loved, I just can’t remember her name, an American artist and she drew—Cassatt, Mary Cassatt. And she drew these beautiful evocative things of women and children and babies and there were a lot of things that obviously were of her life. And I just loved them ‘cause you know it resonates with you about your life and significant times. So I look at those sorts of things. But I like modernism, Tasmanian artist John Lendis, have you heard of him? Well he paints, he does lots of layering of oils. And he does some, a bit of landscape and a bit of female form against that. He’s done a series around the Franklin

River and Lady Jane Franklin. Not the Franklin River, it's Lady Jane Franklin. And we bought one of his paintings and it was just divine.

The final stop on the tour was in the colonial art gallery. Although she doesn't visit that gallery very often, during the time we spent in there, Diana was particularly interested in looking at the historical depictions of Hobart Town.

- Diana: Oh well, I like these sorts of things. I love ah, let me think about this. (pause) Oh this is the sort of thing I look at, this, the Haughton Forrest [*View of Hobart from Rosny Point*, 1886] and things like that. I love that sort of thing, early scenes in Hobart. Beautiful.
- Michele: I know you said you've lived here longer than you've lived anywhere else. But still, to have that appreciation for Hobart and Tasmania, that that would mean something to you.
- Diana: Yes, oh, I think it's gorgeous. Love it!
- Michele: Because of the scenery or because it means something to you?
- Diana: Well it probably means something to me because you sort of think, yes well, I live here in an old house and what would have that been like, that house then? That's why I like it.
- Michele: How old is your house?
- Diana: 1892, it's not that old really. But it's fairly old. And also, I own another house that was built in, in the 1840s.
- Michele: Where's that house located?
- Diana: In West Hobart. It's a really old Georgian house. And so we often look at things and think, ugh and you often see it in old photos and things. So you look for it.

Just then, Diana sees a painting that she thinks may show the location of her house.

As we stand in front of the painting, Diana tries to locate familiar landmarks.

See here Hobart Town. (excitedly) Oh now this is very meaningful. See that? This here, no, not this, well, this, the top one is (reads) Hobart Town from Knocklofty and the house that we have is on the edge of Knocklofty. So this sort of thing would really interest me. So I'd oh, I'd wonder where that house is. ... Initially, I thought oh, this might show it, but that's (reads) Old New Town [William Duke, 1850]. (pause) So I start to think, "Oh I wonder where it is?" And so I look and try and think out—and see here's a church (pointing to it). I wonder what that church is. (looking closely) That looks like another church (looking closely) (pause) Hmm. So that sort of thing would really engage—and if William was here, we'd seriously work it out. But I'm a bit, I go "Ugh, where is it?" And that one as well [Knut Bull, *Hobart Town from Knocklofty*, 1856], if we'd seriously thought about that, we might be able to see the house that we have. And so that sort of thing really is great. ... That was just great seeing that, 'cause I didn't know they were here.

In addition to the paintings of Hobart, Diana also called my attention to the portraits and the still life paintings.

And then I like some of these. I just love looking at those sort of people. ... 'Cause it's you know old. What they used to wear, and the children I think are gorgeous. And I also like that sort of floral still life thing and I still like it. I love modern paintings of still life. So those old ones are gorgeous. And often when we've been to other galleries, in other countries, we always go to the gift part of a gallery, and I've bought prints of those sorts of things. So they're just beautiful and I've got quite a few at home.

We stood in the gallery and chatted a little while longer. Then Diana glanced at her watch and said, "I'm gonna have to go Michele."

* * *

After seeing an exhibition at the museum, Diana typically engages in conversation about it with others, but she doesn't often seek out additional information on a topic.

I would probably talk to other people about it. See when I came to that thing [behind-the-scenes tour], going around in the dungeons, and so I told so many people about that. I said, "Wow you should have seen this. You should have been there because we've got all these fascinating things here that you wouldn't have believed we had." So yeah, you talk about it, talk to other people about it, recommend it, like with the Glover [exhibition], told everybody. ... We had that Antarctic, that opening of that thing. You know I told lots of people about that because there were some amazing things in there. I said you should go and see it. So you talk, talking to other people is what you would take away, yeah. ... But I wouldn't go and find out any more about it really. I can't think of when I would have done that (pause) 'cause that's not me, you know. I just mmm, just wouldn't necessarily do that, unless it really seriously interested me, then I might. But seeing an artist here that I thought, oh, I really like that painting, I might look to find out where else I could find them or something like that, but not really. 'Cause I would have said, thought to myself I'm too busy to find out more. You know, busy, busy. By the time I got out of here and back into that bustle, it's gone.

She says she usually leaves the museum feeling "pretty satisfied."

Michele: So how would you describe the feeling or the mood you're in after you leave here?

Diana: Oh well, how do I describe that? I think it's a feeling of you know you feel pretty satisfied. You're sort of going out on a sense of being

buoyed up, you know, lovely feeling of having seen some beautiful things and learnt a little bit along the way. And it's almost a very, you know, it's a euphoric sort of feeling 'cause you're in a very sort of different place, and then you pop out of here and boom, you're in the middle of buzzing streets and stuff, and that's really quite difficult. 'Cause as you sit here now, it's quite hard to imagine, even here that out there's all this busy city business. And here you are somewhere that was happening years and years ago, this building. So yeah, it's that feeling. It's quite nice really.

Michele: So is it kind of a calming or—

Diana: Yes, it's very calm—

Michele: Restorative?

Diana: Yes, restorative, that's a good word. And also, you're taken to another place. You're transported a little bit, where you are, what you're doing, looking at other things, and it's so quiet and it's very different, mmm.

The main thing Diana takes away from her visits is an “overall feeling” of “pleasure” and “joy.”

Michele: What do you think you get out of your visits? Are there any specific benefits?

Diana: Not anything specific I don't think. It's more just an overall feeling. Sometimes I think, oh I've learned about something different or new. But generally it's just (pause) pleasure ... it's really just, ah, it's joy really.

Although she has visited many museums, there are certain things Diana gets out of her experiences at the TMAG and the Gallery of New South Wales that she does not get from her visits to other museums and art galleries.

Well it's different because you see I probably get the same thing at the New South Wales art gallery, not the museum but the art gallery. I get the same sort of feeling. I go, oh, here I am, and with that too, I go straight to the thing I've come to see or, it's the same sort of thing. You see I've had a split time; I've been there as a young person and then I moved here. Mmm, but also, this gallery embodies a lot of things about the life that I've made here, old things. 'Cause I never liked old things before I came here. ... 'Cause I had an old house, bought an old house, had to buy old things. Went to auctions, came here looked at things and that comes together. ... A gallery in another place is just a way to get a sense of that place, that's all. So, I guess in saying that, coming here gives you a sense of this place, but it holds all that history of yourself as well. So that's what that is. So that's really what, that's it isn't it, really?

Later in the conversation, Diana spoke further about identity and the ways in which her relationship with the museum influences the way she sees herself.

It's like this outer layer around you, you know. When I see myself, the first few layers around you are particularly about close people and places and memories and making up who you are. But this sort of outer ring of, a gallery and a museum and history, sort of comes around and encapsulates you a little bit. You know, it probably doesn't make much sense, but that's kind of how I see that. It's almost as though it was there and you didn't know it was there, didn't know that that was what was influencing you and things. But I think getting older, you make more connections, the connections here seem to be more important as you get a little bit older—that history, that art, old things.

During the third interview, when we were discussing why she continues to visit the TMAG, Diana came to the realization that the sustained nature of her relationship with the museum has to do more with her than the “place.”

Well I mean that if I don't have (pause) if it doesn't get to the heart of who you are then you don't keep coming. So it's something, I don't know what it is about coming here, but like today, it's just a lovely time doing something. I should come back again, you know. And I look around and I think “Oh I should come over here and have a cup of coffee with someone.” This is a good meeting place, you know. And then you can have a little look around and go. But that's because it does something for you emotionally perhaps, it's an emotional thing that makes you keep coming back. ... See it's an interesting thing. I think it's about you, not about this place. I think it is about the person. ... It's a development of you and about your emotions and you know, it's that little place in your heart that you need.

Future Involvement

Diana has been visiting the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for nearly 30 years. Over that time, her relationship has evolved—visiting first as a couple, then as a parent, and now, back visiting as a couple as well as serving on the TMAGots committee. In the third interview, she reflected on the ways in which the museum has served to meet a variety of needs through different life stages.

...they're all very pleasant thoughts and feelings about it. But it's probably a growing, a richening of things. Because I think as you get older, you look for different things. You know, it means different things to you as you get older. So I look back and I can remember younger times coming here. And certainly when there was only William and I before we had children, and

coming here was very different. And I guess now you look back on that and you often maybe want to recreate that in some way. And I also remember coming here funnily enough to Friends of the Museum functions then and thinking, “Wow, that’s an interesting lot of old people.” So it’s a funny thing, isn’t it to think back on that. But also thinking that that was really lovely to connect with a lot of people who have similar values as do you or appreciated really nice things. I can remember those sorts of things. And then, oh then when we brought our children here. That was also a pretty special time because you want them to think the same way you do and they don’t necessarily do that. But you show them things and they are not, you know they’re interested in interactive things and those sorts of things. ... And now, I doubt that they’d come here. And that’s a bit of a, I reflect on that and feel a sadness about that. But maybe hopefully when they get a bit older they would want to.

At the end of the final interview, I asked Diana to tell me what shape she sees her relationship with the TMAG taking in the future.

Well now I kind of, it’s actually interesting. ‘Cause now I would probably see it more, I think I said to you one time we were talking, that I joined the TMAGgot thing because of a need myself. I thought I wanted to make friends with other people you know meet a broader range of people, and I could see myself getting older and maybe you could do more here. That this could be somewhere where you’d come and know people and meet people who enjoy those same sorts of things. So I look towards something like that and I kind of think, well maybe when I’m not working, or I’m working less that you could come and, you know this sort of literary lunch idea, or you might have something here with someone who’s a speaker, or you’d meet in a room and someone talks to you about something particular. Or ‘cause I just loved the very beginning, I think I told you that day they had when we went inside all the backs of the museum and all the exciting things that you [were] privileged to see and you thought, “Well this is really great that nobody else is getting that and I’m so privileged,” that sort of thing. So that’s what I would see it as, more of a sort of rounding out of your life and um, more inquiry, more with other people, meeting other people, having a common interest, values—those sorts of things.

Diana says the only thing that would prevent her from visiting the museum on a regular basis in the future would be “pace of life maybe.”

‘Cause at the moment, just right now I’m meant to go to a TMAGgots thing tomorrow night and I won’t come because I’m just really busy. Because I’ve got family coming and things like that. So just a little bit of pressure and you just don’t. But it doesn’t mean to say that I won’t go back into it after that, you know next month, be back there.

When I asked her if she can foresee a time when she would stop coming to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, she replied, “No, no.”

Postscript

Diana and I met at the museum café on a Sunday morning to discuss her narrative account. During that session she shared her thoughts about the research process.

I found it really interesting to read this [narrative account]. You might think all these things and say all these things, but when you see it all written down, you think, oh my goodness. You see a thread through that, that you don't necessarily see yourself when you're living that. You tell someone your story and still you don't see the threads, but when it's written down you start to see, oh, look at that. ... But, you don't realise that it's important to share it, until you've shared it! ... And it's a lot about, you know, it's an opportunity that someone is just listening to you, all they're doing is listening to you. And there's no, um what's the word, there's no judgment or anything other than listening and affirming what you've said. And that's a reflection on our life in these times. That, you know we don't have extended families and nurturing networks so much and so we don't have time, or you don't have time to talk to people necessarily, or there's no one that really wants to listen to what you're gonna tell them, and that's a shame isn't it? ... And you know people could scathingly say, “Oh you know, you just sit around, you listen to people, you tape record it, you write it down, what's that? That's no study.” But in fact it's a very powerful tool!

Virginia – “the butterfly emerged”

At the age of 60, after spending most of her adult life working as a secretary and looking after her family, Virginia’s life changed forever. It was at that point in her life that her husband died. As the saying goes, as one door closes, another one opens. And for Virginia the door could not have been opened any wider. As she describes it, “from then on, the butterfly emerged.” In the years after her husband’s passing, and after retiring from the university, Virginia decided to do something she’d always dreamed of doing, but for various reasons had not been able to do much of until now—travel.

Being a pensioner on a limited income, Virginia booked herself on tours with budget-style accommodations.

I always travelled with a group. And I went cheaply. I travelled with a group who had tents. A tent is called “soft top” travelling, and the hotels are “hard top.” I didn’t have enough money to do it otherwise. And I took my sleeping bag and I pumped up my mattress. I did! So that’s when I first started. And I started off going all around Australia on safaris. And so I saw museums everywhere. And I was vitally interested. I loved those adventures of mine. ... I saw so many historical events recorded in museums, which could just be in little cottages out in the back of “Woop Woop.”

In addition to seeing most of Australia, Virginia’s travels during that period included trips to Canada, the United States, Africa, and China. At every opportunity along the way, she would visit museums and other historical sites.

History of Involvement with Museums

After reading that account, one would think Virginia’s passion for visiting museums is something she has had since her childhood. But no, for Virginia, her interest in museums was sparked relatively late in life, at the age at 51. It took place during her first trip overseas when she traveled to London to meet with publishers to discuss a venture she was pursuing back home in Tasmania. This was the trip

where it all happened for Virginia. After finishing her business, she joined a tour, taking in sights of Europe.

And so I had to go to London to speak to publishers, [in] 1977. I had never been out of Australia, and all sorts of wonderful things happened to me. I met the right people by coincidence. They always helped me. Then after I'd been to London, I decided I'd go to the "continent" on a group travel. I just can't remember the name of the company, but it was a well-known one, Trafalgar or something. And then, of course, oh, museums abound, wherever we stopped in all these wonderful places! Rome, Venice, you name it, we found a museum of course. And I went to the museums because I realised how vitally interesting and really, to me, essential museums are for education.

During that tour of the "continent," Virginia visited museums and art galleries in London, Paris, Venice, and Rome. Her first stops on the tour were the "London Museum and the London Art Gallery." She recalls being at the art gallery and entering a "room where you stood on this balcony and you looked over at the water lilies—this huge painting." After finishing the European leg of her trip, Virginia flew to the US to meet with people at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. While she was there, she visited the Smithsonian Institution.

So I had a wonderful time, and it was (pause), it was an experience that (laugh) was bigger than all the others, the Smithsonian Institution. ... And I think I realised then how important museums were because in the Smithsonian, there were Rodin sculptures and thousands of exhibits and it [the museum] was huge.

In addition to the Rodin sculptures, she also recalls seeing an aeroplane. "It couldn't have been the Southern Cross, but some very, very, important aeroplane. A little one, you know from years gone by and that was all hooked up on the ceiling."

So, at the age of 51, Virginia was having the ultimate museum and art gallery experience, a true awakening for her. At first she thought the experiences she had during that trip were the first museum experiences of her entire life. But upon reflection, during the second interview, she remembered that she had visited the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery as a child, when she was seven or eight

years of age. “I think my mother or my father would have brought me, yes. But I can’t remember specifically, because we lived away from Hobart. And in my day, to come from New Norfolk to Hobart was a major adventure.” The only memory she has from that visit is seeing Indigenous artifacts.

Virginia’s transformation to becoming a full-fledged museum enthusiast after the age of 50 is rather remarkable. Especially when you consider that she had limited access to museums as a child and never visited museums with her own children when they were young. During the years when her children were growing up, Virginia and her family lived “in the country on farms” outside of Hobart. The thought of taking her children to the museum was something that never crossed her mind. “It was out of the thinking process. If we went [to Hobart], we went to football matches or shopping—because there would not be time to go to the museum.”

The first memory Virginia has of visiting the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery as an adult was after she retired. During the period after her husband died, when the traveling bug bit her, Virginia decided to earn extra income as a nanny.

But, when I made use of the museum was after I retired from the university—I’ve left that out. I was at the university for 16 years [working as a secretary]. So when I retired, I needed to boost my income. And the way I could do it was the way I knew best, and that was looking after children. And that is when my interest in TMAG was actually, (pause) like a fire, it just built up. And ever since, I have had this deep interest in TMAG.

During this stage in her life, Virginia made frequent visits to the TMAG with children. “I was a grandmother of 14 and I would take my grandchildren and the children I was looking after because I thought all children should go to museums.” Virginia has many vivid memories of her visits to the museum with children.

- Virginia: And the children always wanted to go, not just once, but they'd go twice, three times when I looked after them because I developed a good reputation as a nanny. And so whenever I'd go, I'd be asked, "Can we go to the museum?" They would use that term because to them it was the museum not the art gallery.
- Michele: So when you, you must have had something happen after that first experience with children, saw how they reacted.
- Virginia: Exactly. I did. I saw how interested they were and how excited they were when they found something special. There was an Aboriginal exhibit there where the Aboriginals, I think two adults and a child, were standing beside a fire cooking a crayfish. They would zoom on to that. I'm not quite sure whether it was because they didn't have any clothes on or just because they loved looking at the exhibit as a whole, but the fact was that they really looked at that exhibit. And there was a little machine there where they could play the recording of Truganini. And they always listened to that, and always found that fascinating.
- Michele: Was it a story or?
- Virginia: It was just a voice and they knew it was from the past and, "Wow, listen to this!" And of course the format—it's not like the modern format when we turn on the TV, the radio or the recorder. This was a very old recording and it was not particularly clear. And her voice was that of an old woman. So they were fascinated and it was played every time.

In addition to the diorama depicting Aboriginal life, Virginia recalls other exhibitions children were particularly interested in looking at during their visits to the museum.

And certain exhibits of course were, "We've got to go and see this again," and it was the Illawarra, the vessel that crashed into our bridge. And there was an exhibit of it on the seabed and the broken bridge and they would always go and look at that. They'd look at the money of the years gone by. Oh, I could go on and on really about the exhibits that interested these kids. They learnt what things were like in days gone by. They learnt about native headdresses, particularly New Guinea, that were there.

When I asked her if the children learned about all these things in the museum as a result of her providing interpretation she replied:

I didn't do much explaining. This is from New Guinea, that's the Illawarra. These are the Aborigines. Yes, and you just have a look at those because that's history, yes! So they were the things that interested the kids. They didn't want any detail. I'm not much good at detail myself. I can remember

all this, but you know as I was telling you now, when did the Illawarra crash into our bridge? And what was the year of the bush fires? and all of that sort of thing. I'm not good—I've got friends who just remember dates like that, but I don't. So that's why children visited the museum. "A" because I took them and "B" they could spend several hours there, because there were the nature exhibits of the snakes and the Tasmanian tiger. That poor Tasmania tiger's been going up and down that cage. But they, they were there. They knew that we had a Tasmanian tiger, what it looked like and how it became extinct. ... So there's all those different sections that are interesting to different people. And for my part, I thought it was wonderful, because they could go off on their own and they were perfectly safe. And they'd always find me, I didn't lose one child (laugh). ... That's why I love the museum because I thought if these kids only absorbed what they could see when I took them to introduce them to the importance of museums in our life, what a purpose I would have served.

Virginia continued to make trips to the museum with children for the next few years, up until the time she started a relationship with Finn, her "Irish Leprechaun."

Michele: So you did that [nanny] for how many years?

Virginia: Oh, I suppose, ten years, until I met Finn. And he didn't like me spending time earning money with children so I could travel. So he took me travelling himself (laugh). And that's where I saw these overseas museums plus art galleries.

One of the fondest memories Virginia has is of a trip she took with Finn to Greece, Turkey, and Egypt.

Virginia: Finn had one particular trip he desperately wanted to take me. And that was to Greece, to Turkey and to Egypt. So you imagine what I saw there. My heart overflowed, because you walked around all these wonderful, wonderful, historical places.

Michele: What sorts of feelings did you have when you were seeing—

Virginia: Well my heart nearly overflowed—to be part of these historical collections which are the same as museums, and here I was walking among them. And I would be so excited and I'd express my excitement to Finn but he said, "Wait 'til you get to Ephesus" in Turkey. And that surpasses all.

Michele: Why, in what way?

Virginia: Because I was walking down the same streets where the carts and the carriages the people walked down in those times. I was walking into rooms, but no ceilings of course, but into rooms that people of those times lived in. Just that was their lives. They lived there in Ephesus.

Yes, Ephesus was very, very special. But then (laugh), all these places that I've visited, really made me appreciate what museum and art gallery collections were all about.

In addition to providing her with opportunities to experience ancient sites, Finn also showed Virginia a different way to experience the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, through the Friends association. "And Finn was a Friend of the Museum in Hobart. I'd been a visitor, but he was a Friend. So when he got invitations to go to functions, I went along also."

Because of her educational background, joining the Friends' group is something Virginia would never have done on her own.

- Virginia: But I needed to (pause)—I would not have said that I have an inferiority complex, but I will accept that because of my education. Once my children went to high school, they were embarking on a higher grade than I did when I left the country convent school. ... I just, I can't believe the education given by those nuns, by the four nuns at the convent. What they didn't give us in education was quite extraordinary. ... And so my knowledge of historical subjects was not very profound. So, I've always been a reader, and I think that helped. But I didn't think of participating in this group until I met Finn. Can you see what I'm getting at?
- Michele: Yes, when you met Finn, you were brought into the community of the museum, like embraced.
- Virginia: Yes, exactly. Whereas prior to that I would never have forced myself on these people because I didn't have the knowledge, which I've now gained through being part of it (laugh).
- Michele: So what was it that turned that around where, even though you didn't yet have the knowledge in the beginning, how then did you come to feel like you belonged there?
- Virginia: Because of the encouragement from the people—the friendships, the camaraderie. ... But I had to be part of a group to feel it. And that is very different.

Virginia and Finn's social involvement with the museum continued for the next five or so years until a tragic event occurred—Finn suffered a stroke. After Finn's stroke Virginia's relationship with the museum took yet another turn. "But when he had his stroke, all that stopped. I missed it so much I thought, you fool

Virginia, go and join [FTMAG] yourself. And I did. ... So that was it. And my interest hasn't abated by one little bit."

Details of the Relationship Today

Today, at 80 years young, Virginia is more involved than ever at the museum. She is not only a member of the Friends of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, but she also serves on the FTMAG committee. These days, she finds herself at the museum nearly every week for one reason or another. Sometimes she is there to attend committee meetings, other times to assist with FTMAG functions, and occasionally, she is there to experience the museum "just as Virginia."

Involvement with Friends of the Museum

Although Virginia is involved in other community activities, her involvement with the Friends' association is something that is very important to her. It provides her with opportunities to devote time to an institution she sees as an "essential part of the community," to socialize, and to learn. When she is at the museum in her official capacity as committee member, she engages in a variety of activities. She sees her role as that of a "Girl Friday."

But my role on the committee is not only decision making, but also making of sandwiches for the supper, helping with the mailout and being called upon to do anything that someone else is just too busy to do. ... So my role on the Friends' committee is just of a worker. No real glorified position at all. And I love it!

The social aspect of Virginia's work on the FTMAG committee is central to her continued involvement there. During "mailout" sessions, she enjoys sitting around the table engaging in conversation with people who share her interests.

Virginia: Because when you're talking to people with the same interests, oh it is just grand—and so yesterday we had talks about [theatre] shows we've seen (laugh). And that was an offshoot of being with people who like museums. And they're prepared to get up and go. Most of

them were gone for a weekend to see a particular show in Melbourne. Some are going to the opera, Don Giovanni. ... So you talk as you work.

Michele: Is most of the talk somehow related to museums?

Virginia: Not only related to the museum, no, books and things we're doing like the shows—going to the Theatre Royal, that sort of thing.

About committee meetings she says, "There's the talking and laughter, and probably having a drink after the meeting, and more talking and laughing." Over the years, she has established close friendships with some of her fellow Friends.

Recently, members of the committee nominated Virginia to be added to the Tasmanian Honour Role of Women.

Her work with the FTMAG not only provides Virginia with opportunities for social interaction but cognitive stimulation as well.

I like the fact the Friends arrange these functions and they're all interesting. And that's why I grabbed this (pulls out schedule of events). Now, let's see. We had one of our Friends' functions that was particularly to meet Professor Wong and his wife who had donated all these artefacts to the Tasmanian Museum, because they like the Tasmanian Museum. So that was fine and (pause)—oh, we had this incredible one recently, when (pause) Lorenzo Montesinia yes. He came and gave a lecture on Bibliotheca Alexandria. And that is something that I would have never have had the opportunity to hear. And his presentation was wonderful.

In addition to social and learning benefits, Virginia finds there are other perks associated with serving on the committee.

Well, I can say, as a member of the committee I am invited to events that I would not otherwise be invited, that are part of the Museum and Art Gallery. And that is lovely because it gives me the opportunity to just see a bit extra. I'm going to the opening of an exhibition tonight of Tasmanian artists.

The way the staff makes her feel welcomed is another reason for her continued association with the museum.

I love the atmosphere of the museum. Now that's interesting because, if we had another director, some grouchy individual, it wouldn't be so nice. But he [TMAG director] remembers my name. Even in the early days he remembered my name. That's lovely. And other members of the staff that I meet just make me feel so welcome, as though I do some good.

Virginia holds the museum in high regard and feels good about “what we are doing, for those people who are interested enough to be a Friend of the Museum.” A fellow committee member believes Virginia feels privileged to be sitting on the committee. “She came and joined us, I don’t know three or four years ago and came on the committee and thought it was a privilege. But she’s always played a part, you know she’s always passionate about the museum.” When I asked Virginia if serving on the committee has changed the way she feels about the TMAG, she enthusiastically replied, “Oh absolutely! It makes it so much stronger because I’m part of it.”

Visiting as Virginia

Although Virginia has the opportunity to view new exhibitions during Friends’ events, because she is busy performing her duties and due to the large number of people in attendance, she prefers to come back on her own when she can fully explore exhibitions “just as Virginia.”

- Michele: So when you visit here as Virginia, do you prefer to go by yourself or—
 Virginia: I do prefer—I prefer to go by myself. Oh definitely.
 Michele: Because?
 Virginia: Because I can take my time at looking at something I like and I’m not caught up with spending time looking at something someone likes that I don’t like. Yes. ... I can do it at my own pace. ... Because I’ve got to go slowly. And I’ve always been someone who when in a museum or an art gallery I go slowly. I don’t like to rush.

Typically she will “pop in” to have a look at one of the exhibitions after she finishes her Friends-related business.

- Virginia: ...now yesterday I called over to the Bond Store to have a look at the display [*Captured in colour: rare photographs from the First World War*]. ... And it’s Frank Hurley and several photographers. But I’ve

always remembered Frank Hurley, because of Shackleton²¹ on television particularly, and other times I've read about him in books as a war photographer. But I went in there to see the colour pictures of pictures that I have got in my photo album belonging to my dad, when he was riding a camel in front of the pyramids in Egypt in the First World War.

Michele: Oh my gosh.

Virginia: I know, it makes you feel a little bit here (motions with hand on her heart). But there they all are and they're all very delicately coloured. You should see them.

Michele: I have.

Virginia: Yes. And so yesterday, after I'd done my little stint here, I decided, I had the time, the car was parked and, right, so I went in, and that is typical. I made the most of the opportunity I had to have a look around there. And that's the importance of museums. Because that is a very unusual exhibition. And we're just lucky to have it here.

Michele: So what sorts of emotions were you feeling when you were looking at those photos?

Virginia: Oh, I was—all the emotions of my dad in the First World War and his mates and dad's brother, my uncle Jack who was killed in the First World War in Belgium.

Although, on occasion, she revisits certain areas of the permanent collection, it is the “new exhibitions” that prompts a visit.

Michele: So when you come back, it's to see the new exhibitions, you're not coming back to revisit the same, the permanent collection so much?

Virginia: I do visit, but what initiates the visit is something special.

Michele: And then you might go back and look at some of the permanent collection?

Virginia: Exactly. That's exactly it.

On a recent visit, Virginia explored the Huon pine furniture exhibition, a temporary exhibition that had just opened. Of that experience she spoke of her desire to touch the wood.

Virginia: And I just look at all the signs, “do not touch,” “please do not touch” and think I just want to caress that wood. You know but—

Michele: Because why? What do you hope to get from the caressing?

²¹ “Shackleton,” ABC series, 2002 (DVD): A recreation of explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton's ill-fated journey to the South Pole in 1914 (Classroom Antarctica, 2008).

Virginia: Well haven't you ever caressed wood? Rare wood? It's beautiful, just beautiful. I don't hug trees (laugh). Does that help?

One exhibition she was particularly moved by was the temporary exhibition of the works of Pugin (1812–1852).

They had a wonderful exhibition. In fact it won a prize for being such a good exhibition. And I think, if I'm prepared to think laterally, or outside the square, (little laugh) that in learning about Pugin and the religious significance of that man, I think that would have been one of the special things I learnt. ... It was very much a religious exhibition and I looked at it from the point of view of the (pause) people who awarded the commissions, mostly, being me, I got the impression those Catholics commissioning such wonderful works and spending the money to get these wonderful works (laugh) when there was so much else they could do. It worried me terribly. But I could not disregard for a moment the beautiful work that had been done by the craftsman, beautiful! And of course it was an era, the Pugin era, and that's important because with that they changed so much the way certain artefacts were made for the church, the crosses, the vestments, chalice etcetera. It was all there for us to see. It was magnificent!

The educational role of the museum was a theme that came through in all of Virginia's interviews. When I asked her to describe what a museum is she replied, "A place full of history and interest, education. What more would you want of a museum?" Virginia views "education" to be the primary service museums provide the community. She identified learning as a key motivation for her unaccompanied visits to the museum.

[Visiting the museum] It's got to do with Virginia because she wants to see what the culture was of ancient China. I'm reading, re-reading a book at the moment about Mao's last dancer²² and the things that are written about this young man, I can see in some of the objects of art that the Wongs have given. So it's learning.

Virginia frequently leaves the museum wanting to find out more about something she has encountered during a visit.

Virginia: ...learning more about the older exhibitions, like I might see something there and I'll often think to myself, I must find out about that. And surprisingly, you know in an encyclopedia—

²² *Mao's Last Dancer*, a book by Li Cunxin, is an autobiographical account one of the world's best male ballet dancers.

- Michele: Can you think of a time, something you've looked up after a visit?
 Virginia: (laugh) Yes.
 Michele: What?
 Virginia: Artists (laugh).
 Michele: Artists? Such as who?
 Virginia: The fellows that I've talked about. They're all there in the art gallery.
 Michele: Like Glover and—
 Virginia: Yes.

When Virginia visits the museum on her own, she enjoys viewing exhibitions on a wide range of topics—art, social and natural history. She says she engages differently with art as opposed to other artifacts.

- Michele: Would you say you have the same or different sorts of feelings and sensations when you're engaging with art versus objects, the history side?
 Virginia: No, no, it's different. It's very different. Because the historical is what happened and it's there for you to touch. But the paintings (pause) are the comment of life as it was—yes, very different.

* * *

During the *guided tour*, Virginia showed me many areas of the Museum and Art Gallery. The tour starts in the main entrance foyer.

As we walk past the dinosaur skeleton, she remarks, “Dinosaurs to me are just dinosaurs. I'd rather watch the TV program.” After a brief stop in the zoology gallery, we head upstairs and enter the Chinese decorative art exhibition.

I just want you to know that I have been around here several times and because I find it unbelievable that some things are so old and they represent an era that I would have known nothing about if it hadn't been for the museum here and elsewhere, giving me the opportunity to view them.

As I follow Virginia around the exhibition, she searches for something old to show me. She stops in front of a glass case that contains a large bell [Qing Dynasty] and says, “Here we go around, look here.” Stopping to read the label, “OK, that's only 1749. It's relatively young for some of the things.” We laugh.

Next, she walks past a case of small glass [snuff] bottles. “And look at this, exquisitely made. OK, I just think this is all wonderful.” She moves to a case where a large vase is displayed [Large vase with famille rose]. Gesturing with her hand she says, “But look here, isn’t it remarkable?” She reads the label, “Mid 20th century. Hmm. I’m just trying to find something really old.” At the next case, she bends down and reads the label, “the Qing Dynasty, 1862 to 1874.” Just then, she spots a member of the gallery staff and says to him, “Now, I want to show Michele something really old.” As the gallery attendant shows us the way to where the older objects are displayed, Virginia turns to me, motions with her arm and exclaims, “OK, come on!” We follow the attendant through the exhibition until we reach the objects of interest. Once in front of the case, the attendant points to the jars on display and says, “These particular hand-painted ones up the top are roughly 7000 years old.” Virginia looks at me and declares, “There you are.”

I asked Virginia to tell me what she thinks about when she’s looking at some of these old objects.

- Virginia: Ah! I just think it’s remarkable, unbelievable that someone can do it, all those years ago. And someone saved them. ...
- Michele: Virginia, what is it about the old? What is it about the old that really—
- Virginia: Yes. It does tug at my heart. And I think of the humans that (pause) did it. Manufactured it from clay.
- Michele: The skill involved?
- Virginia: Yes, and in a lot of instances I think of those people as having very, very little money. If they were lucky, they would get the sponsorship of a Mandarin or similar, but look there at the colour [*Sancai Glazed Horse*]. Now I ask you, isn’t that incredible!? OK, so that often has a visit. (She moves to another gallery.)

Another area of the TMAG we explored together during the guided tour was the Antarctic exhibition, *Islands to Ice*. As we stroll through the exhibition, a large

three-dimensional display of a swirl of small fish swimming in a defense formation [bait ball] catches Virginia's eye.

Now, see this little exhibition here? Anyone who has watched *The Living Planet* would have seen all the little fish forming their ball, and then hopefully, they'd get away without the sharks eating them all up. But here are the birds diving. That's so interesting, and if it wasn't for a museum, I wouldn't have been able to see it and recognise it from the film—dearly beloved David Attenborough.

From that exhibit, Virginia leads me to the far end of the gallery. Along the way, she points out various displays including a diorama of seabirds and the “personal writings” of Antarctic explorers. On our way back through the space, Virginia opens a drawer containing plant specimens. “No, I don't worry about plants,” she asserts with a smile. Although she has experienced this exhibition on three previous occasions, she says she continues to explore it because, “I really wanted to learn how to understand all this here. Of course I haven't, it's all too involved for me. But it doesn't mean I won't come back again and again.”

The objects Virginia was most intent on showing me during the tour were the shell necklaces made by Tasmanian Aboriginal women. We enter the gallery where they are on display. Virginia approaches the case and says, “Here they are, yes. The Friends raised the money to buy them, you realise that don't you?” “Yes,” I reply. She continues:

And so they contributed to the purchase of these shell necklaces. But there weren't only just two, I think there were more than that. But if you look at them, you can't help but be fascinated by the fact that women made them. ... So I will say that those shells, necklaces are among my most exquisite exhibit, because they had to be done, each minute little shell had to be threaded onto whatever they used in those days and it wouldn't have been nylon thread. But they had to be threaded ah! It would have been, I suppose a reed or something similar, wouldn't it? But it's all there for me to find out. That is a classic example of what I've been talking about because they had to go out and find the shells.

She bends down to have a closer look at them and exclaims, “Look at that. So, (pause) ah wonderful!”

During the tour, we did not spend a lot of time in the art galleries. That may have been as a consequence of there being two contemporary art exhibitions on display at the time. As we walk past a contemporary work [John Kelly, *Unpainted, Looking Away*, 1993] Virginia comments, “I, I dislike it intensely.” When I ask her why she dislikes it she replies:

What’s it got that’s anything? Oh, it fits into the category for me of, ah abstract art. Not meaning anything. I don’t see why that is hung in a museum. Perhaps it’s that it’s oil on linen, maybe that’s it. I can’t believe it.

Although she does not care for all art, she does like to view all types of art.

- Michele: Mmm, so you’re interested in nature, you’re interested in history, you’re interested in some art.
 Virginia: Yes, all art I’m interested in, but some I don’t like.
 Michele: Right.
 Virginia: So, I’m interested and I like to see it, but that gives me the opportunity to know that I don’t like it.
 Michele: Right (laugh).
 Virginia: Whereas I wouldn’t get there otherwise, would I?
 Michele: So have you always been interested in just, all different things?
 Virginia: I’m just interested in things. I’ve just gone through life being interested in things, mmm.

Virginia prefers the works of “traditional painters.” As we walked through the colonial art gallery, I asked her to show me some of her favorite artworks.

- Michele: Which ones are you particularly drawn to?
 Virginia: Well, if we’re going to do the particular ones, we’ll go to Glover. Because, there he is. Would you look at these paintings? And think of the historical significance of that (pause) ... [Glover, *The Western Tier of Mountains, Thursday Hill and the South Esk River from Mr. Wedges Farm*, 1833].
 Michele: So when you look at these, it’s more for the historical, it’s not the technique so much that the artist—
 Virginia: Both.
 Michele: Both.
 Virginia: Both, yes.
 Michele: And do you feel differently when you’re looking at something like this compared to when you were looking at the French impressionists’ exhibition or is it the same sort of—
 Virginia: Exactly the same feeling.

- Michele: The same feeling. And how would you describe that feeling?
- Virginia: Well it really gets to me here (places hand on heart), and in my tummy also. Looking at the Aborigines there (pause) (see Figure 4.9) [Glover, *Mills' Plains, Ben Lomond, Ben Loder and Ben Nevis in the Distance*, 1836]. Don't you think that's just, special? And if we're going to talk about technique, look at this one up here [Glover, *Durham Cathedral*, 1838]—the foreground, the cattle, the background, the castle. These could have been here a long time, but I assure you I will look at them again and again. And that's the museum isn't it?



Figure 4.9. John Glover, *Mills Plains, Ben Lomond, Ben Loder and Ben Nevis in the Distance*, 1836, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 152.5 cm. Courtesy of the TMAG.

During our time in the colonial art gallery, Virginia experienced a range of emotions.

It just makes me feel good looking at Glover. But then when I look here [Duterreau, *The Conciliation*, 1840] (see Figure 4.10), I feel sad. Mmm. At the history. But of course it's not only Tasmanians, it's natives everywhere who have suffered. (She moves to works from the portrait collection.) So we have different characters here. But, I don't remember who they are, and I've looked at them a lot (laugh). But I just wanted to point out how interesting it is to have all these different characters.

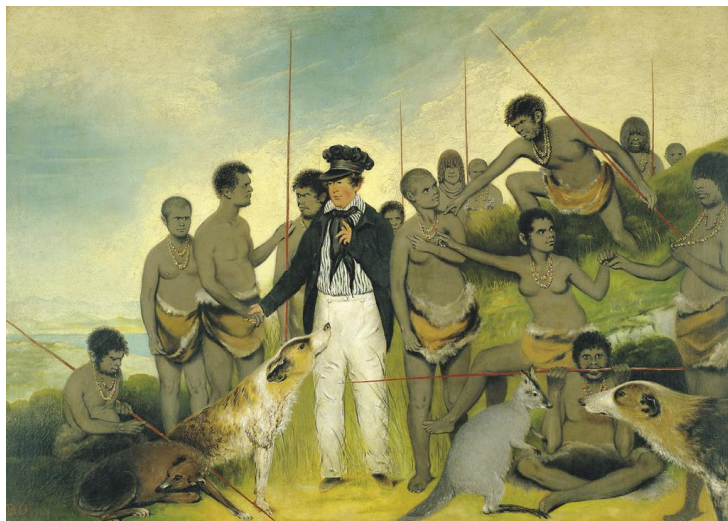


Figure 4.10. Benjamin Duterreau, *The Conciliation*, 1840, oil on canvas, 119.5 x 167.5 cm. Courtesy of the TMAG.

After walking around the museum for nearly an hour, we make our way back to the front entrance. Virginia turns to me and says, “So there you are. Now that gives you a pretty good description of what I like about a museum.”

* * *

Although Virginia has an interest in visiting museums and art galleries in general, she has special feelings for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Virginia: I definitely have an interest in museums and art galleries in general, but I have this special interest in TMAG because I’m actively involved.

Michele: Right. And during the tour, I asked you a question. I said is there something about the museum that makes it special and you said, “Oh yes, ‘cause it’s mine, my museum.” What makes it feel like it’s your museum?

Virginia: Because I am actively helping (pause) to make it a good museum in such a little way, but nevertheless, I am participating. And the fact that I am participating, makes it my museum...

Virginia: ... And if you talk about, which you haven’t, but I will—

Michele: Please do.

Virginia: Talked about the Friends of other museums, other art galleries in Australia, I wonder, deeply whether I would have the same

- enthusiasm because (pause) of the type of people that go to be in those organisations. Whereas in Hobart, they are people just like me. It's not a social thing. It's not, um, oh I'm only—
- Michele: Status. It's not a status—
- Virginia: No. Here it's because we're all interested. And that's what I love as well as ah, what I think a museum is for. Mmm...
- Michele: ... And do you have a sense of loyalty to this place?
- Virginia: Oh yes. If anything, I'd fight for it.
- Michele: And that's because you're deeply involved on the committee and with the Friends?
- Virginia: No, just deeply involved because I think a museum is an essential part of the community.
- Michele: Because?
- Virginia: Of what it contains.
- Michele: And what, can you tell me a little more about that?
- Virginia: No. No, it's because there is so much of it that deals with the history of Tasmania which is, I think is very important for people to know. Yes.

When I asked her if she thinks she would feel the same way about the TMAG if it was just a museum or just an art gallery, she replied, “No. I think I love that fact that it is a museum and art gallery.” Another feature of the TMAG she likes is that “It's so accessible.” She says, “You don't have to pay to go in. I can park in the carpark there. I can park at the Old Woolstore when the carpark's full (laugh). It's accessible.”

I asked Virginia to tell me what she gets out of her relationship with the museum.

- Michele: How have your experiences at TMAG enriched your life?
- Virginia: Because I can talk as though I'm more intelligent about culture (laugh). Work that one out (laugh).
- Michele: And is that important to you to be able—
- Virginia: Well it is important because of the people I mix with. I have got one group of friends that I have been going out with every month since 1972. They, only one of them is interested in the museum. Mmm. So, I don't talk museums to them. I've got another group of friends, yes, I'm happy to talk about museums to them, books, theatre, films. But you've got to have the group of friends that you can talk to

about—and that’s what I like, to have something that I can contribute. And I can only get it from a museum and art gallery.

Her involvement with the museum also serves to keep her mind (and body) active. “Because I’m of the opinion that forgetfulness which comes with age, can be offset if you make yourself remember things. So all these things I do have a degree of making me remember certain little facts, and not having a senior moment.”

Future Involvement

Virginia says she continues to visit the TMAG “Because there’s always something of interest. And I like being involved.” Concerning her future involvement at the museum, Virginia’s hope is that she will remain healthy and active.

- Michele: In light of your involvement with TMAG to date, what do you think your future involvement will look like there?
- Virginia: I hope it will look like, exactly what I’m doing now. But I have got to remember that I am 80 and I am aware I can’t do as much as quickly. And if I want to really do something, I must write it down, so memory is involved. And that is my future. Because think, I’ll have to pass my use-by date some time (laugh).

She does not like to think about a time when she can no longer enjoy the museum.

If I even give time to myself to think; oh my goodness, I will miss it when it goes. But at the moment, I’m in good health, and I will be able to keep on going as long as they want me. I don’t want to think about the time that will come when I can’t enjoy the group known as the Friends of the Museum and Art Gallery.

The TMAG – “leaving”

My last days with the museum were as we were packing up to move from Tasmania to Alaska. A couple days before we departed, I set out for my last visit to the TMAG. It was a gloomy, rainy, cool winter’s day. The weather fit my mood. I had mixed emotions about leaving this special part of the world. Although I was looking forward to living closer to my family, I was not ready to leave. The plans to move came so suddenly. I felt as though there was so much more for me to experience in Tasmania and at the museum. I had established close friendships with my participants. I would miss the personal contact with them. I wanted to know how their stories concerning the museum (and otherwise) would unfold.

The first thing I did when I arrived at the museum that day was to take photographs of the museum complex from across the street. I feared that once I left Hobart I would forget what the TMAG looked like from the outside. Satisfied with the photos, I entered the museum for one last private tour. As I walked through the museum, I was flooded with memories of the experiences I had there with my participants. I thought back to my first guided tour of the museum with Cecilia. I recalled the special moments I witnessed between Sarah and Jasmine—Sarah gently stroking her daughter’s hair as they searched for possums on display in the zoology gallery and their laughing together in front of the distortion mirrors in the children’s discovery space. I also remembered the laughter and memories shared between Zoë and her father while in the *Summers Past* exhibition. As I strolled through the colonial art gallery, I reflected on the guided tours—recalling Mary’s emotional response to Thomas Napier’s painting, *Woureddy and Trucanini*, and Virginia’s proclamation that the TMAG is special because it’s her museum. Walking past the museum café, I thought about the conversations that took place there over many lattes, especially of my final conversation with Diana. When I first started my study,

I could never have imagined the varied and significant ways in which this museum has served to enrich the lives of my participants. Because of the stories they shared with me, I now see the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery as so much more than a quirky place.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, in order to extend our understanding of the factors that support sustained visitor/museum relationships, I discuss findings that emerged through thematic analysis. Individual narrative accounts were examined to identify similarities and differences in experiences (Seidman, 1998). The findings are organized around the five questions that guided the research:

1. What factors and circumstances contribute to the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?
2. What factors influence the development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?
3. In what ways do individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum?
4. What benefits are derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships?
5. What personal factors contribute to sustaining a visitor/museum relationship?

This chapter is presented in five main sections—one section for each research question. Each section begins with an overarching statement (underlined) that summarizes the most significant findings concerning each research question. For questions 1-4, the overarching statement is followed by a number of specific findings that support the statement. These findings, derived from the overarching statement, provide more specific detail concerning individual experience and understanding of museum visitation. Although the research questions are addressed separately, it is acknowledged that findings concerning certain questions are interrelated. Because of the differences in age and life experiences, in many

instances, findings pertaining to the child participants are discussed separately from findings concerning adult participants.

Findings

Research Question 1: What factors and circumstances contribute to the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?

Thematic analysis of participant narratives illuminates the complexities involved in the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship. The study suggests that an intersection of overlapping individual and situational factors influence the formation of visitor/museum relationships. Individual factors identified are personal characteristics and interests. Situational factors identified are social and environmental influences, including the age when introduced to museums, socio-cultural environments, and educational backgrounds.

Finding – People who form sustained relationships with museums share certain personal characteristics, dispositions, and interests.

Although there is a great amount of variation in age and life experiences, the study participants share certain dispositions and interests. The study's findings in this area extend what is currently known about the personal characteristics of regular and returning museum visitors. (Because all of the adult participants are regular museum-goers and make return visits to one particular museum, they are considered to be both regular and returning visitors.) Concerning the attributes commonly used to describe museum visitors—having a curious mind and a love of learning (Davies, 2005; Spock, 2006), this study reveals that although the participants have curious minds, their expressed desire to learn varies. Through their narratives we see that all of the participants demonstrate a curiosity about life. They are inquisitive individuals who have a natural wonder about people, objects,

and places. Curious was the adjective both of Zoë's parents used to describe their daughter. The findings question, however, the degree to which people who visit museums profess an avowed love of learning. In some instances, the participant's curious mind extends to a desire to learn. For example, Virginia and Cecilia regularly attend lectures. Cecilia takes classes on a variety of topics, such as art, Italian, and haiku. Mary describes herself as having an insatiable "quest for knowledge about history." In contrast, Sarah and Diana do not seek out opportunities with the specific purpose of learning. They do, however, enjoy seeing and experiencing new and interesting things. This suggests the need to widen the lens through which museum-goers are viewed—to encompass a broader range of personal characteristics to describe these visitors, and to reconsider how "learning" is understood.

In addition to having curious minds, the participants also share certain interests. All the participants have an interest in the arts—visual art, theater, music, dance, and/or literature. Cecilia, Sarah, and Mary share an interest in visual art. Virginia loves attending theatrical productions. Many of the adult participants tell of having an interest in the arts from an early age—Cecilia and Mary a love of art, and Diana a love of music. Both child participants also expressed an interest in art and the arts. Jasmine and Zoë love to draw. Zoë loves to perform. Jasmine takes dance lessons. In addition to the arts, many participants also have an interest in nature. Their interest in nature comes through in the narratives—Virginia's fondness for safaris, Sarah's nickname as "nature's child," and Mary and Cecilia's appreciation for the natural beauty of the Derwent Valley.

History is another interest the participants have in common. In their narratives, all the adult participants expressed an interest in history. For Sarah, it is a general interest in history. Mary's interest focuses primarily on Tasmanian

history. Diana enjoys historical paintings and novels. Cecilia has a desire to connect with the past. Virginia has an appreciation for the importance of learning about history. As a combined purpose museum, the TMAG provides direct links to all three areas of interest—art, nature, and history.

The study's participants also share a love of reading. Virginia, Cecilia, Diana, Mary, and Zoë are all avid readers. (At the time of the study, Jasmine was too young to read.) Sarah also enjoys reading, but she says today she has little time to read. During our conversations, the participants referred to books they were reading or had read. Many of the books mentioned related to their interest in history. Diana enjoys reading “fictional works [set] in a historical setting.” Mary reads books about Australian history, such as *The Great Shame* and the “journal of Martin Cash.” Virginia referred to *Mao's Last Dancer*. Cecilia reads books covering a wide range of topics, from art history to dream analysis. Interestingly, the reasons they read appear to coincide with their reasons for visiting the museum—Diana for pleasure, Mary and Cecilia to increase understanding and for inspiration, and Virginia for a combination of pleasure and learning. Despite the considerable variation in age, the study's participants share certain dispositions and interests: a curious mind, interest in the arts, and a love of reading. This finding supports the view that museum visitors have inquisitive minds (Davies, 2005; Spock 2006). It also extends and refines current understandings of attributes of regular and returning visitors.

Finding – Sustained visitor/museum relationships can form for people at any age and for people whose first exposure to museums occurs at varying ages.

Although the literature identifies early exposure to museums as a key factor in museum visitation later on in life (Burton & Scott, 2003; Gray, 1998; Hood,

1983), the study's findings suggest that visitor/museum relationships can form for people whose first exposure to museums occurs at varying ages. The study's seven participants' initial exposure to museums occurred at different ages. Many of the participants were exposed to museums as children, one as a teenager, and one as an adult. Mary, Sarah, Jasmine, and Zoë were introduced to the TMAG as children. Diana's first museum experience occurred when she was in her teens. She started visiting the TMAG regularly after she moved to Hobart when she was in her mid-twenties. Cecilia's first museum experience occurred at the TMAG when she was an adult, in her mid-twenties. Virginia vaguely recalls one visit to the TMAG with her family when she was a child, but believes her interest in museums was sparked by her trip to London when she was in her fifties. She became a repeat visitor of the TMAG in her sixties. While this finding supports the view that exposure to museums during childhood is an important determinant of future museum visiting behavior, it suggests that individuals who have not been exposed to museums as children can form enduring relationships with museums. Equally important, it suggests that these relationships can form for people at any age and during various life stages.

Finding – Sustained visitor/museum relationships can form for individuals from a range of socio-cultural environments and educational backgrounds.

The narratives reveal similarities and differences in the home environments in which the participants were raised. Concerning the localities in which they grew up, some of the adult participants were raised in rural communities while others were raised in more urban settings. Virginia, Cecilia, and Mary grew up in the same rural community located approximately 35 minutes outside of Hobart. In contrast, Sarah and Diana were raised in suburbs of Hobart and Sydney respectively. Jasmine

and Zoë live in Hobart. Of the seven participants, the three participants who lived farther away from a city made fewer visits to museums when they were growing up. This suggests that proximity influences the formation of visitor/museum relationships with regards to access, opportunity, and exposure (Davies, 2003). Although Mary (and possibly Virginia) was exposed to the museum as a child, her regular visits to the TMAG started after she moved to the Hobart area. An additional factor related to location that influences the formation of sustained visitor/museum relationships is the number of museums available to visit. In Hobart there are no other public museums, with free entry, that offer a similar range of experiences. Consequently, if an individual is interested in making regular visits to a museum in Hobart, TMAG is likely to be the institution selected.

In addition to variations in locations in which they were brought up, there were also sharp contrasts in the home environments in which the participants were raised. Virginia, Cecilia, and Mary grew up in families with modest incomes, while Diana's family had a higher income. A low value was placed on the arts and creativity in Cecilia's home, while a very high value was placed on the arts in Diana's home. Their surroundings were also very different. Diana remembers growing up in a home filled with "nice things"—interesting objects from different countries, and the sounds of classical music playing. In contrast, Cecilia and Mary found beauty outside the home, in the natural surroundings in which they lived; and for Cecilia, in the religious images she saw in her church. Despite the differences in their home environments, all of the adult participants developed an appreciation for the aesthetic.

Out of the five adult participants, three were not taken to museums by their parents—Cecilia, Diana, and Mary. Although they may not have had a direct influence, Cecilia, Diana, and Mary recognize that their parents' creative tendencies

and interests must have played a role in shaping their interest in visiting museums. About her dad Cecilia said, “[He] was very creative, but in a very different sort of way, with junk.” Diana commented, “I just think my, both my parents were really interested either in the creative arts or in history.” When talking about her family influences Mary expressed the view that she considers her father’s work as a craftsman to be that of an artist; and though he “doesn’t visit museums” he has a great appreciation for “his family history.”

The participant narratives also reveal similarities and differences in the school environments in which they were raised. Of the five adult participants, three attended small country convent schools—Virginia, Cecilia, and Mary. All three expressed their disappointment in the quality of education provided, especially in the areas of art and history. Upon reflection, Virginia believes she was introduced to history not through school, but through books she read outside of school. These three participants have few positive memories from their years in primary and secondary school. The one positive experience Mary recalls was the encouragement she received from her high school art teacher. Cecilia’s fondest memory of her school days was when her friends’ mother “came to the school to give [three] art lessons.” In contrast to the uninspiring school environments some of the adult participants experienced, Diana attended the Conservatorium High School in Sydney—a prestigious, specialist music school. Here again, although school environments were vastly different, all of the adult participants became regular museum visitors.

An additional difference among the study’s adult participants is the level of education completed. Virginia and Cecilia left school before Year 12. Sarah and Mary dropped out of university. Diana is the only participant who completed a university degree. The participants’ education profiles are inconsistent with the

customary description of regular museum visitors as many of them have not attained higher levels of education. In addition to having varying levels of education, their knowledge of art and history also vary. While Mary and Sarah studied art formally at university, Cecilia and the other two adult participants, Virginia and Diana, have become increasingly knowledgeable about art (making and/or art history) through such activities as taking classes, attending lectures, purchasing art, seeking out opportunities to view art, and through reading about art and artists. Even though the participants possess varying degrees of knowledge and skills related to art and history, they have all formed a long-term relationship with the TMAG. This raises questions concerning the levels of formal education and the knowledge and skills required of visitors, in order to have meaningful museum experiences. The findings trouble contemporary understandings of who visits museums (Black, 2005; Burton & Scott, 2003; Falk, 1998) and what skills are required to engage with museums (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Lankford, 2002).

Another important finding, concerning the adult participants' backgrounds, is that things both present and absent in their home and school environments influenced their museum visiting behavior. For example, in the cases of Virginia and Cecilia, their lack of formal education both impeded and fueled their interest in visiting the museum. Furthermore, Cecilia grew up in a home where the arts were not valued. Today she ensures that art is the primary focus for her activities. In Cecilia and Virginia's narratives there is an evident tension in their accounts of their life history. In contrast to these experiences, seeing beautiful things was a natural extension of Diana's school and home environments. Despite the differences in their backgrounds, all of the participants were shaped by the environments in which

they were raised—varied as they were, haves and have-nots, they all found their way to museums and art galleries.

Finding – There are numerous pathways through which sustained visitor/museum relationships form.

The study's participants came to museums in a variety of ways. Pathways include parents, school, and friends. Sarah, Jasmine, and Zoë were introduced to the museum by their parents—parents who were regular museum visitors. In Zoë's case, both of her parents were exposed to museums in childhood. In addition to their parents, the child participants were taken to the TMAG by other people—Jasmine by her grandmother and Zoë by her babysitter. The participants' narratives highlight the important role parents as well as other caregivers play in fostering children's interest in museums, and provide support for the role early enculturation to museums plays in shaping future museum visiting behavior (Burton & Scott, 2003; Gray, 1998; Hood, 1983). Although Sarah is a regular museum visitor today, at 5 and 10 years of age respectively, we have yet to see how this is lived out in Jasmine and Zoë's lives.

School is an additional pathway to museums for children. Of the study's participants, only one was exposed to museums through school. Mary was introduced to the TMAG during a school field trip when she was in second grade. Her second visit to the museum also occurred by way of a school excursion while in high school. She has vivid memories of those experiences. She remembers coming to the museum for the first time and being overwhelmed. "It felt like a wonderful, exciting, secret place to come into because of the dim lighting and the buttons you could press to have interactive sounds—all that is exciting for a child." If it had not been for her school trips, Mary would not have visited a museum as a child. This

emphasizes the vital role schools play in sparking children's interest in visiting museums and providing cultural experiences they may not otherwise encounter.

While introduction to museums by parents and school is commonly reported in the literature, little attention is given to the role friends and partners play in influencing museum visiting behavior. The participant narratives reveal novel insights about the important role significant others play in introducing people to museums. Both Cecilia and Diana's first visits to a museum occurred with their boyfriends. For Diana, she and William were both interested in art and history, so visiting museums and art galleries together was a natural extension of their interests. In Cecilia's case, her boyfriend, being an artist, had previous experience with art galleries and museums. It was through him and their circle of artist friends that Cecilia was brought into the museum community. Up until that time, visiting museums was not in her consciousness. Virginia's museum visitation was also influenced by her partner. Although her initial exposure to museums possibly occurred when she was a child, and she made regular visits to the TMAG as a nanny, her deeper relationship with the museum formed as a result of her relationship with Finn, who was an established member of the FTMAG. In the cases of Cecilia and Virginia, their male friends served as informal cultural guides, bringing them into the world of museums. Through this process of enculturation, they were able to move beyond initial limitations in educational background and social class. This finding provides novel insights for understanding "paths of engagement" (Walker & Scott-Melnik, 2002)—that is, the ways individuals form a relationship with a museum. Furthermore, it supports research that identifies spousal relationships as a key factor in influencing attendance at arts events (Upright, 2004).

Research Question 2: What factors influence the development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship?

Participant narratives provide new understandings about how relationships with the TMAG develop. The study suggests that the development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship is influenced by visitor perceptions of self and place; connections to people, place, and self; life stage; and level of satisfaction.

Finding – Perceptions of self and place play a significant role in the development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship.

Perceptions of self and personal identity affect the development of a visitor/museum relationship. Feeling comfortable and at ease in one's surroundings has been shown to influence an individual's decision to visit museums (Hood, 1983). Although the participants feel comfortable in the museum today, feeling comfortable there was something that came more naturally to some. Sarah, Jasmine, and Zoë started visiting the TMAG at an early age. Feeling comfortable at the museum was never an issue for them. Diana has been visiting museums with William since she was a teenager, and consequently, she feels at ease in museum settings. For Virginia, Cecilia, and Mary, however, given their backgrounds, feeling comfortable in a museum environment required a change in perception of self and personal identity. In Virginia's case, because of her educational background, she felt comfortable there in the role of nanny, but not as a member of the FTMAG. As she describes it, it was not until she met Finn and was accepted by the Friends' members that she began to see herself as someone who belonged in the group. In Cecilia's case, it was through her association with people who were artists and regular museum-goers that she came to see herself as someone who could fit in with the "museum crowd." For Mary, it was not through her association with others, but

a personal journey—an internal process of self-discovery that led her to see the museum as a place for her.

Even though Virginia, Cecilia, and Mary came from backgrounds uncharacteristic of regular museum visitors, they all feel very much at home in the museum today. This suggests that individual perceptions of self as museum-goer can change as a result of both internal and external factors. It also suggests that individuals seek out experiences that affirm personal identities (Falk, 2006). For example, Cecilia's visits to the museum reinforce her perception of herself as an artist. Visiting the museum corresponds with Diana's perception of herself as someone who appreciates nice things. Sarah's identity as a parent influences her decision to visit the museum—as a mother who wants to provide her daughter with interesting and educational experiences. Her visits to the museum also connect with her identity as someone who is interested in art and history. This suggests the vast and multiple ways in which museum experiences connect with and shape visitor's identities (Leinhardt et al., 2000).

In addition to perceptions of self, perceptions of place also influence the development of visitor/museum relationships (Black, 2005). Participants hold mainly positive perceptions of museums. They view museums as interesting, educational, and inspirational places. Overall, they place a high value on the role museums play in society. Virginia sees museums as “a vital part of the community.” Concerning their perceptions of the TMAG, participants, for the most part, spoke in positive terms. Mary said it was a “fantastic place.” Mary and Diana commented on how much they value the historical significance of the museum building. Virginia and Mary value the service the museum provides the local community in the way of “education” and “understanding their own history”—a shared history as Tasmanians. Some participants indicated they have a sense of pride for the museum,

and often take out-of-town visitors there. An additional perception the participants have of the TMAG is that it is a social place—a place with a “nice ambience” for socializing with friends, family, and people who share similar interests.

Other perceptions about the TMAG held by participants include, that it is free, safe, accessible, and unique. Many of the adult participants commented on the museum’s free admission—that it “doesn’t cost to go.” This raises the question of access and the opportunities local audiences may have for sustained engagement with museums that charge an admissions fee. Participants spoke of the TMAG environment in terms of being a safe and easy place to look after children. They also commented on the accessibility of the museum. Because of its central location it is easy for Mary to come over during her lunch hour. Cecilia often walks to the museum. Virginia finds it easy to find parking. In other words, it is their perception that there are few hassles associated with visiting. Some participants also spoke of the unique opportunities visits to the TMAG afford. In her narrative Virginia frequently expressed an “if it wasn’t for a museum” sentiment. Zoë provided the comment, “there’s definitely no other place. There’s only the museum.”

Although most of the descriptions of the TMAG were positive, some of the participants expressed stereotypical negative perceptions associated with museums—those of the museum being boring and never changing (Black, 2005). Even though there are new exhibitions and special events occurring at the museum, not all of the participants appear to be aware of them. For instance, on one of their regular visits, Sarah and Jasmine stumbled across the *National Treasures* exhibition. During Zoë’s guided tour, she seemed to be surprised to see that things had changed in the art galleries. It is noteworthy to mention that even though some of the participants hold somewhat negative perceptions of the TMAG, they continue

to visit the museum. Importantly, this suggests that individuals who are returning visitors have reasons for visiting that override any negative perceptions of place.

Finding – Connections to people, place, and self play an important role in the development of sustained visitor/museum relationships.

Connections to people, place, and self play an important role in the development of sustained visitor/museum relationships. A desire to connect with people who share interests and values is a theme that emerged from the participant narratives. In her narrative, Cecilia tells of making visits to the museum after her divorce, on her weekends alone, “just to have connection with like-minded people.” She left the FTMAG when she felt she no longer had enough in common with the people in the group, but later joined the Art Guides—a group made up of people who share her specific interest in art. Diana joined the TMAGgots to expand her social network with people who share her interests and values. One of the reasons Mary likes to talk to museum staff is because they share her interest “in history and the role of the museum.” Virginia enjoys the conversation that takes place during mailout sessions because she is “talking to people with the same interests.” It is noteworthy to mention that although general museum visits provide opportunities for individuals to be around people who share interests and values, for the study’s participants, it is primarily through their association with the TMAG’s auxiliary groups that they are afforded opportunities to connect with “likeminded” people on a deeper level.

Connections to place and self can also influence the development of a relationship with a museum. All but one of the participants grew up in the Hobart area, and many of the participants have strong family connections to the Derwent Valley. Although Diana moved to Tasmania in her early twenties, she “loves”

Hobart, and has lived there longer than anywhere else. She says she feels passionately about it. The thread of connection to place comes through more strongly in certain narratives. For Mary, more than any of the other participants, her connection to place plays a central role in why she continues to visit the museum. A constant theme running through her narrative is the special connection she has with the Derwent Valley—growing up “surrounded by the beautiful undulating hills that rolled down to the Derwent River.” She speaks of her family having lived “in that one little place [town in the Derwent Valley] for five generations on both sides.” The experiences she has at the museum affirm and strengthen those connections (Paris & Mercer, 2002).

Visits to the TMAG also provide opportunities for participants to connect with their personal history with the museum. Because the adult participants have been visiting the TMAG over a number of years they have a history with that place. For some of the participants, their memories of past experiences there make the museum a special place for them. During her guided tour, as we walked through the zoology gallery, Diana commented, “It evokes that feeling of (pause) ah, time. There’s a big timeline in that from when I first came here when I just visited here on a holiday right through to now.” While walking through that same exhibition, Sarah was reminded of her experiences there as a child. “My daughter likes this room and I used to like it lots when I was a kid.” During our conversations, Barbara recalled fond memories of her visits to the museum with children and with Finn. It is interesting to note that although all the adult participants have a long personal history with the TMAG, only Virginia, Mary, and Diana expressed the view that the TMAG holds special meaning for them. Cecilia and Sarah said they think they could have a similar relationship with a museum located in a different city. This

may stem from an attitude Cecilia and her daughter appear to share—to be open to new experiences and to see where their lives take them.

A connection to personal interests is another factor that influences the development of a visitor/museum relationship. Because the TMAG exhibits a broad and varied range of objects, it affords opportunities for participants to connect with a number of different interests. As mentioned earlier, many participants have interests in all three subject areas presented by the museum—art, history, and nature. The TMAG is one place where connections to all of these interests are readily made. For example, Diana’s experiences at the museum match well with her interest in art as well as her interest in “old furniture” and “old buildings.” During our conversations, participants expressed the view that they like that the TMAG is a combined purpose museum. It is questionable how many of the participants would have a similar relationship with the TMAG if it were solely a museum or solely an art gallery. The range of topics exhibited also provides opportunities for participants to expand the ways in which they engage with the museum over time. Although initially Cecilia and Mary’s relationships with the TMAG developed out of a specific interest in art, over the years, as their interests have developed, they have connected with other areas of the museum’s collection.

Finding – Sustained visitor/museum relationships develop and evolve through different life stages.

The study’s narrative inquiry methodology provides new understandings and novel insights about the ways sustained visitor/museum relationships develop and evolve through different life stages. All of the adult participants have made visits to the museum through a number of different life stages. Sarah started visiting the museum as a child with her family. She reconnected with the TMAG after she

moved back to Hobart as a young single mother. Mary's initial visits to the TMAG were as a child and as a teenager, while on school field excursions. She started visiting the TMAG regularly when she was a young adult as part of her study while attending university. After spending time away from Hobart, getting married, then divorced, she returned to the Hobart area and found her way back to the museum as a single working woman. Both Sarah and Mary returned to the TMAG after they moved back to Hobart, but for different reasons—Sarah because she was a mother with a young child, and Mary for herself.

There are similarities in the course through which Cecilia and Diana's relationships with the TMAG developed. Cecilia visited the museum first as a young woman in her mid-twenties, then as a wife. After she started a family, it was an "interesting," "free" place she could go to have "quiet time" with her children. Later, when her marriage ended, it was a place she would go on her weekends alone. Today she visits the museum as a single woman whose children are grown. Although there are differences in Cecilia and Diana's life experiences, Diana's relationship with the TMAG has taken her through a similar set of life stages—visiting first as a young woman, then as wife, then as a mother, and now as a woman whose children are older and more independent.

Virginia's relationship with the museum followed a different path. Her regular visits to the TMAG started when she was in her sixties, as a widow after she had retired. She did not visit the museum with her own children (due to her location, living in a rural community outside of Hobart), but she did make use of the museum as a nanny and a grandmother. During the next stage of her life, in her seventies, she made regular visits to the museum as Finn's partner. Now, as a woman in her eighties, she is involved there on her own.

The narratives reveal how participants' relationships with the museum fill a variety of needs through different life stages. As a child it fills a need to have fun, to be stimulated and active, and to spend quality time with family. As a young couple, it provides a place to socialize with your spouse and others. As a mother, it provides a safe, educational environment for an outing with children. As a woman whose children are grown, who has more time to focus on herself, it provides opportunities to broaden social networks and pursue interests. As a grandmother, it fills the need to share interests and time with grandchildren. As a senior it serves as a site for social and mental stimulation.

A participant's life stage influences the frequency of visits. At certain times during their lives, participant visits to the TMAG occurred less frequently. In Sarah's case, her visits tapered off when she was a teenager. She presumes she "would have thought it was boring" because she "would have seen everything" when she was there as a child. And at that stage in her life, she would have been "more interested with just hanging out with friends and doing other things." In Diana's case, her visits became less frequent during the busy years when her children were growing up. Although there have been times during various life stages when visits to the museum tapered off, the adult participants have found ways to reconnect with the museum at various points in their lives.

Life stage also impacts the level of involvement. Today, Virginia, Cecilia, Diana, and Mary are involved with the museum's auxiliary groups—Virginia with the FTMAG, Mary and Diana with the TMAGgots, and Cecilia with the Art Guides. This deeper level of involvement is a consequence of a number of factors. For Cecilia and Diana, now that their children are older, they have more time to devote to pursuing their own interests. For Mary and Diana, at this stage in their lives, they are seeking additional opportunities to meet new people and to socialize.

For Virginia, her level of involvement increased after she retired. Her deep involvement with the TMAG today has to do, in part, with her desire to stay active and to make a contribution.

Personal growth that comes with age is an additional factor that influences the development of a visitor/museum relationship. Over the years, some participants have developed a greater appreciation for history, place, and museums. For some of them, this greater appreciation has developed through their travels. Virginia attributes her trip overseas to opening her eyes to the educational value of museums. Mary tells of how her year living in London served to heighten her appreciation for Tasmania. Participants also expressed the view that appreciation develops through the natural process of getting older (Kelly et al., 2002). Mary says, “You get older and things become more significant that aren’t significant to you when you’re young.” The narratives reveal how the personal growth the participants experience influences their engagement with the TMAG. It strengthens their ties to the museum and makes the relationship they have with the museum more meaningful. Mary tells how she grew to love the museum more as her interest in history developed. As she gets older, her interest in her own history has become much stronger. Originally it was her interest in art that brought her to the museum, but now it is her interest in history that keeps her there. Diana also explains how her engagement with the museum has changed with time, “But I think getting older, you make more connections, the connections here seem to be more important as you get a little bit older—that history, that art, old things.” This finding is important because it documents the ways in which life stage influences the nature of an individual’s engagement with a museum. And provides support for the view that as visitors age, they may find new ways of engaging with museums (Goulding, 2001; Kelly et al., 2002).

Finding – The development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship is influenced by the level of satisfaction that accrues from an individual's experiences with a museum over time.

An additional factor that influences the development of a visitor/museum relationship is the level of satisfaction that accrues from an individual's experiences with a museum over time. The participants' satisfaction with their experiences at the TMAG is expressed through the words they use to describe how they feel after their visits. Cecilia describes the way she feels after she leaves the museum as "content." Jasmine says she feels "good" after a visit." Zoë describes the way she feels after a visit as "optimistic and happy." Diana leaves the museum feeling "buoyed up." Mary uses the words "relaxed" and "inspired" to describe the ways she feels after her visits.

The level of satisfaction associated with participants' experiences at the TMAG stems, in part from having expectations met (Kotler, 2003). As reported in the literature, people have a variety of reasons for visiting museums that include learning, social, enjoyment, relaxation, introspection, escapism, restoration, and entertainment (Packer, 2004; Roberts, 1997). All of these reasons for visiting are represented in the participants' narratives. Because of the sustained nature of their relationships with the museum, participants have different reasons for making specific visits. Consequently, their expectations for visits depend on the context for the visit. For instance, Cecilia has different expectations for visits she makes to the museum on her own, with a friend, with her granddaughter, and to attend an Art Guide session. In addition to having different expectations for different visits, this study finds that participants typically have a combination of motivations and expectations for single visits. For example, when Virginia attends a talk she is there for learning and social reasons. This suggests that for returning visitors,

relationships develop, in part because they view the museum as a place where they can have expectations met for a variety of different types of experiences they seek to have there.

Participants' history with the museum influences expectations and levels of satisfaction in another way. Based on their prior experiences at the TMAG, they have a general expectation for visits. Diana says the only expectation she "really" has for visits is that every time she goes there she knows "It's gonna be good because you've got that past experience." Based on previous visits, Sarah expects to have a positive, relaxing time with her daughter. Virginia expects to have an enjoyable social outing when she attends Friends' events. Although they know what to expect from a visit (many following a specific routine during their visits), there are also times when they are pleasantly surprised by something unexpected. For instance, when Sarah and Jasmine came across the *National Treasures* exhibition, or when Zoë encountered the contemporary art exhibition. For the study participants, their expectations for visits are met and occasionally exceeded.

Although all of the participants have satisfying experiences at the TMAG, what constitutes a satisfying experience is defined differently for each participant. Satisfying experiences range from having a relaxing time with friends and family to having an introspective, solitary interaction with an artwork. Because of the sustained nature of their relationship with the museum, over the years participants have experienced many different kinds of satisfying experiences—object, cognitive, introspective, and social (Pekarik et al., 1999). This study suggests that visitors who make repeat visits to a museum can experience one or a combination of these types of satisfying experiences during visits. The study also finds that although the satisfaction levels are, in part shaped by the museum through its facilities, offerings, and interpretation, the participants' satisfaction with their museum experiences

appears to be influenced more by individual and personal factors, such as the social milieu and the personal meaning they ascribe to their visits (Silverman, 2000).

Research Question 3: In what ways do individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum?

Study participants have engaged with the TMAG over a number of years. Many of the adult participants have been making visits to the museum for over twenty years. Over the course of their relationships with the museum, the participants' engagement with the TMAG has provided them with a range of experiences—social, cognitive, and aesthetic. The study suggests that participants engage with the museum in a variety of ways, both in terms of immediate experiences and engagement over time.

Finding – The nature of the engagement is influenced by the context and purpose for the visit.

The narratives reveal that individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum in multiple ways and for multiple purposes. For example, today Cecilia visits the museum on her own, with friends, with her granddaughter, and for Art Guide sessions. Mary visits on her own, with friends, for work, and to attend social events. Virginia experiences the museum on her own, to attend to her duties as a member of the FTMAG committee, and to attend FTMAG functions. Diana has her ongoing visits to the museum with her husband as well as attending TMAGgot meetings and events. Sarah is the only adult participant who visits the museum primarily in one context—with her daughter. But even her visits are varied—sometimes it is just the two of them, other times she experiences the museum with Jasmine and one of Jasmine's friends, and at other times she and Jasmine visit the museum with another mother and her child. The child participants

also experience the museum in different contexts—making visits with family, friends, and school. This finding is important because many visitor studies explore single visits and fail to take into consideration the complex nature of an individual's museum visitation. These novel insights about the variety and number of contexts in which one visitor engages with a single museum serve to broaden our understanding of the museum experience.

The context for the visit influences the ways participants engage during visits. Although the participants often have a combination of motivations for a specific visit (Leinhardt et al., 2000), some visits have a dominant focus, such as cognitive, social, or aesthetic. For instance, when Virginia attends a talk, although there is a social component to these visits, she attends the talks primarily to learn about a specific topic. When she attends FTMAG functions, the focus is primarily on social engagement. When she visits the museum on her own, she is seeking a deeper aesthetic engagement with the objects. Cecilia and Mary experience the museum in ways similar to Virginia—sometimes viewing exhibitions on their own, other times for the purpose of learning, and at other times for social reasons. Although Diana, Sarah, and the child participants typically experience the museum with others, the nature of their engagement is influenced by who accompanies them to the museum. The range of contexts in which each participant has engaged with the TMAG over the years has provided them with opportunities to experience the museum in many different ways.

Finding – Social engagement is a primary means by which participants engage with the museum.

The narratives reveal the variety of ways in which participants engage socially with the TMAG—with family and friends, and through their association

with the museum's auxiliary organizations. All of the participants have experienced the museum with family and/or friends. The focus during some of these visits is as much on social interaction, if not more, as it is on engaging with objects. For example, when Sarah visits the museum with Jasmine and another mother and her child, much of the conversation Sarah engages in with the other adult is about things unrelated to the museum. When Mary meets a friend in the café, she may not even enter the exhibition areas. Social engagement is a central part of the children's visits to the museum. The importance of the social interaction that takes place between Zoë and her father during visits to the TMAG was a theme that emerged from her narrative. Both of Zoë's parents and Jasmine's mother identified the social aspect—spending time with family—as a very important dimension of their visits to the museum with their daughters. While the existing literature points to the importance of knowledge acquisition as central to understanding the museum experience, the participants' narratives support Thyne's (2001) finding that today, many visitors visit museums for social reasons, to spend time with family and friends—a feature of visits that may be particularly important to returning local visitors. Additionally, the central role the social dimension plays in the participants' engagement with the TMAG confounds Hood's (1983) assertion that frequent visitors prefer to engage in leisure activities that involve learning, challenges, and doing something worthwhile, while occasional and non-visitors prefer leisure activities that involve social interaction and relaxation.

When the participants visit the museum in the company of others they have specific ways of experiencing the museum. When Diana visits the TMAG with her husband they start together, but because they have different preferences for how they like to experience a museum—him reading and her “feeling”—they each go at their own pace and check back with one another along the way, pointing out and

discussing various objects of interest. When Cecilia and her friend view an exhibition, they experience it independently and talk about it afterwards. When Mary and her friend Ellie explore an exhibition, they enjoy “talking about that exhibition together.” The children also have distinctive ways of exploring the museum with their family members. Sarah and Cecilia usually follow Jasmine’s lead during their visits to the museum with her, whereas Zoë and her father take turns deciding where to go, what to see and do.

Although there are differences in how they explore the museum when they are there with others, there are also similarities in the behavior of the participants. Many of the visits to the museum with family and friends include a stop in the café to have something to drink and eat. The café experience adds an additional social dimension to the visit. Zoë’s mother Rose finds time spent in the café plays an important role in shaping the feel of the visit. For Rose, having “a cup of coffee or a milkshake” after touring the museum gives it the feel of an “outing”—“the whole little excursion is part of the experience.”

In addition to visiting with friends and family, visits associated with the museum’s auxiliary groups provide a range of opportunities for social engagement. Virginia, Mary, and Diana regularly attend FTMAG/TMAGgots functions. During these events, here again, the focus is often on social networking as opposed to engaging with the museum’s collection. There is also a social component to Virginia and Diana’s committee work. The social interaction that occurs during meetings and mailout sessions is especially important to Virginia. She enjoys “the talking and laughter” and conversations that take place during these sessions. Although the social aspect may not be the primary reason for Cecilia’s association with the Art Guides, she does enjoy “having a cuppa” with members of the group, people who share her interest in art. The participants’ association with the auxiliary

groups not only brings them to the museum more frequently, but also provides them with opportunities to engage with the museum in a different way. This suggests that the range of opportunities for social engagement the museum provides is of vital importance for returning visitors.

Finding – The emphasis placed on cognitive engagement varies among participants and for individual visits.

In addition to social engagement, the participants also engage cognitively during their visits to the museum. The importance participants place on learning during visits to the museum varies. Many of the participants do not talk about their engagement with the TMAG in terms of cognitive learning—learning factual information. For many of them, it is more about the experience—the seeing, the feeling, the doing—than it is about education and learning (Ansbacher, 2000).

Learning, however, does play an important role in Virginia, Mary, and Cecilia’s relationships with the TMAG. Virginia identified learning as the primary reason for her unaccompanied visits to the TMAG. Mary’s profound desire to understand history is a main feature of her engagement with the museum today. During the Art Guide sessions, Cecilia commented that she is there “soaking up whatever’s going on.” Although they all have a desire to learn, their reasons for wanting to learn during their museum experiences are different. Virginia’s learning centers around her desire to broaden her understanding so she can speak knowledgably about art and culture. She appreciates the rare and unique learning opportunities the museum affords. Some of Mary’s visits to the museum also focus, in part on learning, but her learning is not about the acquisition of facts to become more knowledgeable about a topic, but to increase her understanding as it relates to her personal history. Learning is also a component of Cecilia’s Art Guide sessions.

The focus of Cecilia's learning is to keep her immersed in the art world. It is interesting to note that Virginia, Mary, and Cecilia all spoke of the educational shortcomings they experienced while they were growing up.

For the study's other participants, learning is less of a focus for their visits to the TMAG. Although learning is a primary reason for why her husband visits the museum, Diana says it has little to do with why she visits the TMAG. Like Diana, Sarah says that learning is not the primary reason for her visits to the museum, for either her or her daughter. In her narrative, Sarah made the comment that because she is more familiar and comfortable with the TMAG, it may mean that she is perhaps less interested in engaging with the permanent collections when she is there. This suggests that with respect to learning, visitors may engage differently with the museums they visit on a regular basis. Sarah does, however, see the museum as providing her daughter with an interesting and educational experience. She recognizes that while they are there, her daughter "learns without noticing." Zoë frequently mentions learning in her narrative, but although she appreciates that the museum is a place to learn, she says it is not the main reason she goes there.

Finding – Cognitive engagement in museums occurs in conjunction with other dimensions of engagement, takes many forms, and involves a process of personal meaning-making.

The narratives provide insights that extend our understanding about learning in museums. First, they highlight the degree to which learning at the TMAG occurs in conjunction with other dimensions of engagement—social, aesthetic, emotional, and physical. This multidimensional engagement was revealed in the narratives and from observations of the participants in the museum setting. For instance, when Mary and her friend Ellie toured the *National Treasures* exhibition together, they

were engaged cognitively, socially, aesthetically, and emotionally—simultaneously. During the guided tours, while interacting with displays in the *Islands to Ice* exhibition and the children’s discovery space, the children demonstrated high levels of physical engagement, while at the same time, being engaged cognitively and socially. Promotion of children’s kinesthetic experiences in museums has been shown to enhance children’s learning outcomes (Weier & Piscitelli, 2003). Such experiences provide opportunities for multimodal, embodied engagement—activity that integrates thought, emotion, and action (Bresler, 2004; Dewey, 1934; Wright, 2003). The multidimensional nature of cognitive engagement in museums also contributes to making the learning experience enjoyable. Packer (2006) finds the “learning for fun” feature of museum experiences to be “a unique and distinctive offering of educational leisure experiences...” (p. 329).

Second, the narratives reveal that cognitive engagement is present in all types of engagement, including social, aesthetic, emotional, and physical. Although “learning” is not the main focus for many of the participants’ visits to the museum, they engage cognitively during all their visits. Participants’ cognitive engagement takes many forms, such as engaging in conversation, asking questions, experiencing aesthetic responses, engaging with interactives, making observations, and through reflection. The narratives provide support for museums to adopt a view of learning that acknowledges the variety of ways in which visitors engage in the meaning-making process and the broad range of learning outcomes that result from museum experiences (Ansbacher, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2004).

Third, the narratives illustrate the personal nature of the meaning-making process. Many of the participants prefer to engage with objects through looking and “feeling” as opposed to reading the text (Pekarik, 2002). This supports the view that the meaning visitors take away from their museum experiences may be less

influenced by what the museum provides in the way of interpretation and more by subjective factors, such as personal connections and life experiences (Carr, 2001; Silverman, 1995). This raises a question concerning what role museums should play in fostering meaning-making from museum experiences. Although some museum professionals express the view that museums need to “decide what kind of engagement we want visitors to have,” (Carter-Birken, 2008, p. 176) this study finds that although museums may design experiences with the intention of encouraging specific forms of engagement, such as cognitive, visitors engage with exhibitions in ways that are best suited to their needs and preferences, and they shape the meaning they take away from these experiences. The study also raises questions concerning the potential impact of new technologies and media on visitor engagement and the personal meaning-making process.

Finding – Participants’ private interactions with art and objects provide opportunities for a wide range of aesthetic responses.

In addition to experiencing the museum socially and cognitively, participants also experience the museum aesthetically. When Cecilia, Virginia, and Mary visit the museum on their own they engage with the museum on a very private level. Cecilia says when she visits the TMAG alone she “might already be in a thoughtful kind of mood.” Both Virginia and Cecilia prefer to explore exhibitions on their own because they can follow their own interests and move at their own pace. Cecilia, Virginia, and Mary typically make visits to the museum on their own with the specific purpose of seeing a new exhibition. In addition to coming to see new exhibitions, Mary also makes visits on her own to revisit works from the permanent collection, sometimes viewing only one or two paintings. Cecilia and Mary occasionally make repeat visits to view traveling exhibitions of interest.

During their unaccompanied visits, Cecilia, Virginia, and Mary engage with the museum and its collections differently than when they are there with others. When they are there on their own, there is a stronger focus on the aesthetic dimension of engagement. Although Cecilia, Virginia, and Mary make unaccompanied visits to the museum with the intention of engaging aesthetically with artworks and objects, the participants who typically experience the TMAG in the company of others, Diana, Sarah, Jasmine, and Zoë, also engage aesthetically on a personal level during their visits. The participants' private interactions with artworks and objects provide opportunities for a wide range of aesthetic responses.

There were certain types of objects that evoked aesthetic responses from many of the participants. During the guided tours, the adult participants were particularly captivated by “old” objects—Cecilia with a glacial rock, Virginia with the Chinese jar, Diana with the Hamilton couch, Sarah with Aboriginal baskets, and Mary with colonial paintings. Although they were all drawn to old objects, they provided different reasons for the attraction. Cecilia's attraction stems from a desire to connect with and draw strength from the encounter. Other participants' attraction has more to do with a general interest in history or an appreciation for the historical significance of the object.

Some works produced an aesthetic response for a number of participants. For example, during the guided tours, Jasmine, Mary, and Diana all called my attention to Adolphe-William Bouguereau's *Cupid & Psyche*. Although they all commented on the work, the reasons for their attraction to the painting varied. Jasmine said she liked the shiny gold frame. Mary's attraction to the work was due, in large part to its history with the museum. It appealed to Diana because of its romantic quality. This supports the view that people's aesthetic responses to art and objects are highly individual and personal (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990).

There were also objects that held greater appeal for individual participants. Concerning the children's aesthetic responses, Jasmine and Zoë showed varying levels of interest in looking at specific types of art. During the guided tour, Jasmine engaged with a number of art objects exhibited throughout the TMAG—both inside and outside the museum building. She commented on traditional artworks, sculptures, and contemporary works. In contrast, Zoë did not engage with artworks from the permanent collection. She said the art in the colonial art gallery did not “appeal” to her. During the guided tour she did, however, engage with the contemporary works on display in the temporary galleries. During those encounters she commented on the content, technique, and texture of the works. Although interactions with adults have been found to determine the quality of aesthetic engagement for young children (Mallos, 2002), the findings from this study suggest that children have meaningful aesthetic engagement with objects regardless of the input from adults, as observed from Jasmine's personal encounter with the multicolored metal sculpture on display in museum's courtyard.

The objects participants were particularly drawn to during the guided tours were those that made direct connections to their lives—their experiences, interests, family, and surroundings. Mary and Diana enjoyed the Hamilton couch, in part because they attended the auction where it was purchased and knew its story. Sarah was drawn to photographs and works with flowers, two of her interests. Cecilia called my attention to rocks in the geology gallery that reminded her of her father. Virginia was moved by the photographs on display in the *Captured in colour: rare photographs from the First World War* exhibition that reminded her of her father and uncles. The Aboriginal shell necklaces purchased by the FTMAG were also objects that held personal significance for Virginia. Mary and Cecilia engaged with artworks that depicted the Tasmanian landscape and Mt Wellington, a landscape

that has played an important role in both of their lives. This supports research that finds meaningful encounters with objects occur when individuals “[blur] the lines between the exhibit and themselves ... or [draw] an interpretation out into their own lives” (Leinhardt et al., 2000, p. 26). Although the participants experience aesthetic responses during encounters with objects at other museums, for some of the participants the aesthetic encounters they have at the TMAG are more meaningful because of their personal history with the museum and Tasmania.

During their encounters with artworks and artifacts, the participants engage aesthetically on many levels. On one level they observe (perceptual) color, technique, lines, form, and subject matter (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). On another level, they appreciate the object—for its historical significance and craftsmanship. On another level they enjoy the beauty of the work. On another level they communicate with the work—with the artist, the owner, the era, and/or with self (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). When communicating with the artist, some of the participants wonder about the person who produced the object, or what the artist was thinking as they created it. They also wonder about who owned it or who wore it. Some of the participants reflect on the era in which the object was made and transport themselves back in time. During these aesthetic encounters they also communicate with themselves. Cecilia wonders if she could produce a similar work. Other participants think about the ways in which they are connected to a common people and the landscape, and reflect on their personal and cultural identity.

Some of the participants’ aesthetic responses to objects could be described as numinous. Numinous responses are characterized by deep engagement, empathy, and awe or reverence—spiritual communication with objects, people or events of the past (Cameron & Gatewood, 2003). Numinous responses were evoked through

interactions with both artworks and artifacts. During the guided tour, as we entered the colonial art gallery Mary said, “You know as soon as I come in this room I just feel an overwhelming sense of awe.” Mary and Virginia were deeply moved by objects that represented the suffering and struggles other humans have endured. Diana and Cecilia describe how they are transported to another time when they engage with certain objects (Pekarik et al., 1999). For Cecilia, traveling back in time is a spiritual experience—“trying to get into their [people from the distant past] soul...” The participants’ descriptions of encounters with objects in which they are deeply engaged match Csikszentmihalyi’s description of “flow” and Dewey’s description of *an experience*—an embodied interaction with the world marked by a heightened sense of awareness. Mary expresses the sensation as, “Just letting the painting wash over you I guess, and really being absorbed by the image in front of you and the feeling that it can give you.”

The narratives reveal that there is an emotional element associated with all aesthetic responses. Participant engagement with objects is often expressed through feelings of joy, pleasure, awe, and inspiration. During the guided tours, there were numerous instances when participants demonstrated the emotional dimension of their engagement with objects. While in the colonial art gallery, participants experienced a range of emotions. They expressed joy and pleasure when engaging with works depicting the natural beauty of the Tasmanian landscape on display in one area of the gallery; they expressed deep empathy for Indigenous Tasmanians portrayed in works displayed in a different section of the gallery. While standing in front of Thomas Napier’s *Woureddy and Trucanini* Mary said, “You know really, this is an emotional painting for me.”

Participants also had emotional responses to objects in other galleries. When looking at the older objects in the Chinese decorative art exhibition, Virginia

remarked, “It does tug at my heart.” While in front of the Hamilton couch in the Huon pine exhibition, Diana commented, “So emotionally, aesthetically yeah I’d sort of think about oh that’s lovely and I covet that piece or those things, and I want to have it. That sort of feeling.” Describing what she thinks about as she engaged with the Work Table in the same exhibition, she tapped her heart with her hand and said, “I just think it’s so lovely. It’s in your heart, that is what’s lovely about that.”

According to Dewey (1934), the emotional phase of an experience is what “binds parts together into a single whole” (p. 56-57). Although there was an emotional dimension associated with all the aesthetic responses, similar to the finding from Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s (1990) study, the intensity of emotional responses varied among participants, and during interactions with different objects. Some of the participants were deeply moved while engaging with objects, while others connected emotionally on a lighter level. This said, however, it is unclear what role the intensity of emotional responses participants have during visits play in sustaining their relationships with the TMAG. The narratives suggest that for some participants, specifically Cecilia, Mary, Diana, and Virginia, opportunities to connect with works on an emotional level play an important role in sustaining their visits to the museum.

At times, the participants’ aesthetic responses to objects were multisensory. For instance, during the guided tour, while in front of a work by Piquenit, Mary commented that when she looks at the painting she can “almost feel what it’s like to wake up on that particular type of morning or be there at that particular time of day—the feeling of the cold air that would be there in Tasmania, the smell of the ocean.” During the tours, many of the participants, both children and adults, expressed a desire to touch objects. While in the Huon pine furniture exhibition Virginia expressed a desire to “caress that wood.” Sarah and Jasmine expressed a

desire to sit on the “velvety” lounge. Cecilia let out an “Awww!” of wonder when she touched glacial rock. While the benefits of providing children with multisensory museum experiences are documented (Piscitelli, Weier, & Everett, 2003), little research has explored the affect such experience may have on adults. It is also noteworthy to mention that although touching is an important way in which children engage in museums, many of Jasmine and Zoë’s aesthetic responses were evoked from interactions with objects they could not touch.

Research Question 4: What benefits are derived from sustained visitor/museum relationships?

This study suggests that a sustained visitor/museum relationship contributes to the lives of the participants in diverse and significant ways. The participants derive benefits from individual visits as well as engagement over time. In this section, I discuss intrinsic benefits derived from engagement with the TMAG. Then, I discuss benefits associated with social, cognitive, and aesthetic engagement. Finally, I discuss specific benefits participants derive from sustained engagement with place.

Finding – Intrinsic benefits are a central feature of participants’ engagement with the museum.

The narratives reveal that intrinsic benefits are a central feature of the participants’ engagement with the museum. Although intrinsic benefits are intertwined with social, cognitive, and aesthetic benefits, because enjoyment and pleasure have been identified in the literature as playing a central role in sustaining involvement and deepening the level of engagement in museum and arts settings (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; McCarthy et al., 2004) they are discussed separately here.

All of the participants derive enjoyment from their experiences at the TMAG—enjoyment from engaging with objects, others, and place. Diana summed up what she takes away from her experiences at the TMAG as “pleasure” and “joy.” Cecilia used the word “content” to describe how she feels after visits—unaccompanied as well as social visits. Enjoyment is also at the center of Sarah’s experiences at the TMAG. She says, “...I don’t care how long we stay, we can stay for hours and I enjoy myself here.” Mary derives intrinsic benefits not only through her engagement with objects, talking to museum staff, and the work she does there, but she also finds intrinsic value in what the museum gives back to her “as a local Tasmanian person understanding our history.” Virginia gains a great deal of gratification from her relationship with the TMAG—not only socially, aesthetically, and cognitively, but also from the way it makes her “feel good” about the service she is providing to the museum.

The children also derive intrinsic benefits from their experiences at the TMAG. Both Jasmine and Zoë used the word “fun” to describe their visits. Jasmine feels “good” when she is at the museum. Zoë leaves feeling “happy” and “optimistic.” She says, “I have a fun feeling and an interested feeling and yeah, just enjoy it a lot.” Both Jasmine and Zoë’s mothers commented that their daughters enjoy the entire experience of going to the TMAG. According to Sarah, Jasmine likes “the whole experience ... she wouldn’t want to do one bit without doing another bit.” The variety, range, and uniqueness of experiences participants have at the museum contribute to the intrinsic benefits participants derive from their experiences there. The study’s findings provide support for the important role intrinsic benefits and satisfying experiences play in sustaining visitation (Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Kotler, 1999; McCarthy et al., 2004).

Finding – Participants derive important benefits within the social contexts of visiting with family and friends, and as a member of a group.

Because of the sustained nature of their relationships with the TMAG, participants have opportunities to experience the museum socially in a variety of contexts. The museum serves as a place to spend quality time with family and friends. The narratives illuminate the ways museum visits provide opportunities to strengthen relationships—parent and child, couples, friendships, and grandparent and grandchild. For example, in Zoë’s narrative, her father Oscar specifically addresses the issue of using the museum as a site to spend quality time with his daughter.

Oscar: It’s a bit of quality time I suppose. ... Because you get more quality time at a place like this than you would with quality times at the movies. See the interaction that’s between her and I comes from what this place produces. Whereas if you go to the movie, you get nothing out of it. She wouldn’t know who was sitting next to her, you know.

Oscar attributes the special quality of exchanges with his daughter to the museum environment. The museum is also a place where Jasmine spends time with her father on the Sundays when they are together. Both Zoë and Jasmine’s mothers stressed the relationship side of their visits to the museum with their daughters. The use of museums by single and/or divorced parents has received scant attention in the visitor studies literature. Findings from this study suggest that museums serve as important sites for single parents to spend time with their children, and consequently, it is an audience that warrants further consideration and investigation.

In addition to parent/child relationships, the TMAG also provides opportunities for couples to share quality time. When talking about her visits to the museum with her husband, Diana said, “...it’s a lovely thing to do together.” Upon reflection she sees how during her visits to the museum with William today, she is reminded of their visits there in “younger times” before they had children. She says,

“And I guess now you look back on that and you often maybe want to recreate that in some way.” This observation extends current understandings about benefits associated with making visits to museums with companions. In addition to shaping learning outcomes (Leinhardt et al., 2002; Packer & Ballantyne, 2005) and contributing to satisfaction levels (Pekarik et al., 1999), findings from this study suggest that visits to museums may also serve to strengthen couple relationships.

Engaging with objects in the company of others provides unique opportunities to share interests, memories, and common bonds with friends and family. For example, when Mary spoke of viewing the *National Treasures* exhibition with her friend Ellie, she said, “Ellie and I together went for a wander through and we loved it. We both are lovers of history and we enjoyed talking about that exhibition together.” About experiencing the *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* exhibition with her grandmother and aunt, Mary commented, “that’s the only time I can remember three generations in my family of females being interested by the one thing.” When Zoë’s father came across a photograph on display in the *Summers Past* exhibition, he showed his daughter the beach where he used to swim when he was a boy. During visits to the museum with Jasmine, Cecilia has opportunities to share her interests with her granddaughter. These accounts support other research that finds museums serve as important sites for intergenerational conversations (Kelly et al., 2002; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2006). All of these meaningful exchanges are made possible through the unique opportunities for shared experiences that museum visits afford.

Visits to the TMAG also provide important opportunities for children and adults to socialize with people they do not know. During visits to the museum with her mother, Jasmine interacts with other children, especially in the children’s discovery space. When Jasmine was younger, time spent in the children’s area also

afforded Sarah opportunities to socialize with other mothers. These experiences were important because, as Sarah says, “as a single parent you can be really isolated so ... it’s nice to have that kind of adult time, and the kids can do what they want.” The museum provides a safe environment for Sarah and her daughter to socially engage with others.

Participants who are members of the TMAG’s auxiliary groups derive additional social benefits from being a part of a group. Virginia, Cecilia, Diana, and Mary are all involved with various museum auxiliary groups. Connecting, belonging, and contributing are three key benefits they derive from their involvement. Virginia, Cecilia, Diana, and Mary’s associations with the auxiliary groups provide them with opportunities to connect with people who share similar interests and values. Virginia and Cecilia have been able to connect socially on levels they are comfortable with—Virginia establishing close friendships, and Cecilia staying on the fringe and not getting “too buddy connected.” During TMAGgot functions, Diana and Mary meet new people and expand their social networks.

Associations with the museum’s auxiliary groups also provide participants with a sense of belonging and contributing. A sense of belonging is something that is documented in both Virginia and Diana’s narratives. Virginia’s sense of belonging stems from being accepted into the FTMAG. She attributes her involvement with the Friends’ group to “the encouragement from the people—the friendships, the camaraderie.” She says she “had to be part of a group to feel it.” A sense of belonging is also important to Diana as noted from her comment about how she felt as she drove to the museum to attend a TMAGgot meeting.

Diana: I sort of felt like I had a sense of belonging when you drive up here. Because you know, yeah, I’m, I’m a part of this because now, I’m in a group

that sort of contributes. So that's a really interesting sort of thing, feel a bit more valued...

Virginia too touched on the issues of being valued and contributing. "But he [TMAG director] remembers my name. Even in the early days he remembered my name. That's lovely. And other members of the staff that I meet just make me feel so welcome, as though I do some good." Virginia, Diana, and Mary feel good about supporting something they perceive to be of great value, to them personally as well as to the community. Virginia feels good about the work she and her fellow Friends "are doing for those people who are interested enough to be a Friend of the museum." Another benefit all four participants mentioned was the special perks they are privy to as a result of their association with the various groups, such as behind-the-scenes tours and being invited to events. They used the words "feeling special" and "privileged" to describe how attending these events make them feel.

The participants' involvement with the museum's auxiliary groups also contributes to their well-being, self confidence, and identity. Cecilia's involvement with the Art Guides is critical to her well-being. It provides her with a vital link to the local art scene and the art world. It keeps her connected so she doesn't "sort of fall in a hole." Cecilia's experience is reflected in the developing body of research that suggests social connectedness and engagement contribute to personal well-being (Seligman, 2002). In her narrative, Cecilia says the museum has served "as therapy" for her. The therapeutic potential of museums is an area that is currently receiving an increasing amount of attention (Jones, 2009; Silverman, 2002). Cecilia's association with the Art Guides provides her with an enhanced sense of self and personal identity. It helps her understand who she is and where she "fits in" in the world. Cecilia's involvement with the group has also served to boost her self-confidence. Having to deliver presentations to the group has given her "a bit more

confidence to say a bit more.” Virginia’s involvement with the FTMAG has also made important contributions to her self-confidence. By taking advantage of the learning opportunities the FTMAG afford, she feels she is more knowledgeable about art and culture. This is important to her because she likes to feel as though she “can contribute” to the conversation. Sounding intelligent about art and culture is something she believes she could “only get ... from a museum and art gallery.” Perhaps the most important contribution Virginia’s association with the FTMAG makes to her life these days is warding off the effects of old age. Her work with the group keeps her physically, mentally, and socially active. It prevents her from “having a senior moment,” “reaching her use-by date,” and keeps her feeling as though she can continue to make a valuable contribution to society. Many of these benefits are derived from the sustained nature of the participants’ engagement with the museum (McCarthy et. al., 2004).

This deeper level of involvement with the museum’s auxiliary groups not only provides the participants with additional benefits, but also benefits the museum. In addition to their official roles in the organization, the participants whose involvement with the museum extends to the auxiliary groups also serve as informal public relations agents and cultural guides—spreading the word about what is going on at the museum, encouraging others to visit, bringing out-of-town visitors to the museum, and arranging to meet people at the TMAG café for lunch. For instance, today, Mary serves informally as a cultural guide by introducing her friends to the museum. She says she feels like she is “a bit of an advocate for the museum now” sharing the museum with members of her “peer group” who “normally wouldn’t say, ‘We’ll go to the museum for fun.’” Although many museums have such established auxiliary groups as Art Guides or Friends’ associations whose members serve as officially sanctioned guides, this study

suggests there are people who act informally as cultural guides, individuals who provide an invaluable service by bringing in new visitors to the museum. The characteristics and role of informal cultural guides in bringing people to the museum is an area that warrants further research.

In some cases, this deeper level of involvement leads to a feeling of ownership and loyalty. Diana, Virginia, and Mary expressed the view that their feelings for the TMAG are stronger than the feelings they have for most other museums. Diana commented that she feels differently about the TMAG because “coming here gives you a sense of this place, but it holds all that history of yourself as well.” During the guided tour, Virginia referred to the TMAG as “her” museum. When asked what makes it feel that way, she replied, “Because I am actively helping to make it a good museum in such a little way, but nevertheless, I am participating. And the fact that I am participating, makes it my museum.” Mary too expressed a feeling of ownership. “[I]t’s that Tasmanian connection that makes it feel really special about this one. It’s almost like it’s my building too. Yeah because you feel like you’re, in a way we’re all looking after our history.” These comments suggest that although visitors may be regular museum-goers, they may also demonstrate loyalty to one museum. This finding troubles the claim that “Clearly, frequent visitation is not a phenomenon that is linked to a single museum—these visitors are very experienced museum goers. Their loyalty may not be to particular museums but to museums as institutions” (McManus, 2001, p. 21).

Finding – The sustained nature of the relationship affords opportunities to derive additional cognitive benefits from museum visits.

Participants also derive cognitive benefits from their relationship with the TMAG. Although cognitive engagement is not a main focus for many of the

participants' visits to the museum, the participants name learning as one of the benefits they derive from their experiences there. Since the focus placed on learning varies both among participants and for participant's individual visits, the nature of cognitive benefits derived also varies among participants and for individual visits.

In their narratives, participants expressed the view that there are additional cognitive benefits associated with making repeat visits to the TMAG. Comments concerning additional benefits for the child participants focused on seeing different things each time they visit. Zoë's father, Oscar, observes:

I think she gets more out of it every time she comes here. Sort of like a brain food for her ... sometimes she'll find something different ... sometimes you'll see something different that's been here all the time, but you might just look at it from a different angle.

About Jasmine, her mother comments, "I'm sure she notices different things every time she goes back. This notion that each visit provides opportunities to discover new things was observed during the guided tours and tag along visits. For instance, when, during the tag along visit, Jasmine noticed a new appendage on Bill Yaxley's sculpture. These new discoveries stimulate conversation and thought. In addition to seeing new things in the permanent collection, repeat visits also provide opportunities to explore and learn about topics and objects that are part of traveling exhibitions.

Each new visit to the TMAG also provides participants with opportunities to see things differently as familiar objects take on new meaning with successive visits (Jackson, 1998). Zoë's mother, Rose, suggests that certain objects may become relevant because "what they're [children] learning in life might raise questions, and they might see something at the museum, so you might focus on it." Zoë demonstrated this during the guided tour when she noticed the jar containing a young Tasmanian tiger and commented that she had been learning about the

Thylacine at school. Mary's narrative illustrates the dynamic nature of perceiving works of art (Dewey, 1934; Jackson, 1998).

Mary: The Duterreau paintings I find fascinating really, and often, the more I'm reading stories about history, the more that painting becomes more relevant to an understanding I might have of history. Yeah, so I guess, you know, I might have seen that painting once and then read a little bit more about that era of history, and so the painting takes on another meaning almost if you come and look at it again too.

In her narrative, Mary also reveals how meanings made from interactions with familiar objects are influenced by personal growth. She explains how her engagement with and meaning derived from experiences with objects has changed as her interests develop and knowledge increases. "So I just love to come here to look at things again, if you like, that I'd not paid much attention to when I'd been younger on visits here—see it with different eyes because I understood, um the context."

The sustained nature of the relationship, viewing exhibitions on more than one occasion, also provides opportunities for the participants to experience an exhibition in a variety of ways. For example, Mary first experienced the *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* exhibition with her family, and then came back on her own on two other occasions, taking away different things from each experience. This suggests that the participants derive cognitive benefits from engagement in a variety of contexts—when they explore the museum on their own as well as when they visit the museum in the company of others. The issue of learning outcomes resulting from solitary versus shared museum experiences is discussed in the visitor studies literature. Although research suggests visits made with others can "build on joint experiences of visitors to create a much richer experience than any individual could have alone" (Fienberg & Leinhardt, 2002, p. 209), the narratives reveal participants can also have profoundly meaningful

experiences during unaccompanied visits. Packer and Ballantyne (2005) find “there is no significant learning advantage to either solitary or shared museum experiences ... solitary and shared learning experiences can be equally beneficial, but in different ways” (p. 177). This view is supported in the study’s narrative accounts. During the conversation about Mary’s visits to the museum on her own and with others, her friend Ellie commented, “I think Mary gets benefits both ways.”

There are other cognitive benefits associated with making return visits. For Virginia, return visits provide her with opportunities to take in a limited amount of information with each visit. Although she has experienced the *Islands to Ice* exhibition on a number of occasions, she says she will continue to explore it because she really wants “to learn how to understand all this here.” In Sarah’s telling of her visit to the Louvre, she expressed a similar view. She commented, “Because there was so much to see, “I hardly saw any of it ... you kind of get tired and don’t absorb.” These comments suggest that making return visits to a museum to view exhibitions provides opportunities to build on previous experiences and reduce the effects of museum fatigue (Davey, 2005).

Because they are returning visitors, the participants can also be selective about which parts of the TMAG they want to experience during visits. In the cases of Mary and Cecilia, they make return visits to spend additional time with artworks of interest and personal significance. For Mary, this often occurs with works in the colonial art gallery.

Mary: I like the fact the colonial art gallery is pretty much an unchanging permanent display and I really like being able to have repetitive visits because you might look at a painting and go away and think about it and then you have a question about it and want to come again. So the fact that they’re always here to see is wonderful.

Mary's description supports the claim that time spent with works of art influences the quality of the experience (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990) and the meaning made from the experience (Dewey, 1934).

Cognitive engagement experienced at the TMAG over the years has made important contributions to the participants' lives that extend far beyond learning factual knowledge. The narratives reveal a wide range of cognitive benefits that include stimulating interests and curiosity, gaining a greater understanding of self and others, broadening one's perspective, and increasing self-esteem and confidence. Mary, Cecilia, and Virginia often leave the museum with a desire to find out more about a certain topic. Mary's engagement with the museum plays a vital role in her "quest for knowledge about history." She says the museum "is sometimes like the glue that's sticking pieces of a puzzle back together." Virginia feels as though she can "talk" more intelligently "about culture." Contributions such as these illustrate the many intangible benefits that result from museum experiences (Scott, 2006).

Finding – The aesthetic benefits that result from sustained engagement stem from the wide range of aesthetic responses participants experience during their encounters with objects.

Thematic analysis of the narrative accounts reveals participants derive important benefits from their aesthetic engagement with the museum and its collections. Aesthetic benefits participants derive from their relationships with the museum include such things as inspiration, being emotionally moved, and personal well-being. Many of the participants leave the museum feeling inspired. Inspiration takes many forms, including awe, appreciation, and amazement. Mary is "inspired" by seeing the original work, the technique used to produce the work, as well as its

content. In the cases of Mary, Cecilia, and Sarah, inspiration also takes the form of stimulating a desire to create art. Mary says, “I might go because I need some inspiration because I want to do a painting myself, which I probably never end up doing, but I go there and try and be inspired on that level.” It should be noted that although they leave the museum feeling inspired to produce art, all three women commented that they do not act on those feelings.

In addition to feeling inspired, many of the participants leave the museum having been emotionally moved. Emotional encounters with works provide opportunities for reminiscence and to feel connected to family and culture. When Virginia experienced the *Captured in colour: rare photographs from the First World War* exhibition she was reminded of her father, and of his brother “who was killed in the First World War in Belgium.” When Mary experienced the *National Treasures* exhibition, she was moved by seeing evidence of a sad event in Australian history. Her friend Ellie thinks Mary experiences an “emotional connection” during her visits and “goes away being moved ... from some of the things that she sees and some of the things that she witnesses.” In a study conducted at the Museum of Immigration in Melbourne, Australia, Horn (2006) found one need local visitors have is “to receive an emotional benefit from their experiences” (p. 82). Additional research is needed to better understand the role emotional engagement plays in sustaining visitor/museum relationships with local community members.

Encounters with artworks and artifacts also raise feelings of empathy and concern. During their interactions with objects, participants reflect on issues, such as the struggles and suffering various peoples have endured. During the guided tour, while in the colonial art and convict galleries, Mary spoke of environmental and social issues, including:

- the human impact on the natural environment;

... And often you know you think about the marks humans leave on the landscape and how as the population grows a lot of the environment is being lost. And back then it was not even, I guess when this painting was painted people were thinking more about survival and conquering the landscape than trying to retain some natural environment for the future. You know, bringing their cows and everything out here and slaughtering Tasmanian tigers and whatever else was going on.

- the effects of colonization of Indigenous peoples;

... You know this is incredible. This is a race of people that 200 years ago were living here harmoniously. You know I can't believe sometimes that our history is so dark, what happened to the Tasmanian Aborigines actually happened. Um, so to look at these paintings you really—I think you can see in them, the ignorance of the people that came here and painted them.

- and her discomfort and disbelief about the way the convicts were treated;

You know, how people could have treated each other so cruelly ah, you know I still can't believe that that's what happened. ... And thank god in some ways, like we've got such a dark history um, that you know to look back at this now, you thank god, thank god people don't treat people the way they used to. You know, maybe we have advanced (little laugh).

These excerpts illustrate the ways in which individual benefits reach beyond the individual visitor to provide social benefits to communities and society. They highlight the contribution museums can make to shape a citizenry made up of individuals who have an expanding capacity for empathy and a shared understanding of the human condition (McCarthy et al., 2004). The excerpts also illustrate that many of the aesthetic benefits are derived from experiences that evoke both emotional and cognitive qualities of aesthetic response—feelings together with reflection and introspection.

In addition to inspiration and being emotionally moved, aesthetic engagement also provides benefits associated with personal well-being. When Cecilia engages with old objects, she is transported back to the time when the object was formed or created. She says transporting herself to a different time is “sort of

another survival technique” for her. She draws strength from thinking about what life would have been like at that time.

Cecilia: You know, if I’m not coping with the present day, you know, how would they have coped with it in the past? Or how would they have done it?... I feel as though I might be getting into them a bit, even though they’re dead and long gone, I feel maybe they’re just helping me a little bit. And it’s not just with artwork, it might be with everyday things.

For Cecilia, the museum serves as “a place of spiritual, sort of, renewal,” suggesting that museums can make significant contributions in enhancing visitors’ well-being by serving as sites for reflection and restoration (Silverman, 2002).

Although participants may experience similar responses during encounters with artworks and artifacts at other museums, there are additional benefits associated with aesthetic encounters participants have at the TMAG. Because of their personal history with the area, connections to self, family, and place are readily made, thus increasing opportunities for personally meaningful aesthetic experiences (Leinhardt et al., 2000). Additionally, because of their familiarity with the museum, participants draw comfort from seeing familiar works again. As Mary describes it, “So the fact that they’re always here to see is wonderful. They’re like your friends after a while (little sigh).”

Finding – Participants derive specific benefits from sustained engagement with place.

There are other specific benefits participants derive from sustained involvement with the museum. One benefit they derive is that visits to the TMAG can be on their terms. During visits they can see as much or as little of the museum as they want. They can spend as much or little time there. Because they are returning visitors, they can decide the focus for individual visits—social, aesthetic, and/or cognitive. During the child participants’ visits, they are often the ones who

decide where to go and what to do—often following a familiar routine and revisiting their favorite objects and areas. This provides support for Falk and Dierking's (2000) assertion that choice and control are important features of museum experiences.

An additional benefit derived from the sustained nature of the participants' relationships with the TMAG is being able to relax during visits. Because of their history with the museum, the participants are comfortable there and they know what to expect from their visits. They are not under pressure to experience the entire museum. They know it is a place where they can go to have a relaxing, enjoyable time with a minimal amount of stress. Feeling relaxed and removed from everyday stresses during visits was a theme that emerged from the narratives. "Relaxing" was a thread that was woven throughout Sarah's narrative. She visits the museum primarily because it is a place she can go to have a relaxing time with her daughter. Both Sarah and Oscar, Zoë's father, used the word "relaxed" to describe the way their daughters feel during their visits to the museum. Zoë's father also used the word "peaceful."

Oscar: I think relaxed, yeah relaxed—not that she wasn't when we arrived. But I think she feels peaceful ... she's peaceful. This is when she's just with me. ... It can be full-on like you know, back into the mainstream, let's get back up to pace again.

The issue of stress was also raised by Cecilia when she talked about her visits to the TMAG with her granddaughter. She said, "We've had a nice time together, it hasn't been stressful." The calming nature of museums and the way they serve as a respite from the hectic pace of everyday life outside the museum was expressed by many of the participants.

Mary: ...when I was working at the ABC, and sometimes when I was just really busy, as a break in the day, a lunch break, I just loved to come over here and walk around the colonial art gallery and look at the paintings again. And I just loved doing that. It was a really good break in the day. Um, took

you away from the everyday sort of stress, and so I used to do that quite regularly...

Diana: You're sort of going out on a sense of being buoyed up. ... And it's almost a very, you know, it's a euphoric sort of feeling 'cause you're in a very sort of different place, and then you pop out of here and boom, you're in the middle of buzzing streets and stuff, and that's really quite difficult. 'Cause as you sit here now, it's quite hard to imagine, even here that out there's all this busy city business.

The use of museum visits as a respite from everyday stresses is one benefit that perhaps has added importance today given the fast paced society in which we live, for visitors and for all museums. This view is supported in recent research that identifies restoration as an important beneficial outcome of museum visits (Packer, 2008). It also suggests that societal change may influence the nature of visitors' engagement with museums (Slater, 2007) and the ways in which museums may serve their communities in the future.

For some participants, the sustained relationship they have with the museum also plays an important role in providing them with a sense of continuity and self. Upon reflection, Cecilia came to understand that the TMAG is one of the few constants in her life. She said, "And I think, yes, it's one of my connecting, um, connecting solidly to something." Mary and Diana expressed how their relationships with the museum contributes to their sense of self. Mary feels good about herself, that she found her way to the museum on her own.

Mary: But, I really think the most interesting thing from my point of view is I was one of those people that was probably never going to appreciate a museum unless I'd, you know, just found it myself. ... Mmm, I didn't listen to classical music when I was growing up, you know we had um, (little laugh) Hank Williams and Shakin' Stevens. Like my family weren't into cultural institutions and that. I guess you can say there's a bit of a stereotype of people who are into museums. They seem to be slightly well educated or better educated and have more money and that kind of thing. Well, I'm not from that background and that's why I appreciate what it genuinely is, not just some place I sort of think I should go. ... It's been a really personal thing to um, to find the museum a place of interest. So I like that fact, because there's a lot of other people out there like me who may have, you

know, not been privy to many visits or maybe feel like it's not the sort of place for them, when it can be.

Diana describes how her relationship with the TMAG shapes the way she sees herself.

Diana: It's like this outer layer around you, you know. When I see myself, the first few layers around you are particularly about close people and places and memories and making up who you are. But this sort of outer ring of, a gallery and a museum and history, sort of comes around and encapsulates you a little bit. You know, it probably doesn't make much sense, but that's kind of how I see that. It's almost as though it was there and you didn't know it was there, didn't know that that was what was influencing you and things. But I think getting older, you make more connections, the connections here seem to be more important as you get a little bit older—that history, that art, old things.

Providing a sense of continuity and affirming one's sense of self are significant and important contributions sustained relationships with the TMAG make in the lives of the participants (Silverman, 2002).

The study's findings document the broad range of benefits visitors derive from a sustained relationship with a museum, and indicate the diverse and significant ways in which engagement with a museum over time contributes to visitors' lives.

***Research Question 5: What personal factors contribute to
sustaining a visitor/museum relationship?***

A question central to this study is what sustains a visitor/museum relationship? The narratives reveal both general and specific answers to that question. In general, all of the participants continue their engagement with the museum because they have personally meaningful and enjoyable experiences there. The study suggests that the variety, range, and unique nature of experiences as well as the benefits from these experiences—from individual visits and engagement over

time—are factors that contribute to sustaining participants' relationships with the TMAG.

In their narratives, each participant provides specific reasons for why they believe they continue to visit the TMAG.

Cecilia: It feels like another good place for me to be, like in a home, you know a comfortable home. And I think, yes, it's one of my connecting, um, connecting solidly to something.

Sarah: I suppose it's something I've always done, and I'm interested in history, and nature, and art. But as a parent, I want to take my daughter there and she enjoys it so um, that's the main reason that brings me back now.

Jasmine: I just love it.

Zoë: The experience, the experience of coming here and learning about new things and about how people can just do, like the pine exhibition. I mean I said it was a bit boring, but how people can do that it's amazing, and how people can paint their beautiful pictures. ... I love coming here and, like the *Islands to Ice* exhibition, I like it because it's very interactive and I have a lot of fun.

Mary: Well, it's the fact that, if you like, I can never run out of interesting things to see or find there personally, especially with the changing exhibitions and new displays coming through. Um, I mean even if I didn't work there, I'd still want to go to the museum. Ah, so what sustains it is my level of interest and my quest for knowledge about history, um and my appreciation as I grow older of more of our cultural relics, antiquities, if you like. Time passing makes things seem more special. So suddenly, you know, something from the 1950s that you might see on display again, you're familiar with, but it takes on a new context over the passing of time. So I think that's, it's always going to be relevant to me, with new acquisitions and new things they do, yeah.

Diana: Well I mean that if I don't have (pause) if it doesn't get to the heart of who you are then you don't keep coming. ... But that's because it does something for you emotionally perhaps, it's an emotional thing that makes you keep coming back. ... See it's an interesting thing. I think it's about you, not about this place. I think it is about the person. ... It's a development of you and about your emotions and you know, it's that little place in your heart that you need.

Virginia: Because there's always something of interest. And I like being involved.

The children's comments focus on the enjoyment they get from their visits—something they “love” to do. Zoë attributes her continued visitation to the

“experience” of visiting the museum—an experience that includes seeing interesting things, opportunities for active engagement, and spending time with family.

The adult participants provide diverse, individual and highly personal reasons for their continued visitation. Cecilia’s sustained engagement with the TMAG focuses on her personal well-being as well as her identity as an artist. Sarah attributes the sustained nature of her relationship with the TMAG, in part to the fact that it is something she has always done. Her visits to the TMAG also connect with her personal interests and her identity as a mother. Mary attributes her continued relationship to her personal growth and development—her growing appreciation and “quest for knowledge about history.” Diana too places personal growth at the center of her relationship with the TMAG. But unlike Mary, Diana’s personal growth has more to do with the emotional quality of engagement with place. As she describes it, “it’s that little place in your heart that you need.” Virginia’s relationship with the TMAG is sustained by the high value she places on museums, and the integral role her involvement with the museum plays in her life.

Although the participants have maintained relationships with the TMAG over a number of years, it is difficult to predict what their future involvement will look like. While all of the adult participants expressed the view that they are likely to continue to visit the museum in some capacity, sustaining their current levels of visitation and involvement appears to be more tenuous for some of the participants. Both Virginia and Mary believe their relationship will remain strong. Their social and professional commitments will continue to bring them to the museum on a frequent and regular basis.

Mary: Yeah, I ah, I think it [my involvement] wouldn’t lessen. It would be the same, I would hope; because after all it doesn’t cost to go, ah, unless I moved. ... I’m a member of the TMAGots so that social level of

interaction I expect will continue. And any new exhibitions, I'm sure I will want to go and see. And my work, in the near future, will keep me being there as well.

The only factor that may impact Virginia's continued involvement at the TMAG is her health.

Virginia: I hope it will look like, exactly what I'm doing now. But I have got to remember that I am 80 and I am aware I can't do as much as quickly. And if I want to really do something, I must write it down, so memory is involved. And that is my future. Because think, I'll have to pass my use-by date some time (laugh). ... If I even give time to myself to think; oh my goodness, I will miss it when it goes. But at the moment, I'm in good health, and I will be able to keep on going as long as they want me. ...

The form the other participants' relationships take in the future is less clear.

Cecilia indicated that she will continue to stay involved with the Art Guides only as long as it holds her interest. She "might stay with it" or she "might sort of get bored with it." She says her involvement would diminish if she decides to "start painting" again. Diana identified "pace of life" as the one thing that would reduce her involvement at the TMAG—having other demands on her time. Sarah's continued visitation depends primarily on Jasmine's level of interest in visiting the museum. She did, however, say that she would continue to visit as long as they didn't start "charging heaps to go" and made it more exciting by offering new exhibitions and programs that appealed to her interests. As far as the children's future visitation to the TMAG is concerned, both Jasmine and Zoë indicated that they plan on continuing their visits to the museum. Zoë commented that she will "even take" her "children there."

The participant narratives reveal that factors, both personal and museum-related, influence the sustained nature of visitor/museum relationships. Participants identified such personal factors as health, time demands, pursuing other interests as well as museum exhibition and program offerings and cost as factors that could affect future engagement with the TMAG.

Summary

The thematic analysis of narrative accounts presented in this chapter extends our understanding of sustained visitor/museum relationships in very specific ways. First, it highlights the complexities involved in the formation and development of a sustained visitor/museum relationship, and identifies specific factors that influence how these relationships form and how they develop. Second, it reveals the variety of ways in which returning visitors engage with the museum, both in terms of immediate experiences and engagement over time. Third, it illuminates the diverse and significant contributions sustained relationships with a museum make to enrich individuals' lives. Finally, it provides important insights about factors that contribute to sustaining a visitor/museum relationship.

In the next and final chapter, I summarize the findings from the study, discuss implications and recommendations for museum practice and future research, and share new understandings I have gained, through the inquiry process, about research, place, and self.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This research project, *Guided tour: A study of museums as sites for sustained engagement*, explored the life experiences individuals have with a museum. The study aimed to understand how relationships with a museum form and develop, the ways in which returning visitors engage with the museum, the benefits that are derived from such relationships, and how these relationships are maintained over time. The narrative journey to explore this research puzzle has taken me to a place far away from the point at which I started. In this final chapter, I present a summary of the findings from the study, including implications for museum practice and recommendations for future research. In the final section, I discuss new understandings I have gained about research, place, and self.

Summary of Findings

This narrative study has extended our understanding of the museum experience by providing novel insights about returning visitors' engagement with a museum over time, an important audience and phenomenon that has received little attention in the research literature. First, the narratives illuminate the complexities involved in the formation of a sustained visitor/museum relationship. The study finds an intersection of overlapping individual (personal characteristics and interests) and situational factors (social and environmental) influence the formation of these relationships. Findings from the study trouble contemporary understandings of who visits museums. The literature suggests that museum visitors are primarily well-educated individuals (Black, 2005; Burton & Scott, 2003; Falk, 1998). This study finds that visitors come with a range of education levels, and that high levels of education are not a prerequisite for engagement with a museum.

Furthermore, sustained visitor/museum relationships can form for people from varied backgrounds and at any age. The narratives also provide novel insights about pathways to museums; specifically, the important role significant others and friends who serve as informal cultural guides play in introducing people to museums.

Second, the development of sustained visitor/museum relationships is influenced by visitors' perceptions of place and self; connections to people, place, and self; level of satisfaction; and life stage. The narrative inquiry methodology adopted for this study, new to the field of visitor studies, provided a unique opportunity to explore visitor/museum relationships over time, and to place museum visiting in the context of individuals' lives. The novel insights into the ways in which visitor/museum relationships develop and evolve through different life stages will assist museums in fulfilling their charter to serve members of the community through their lifetime in that community.

Third, the study extends our understandings about how visitors engage with museums. Individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum in multiple ways and for multiple purposes. The sustained nature of the relationship influences the ways in which they engage with the museum. And, the nature of engagement changes over time. The narratives illustrate how, through different life stages, the participants discovered new ways of engaging with the museum—experiencing the museum in ways that meet changing needs over a lifetime (Goulding, 2001; Kelly et al., 2002). This study's findings confound some of the stereotypical views of how people experience museums. Although engagement with objects may be a central focus for some visits, these narratives reveal that there are visits in which the objects serve only as a backdrop to the participants' social agendas (Perry, Roberts, Morrissey, & Silverman, 2000). Thus,

suggesting that returning visitors may have different ways of engaging with those museums that they routinely visit.

Fourth, the study finds sustained visitor/museum relationships enrich people's lives in numerous and significant ways. The findings confirm and extend current understandings concerning benefits derived from museum experiences (Packer, 2008; Silverman, 1999, 2002). Over the course of their relationship with the museum, the participants have derived such benefits as increased well-being, improved self-confidence, a strengthened feeling of belonging, connecting with people who share interests and values, spending quality time with family and friends, and warding off the effects of ageing. Sustained visitor/museum relationships have the potential to meet a wide range of needs through various life stages, and to shape important connections to place and personal identity. Finally, this study finds visitor/museum relationships are sustained by a combination of factors, including the nature and variety of the experiences, the benefits derived, and the value and meaning people ascribe to their museum experiences.

Implications for Museum Practice

The study's findings have implications for museum practice. First, in keeping with calls from other researchers, there is a need for museums to better understand their visitors (Goulding, 2000; Pekarik, 2007; Silverman & O'Neill, 2004). Although much is known about certain museum audiences, such as families and school groups, little is known about returning visitors. Given the challenges currently facing museums, returning visitors are a critically important segment of the visiting public (Vogel, 2009). Although the significance of the local audience has increased dramatically as a factor in museum sustainability, few museums have an understanding of who these individuals are, why they are there, what sorts of

experiences they are seeking and having, and what they are taking away from these experiences. This study's findings make an essential contribution to understanding this important audience. In better understanding returning visitors, museums can facilitate experiences that meet their specific needs in order to deepen levels of engagement and strengthen relationships with members of the local community.

Second, this study reaffirms Silverman's (1999) call for museums to recognize their broader potential. The narratives illustrate the variety of ways in which visitors engage with a museum and the broad range of positive outcomes that result from their museum experiences. To serve a wider community, museums need to recognize and embrace the diverse ways in which visitors experience museums. Silverman (1995) argues that "museums for a new age will see their great potential to meet a range of human needs..." (p. 169). She advocates that museums "become places that actively facilitate and support a range of human experience with artifacts and collections—social, spiritual, imaginal, therapeutic, aesthetic and more" (p. 167). By recognizing their broader potential, museums can diversify their appeal (Sandell, 2003), and thus better serve their communities.

Third, in order to increase their audience and repeat visitation, it is essential that museums find effective ways of communicating the range of opportunities and benefits they provide (Kotler, 1999). Many people are not aware of all that museums have to offer. For instance, as revealed in the narratives, how they serve as a respite from the hectic pace of everyday life, or the variety of ways in which one can experience a museum over the course a lifetime. To enhance sustainability, museums need to better communicate their multiple values to the community—the unique experiences they provide and the significant contributions they make toward enriching visitors' lives across the lifespan.

Finally, there is a need for museums to develop and implement strategies to facilitate and strengthen relationships with visitors to encourage repeat visitation. Importantly, the participant narratives point to such strategies. Over the course of their relationships with the TMAG, participants' engagement with the museum has taken many forms. This suggests that to encourage visitors to return, museums need to offer visitors a range of experiences and multiple modes of engagement (Kotler, 1999). The narratives also reveal that experiencing new exhibitions and attending auxiliary group functions are two factors that bring the participants to the museum on a regular basis. Thus, it is important to provide a variety of programs and offerings—new and interesting exhibitions and opportunities for involvement with museum auxiliary groups—that appeal to visitors of all ages.

In addition, the narratives underscore the important role personal meaning-making plays in deepening engagement—making personal connections with objects, place, and self. To encourage repeat visitation, museums should provide opportunities for visitors to have personally meaningful experiences (Cole, 1998). Lankford (2002) suggests connection-building strategies include such things as placing objects within rich contexts of individual, social, and cultural histories and experiences; encouraging the expression of feeling, memories; and promoting a sense of wonder. The narratives clearly illustrate how individuals have taken up some of these strategies in the ways they engage with the museum. For instance, Virginia's emotional response to viewing the images in *Captured in colour: rare photographs from the First World War* that reminded her of her father and uncles. Other exhibitions that were especially meaningful to the participants were those that connected to their identity as Tasmanians and Australians, including the Huon pine and the *National Treasures* exhibitions.

Implementing these imperatives to develop and strengthen relationships with visitors requires both an institutional shift in mindset and a commitment to research. Few museums have invested resources to better understand this audience, and thus are unaware of the significant benefits sustained visitor/museum relationships bring to both the individual and the museum. Because of the great potential sustained visitor/museum relationships offer museums, in terms of enriching their offerings and expanding their outreach and service to the community, additional research about returning visitors is needed. This study examined the life stories of seven individuals' sustained engagement with a museum, a "quirky" one located as close to the Antarctic as you can get; we need to know more.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides recommendations for future research in the area of sustained visitor/museum relationships. First, the all-female sample and unique location used in this study suggest further research is needed to gain additional perspectives on the phenomenon, including male perspectives and perspectives from visitors who return to museums in cities with smaller, larger, and more diverse populations than Hobart. Second, in order to better understand the nature of these relationships, there is a need to investigate the role specific factors such as identity, life stage, and emotional engagement play in sustaining visitor/museum relationships. Third, the study's finding concerning informal cultural guides that emerged from the narratives warrants further investigation. Further research to explore the characteristics and role of informal cultural guides may provide important insights concerning ways to increase visitation by bringing individuals who may not consider themselves "museum-goers" to museums. Fourth, because there is potential for visitors to derive additional benefits from repeat visitation and

through their association with auxiliary groups, there is a need to investigate ways to move people to a deeper level of involvement with the museum. Fifth, the study reveals important and unique ways in which museums serve to strengthen relationships with family and friends. Thus, there is a need to investigate the ways specific groups of returning visitors engage with the museum, such as single/divorced parents, couples, and intergenerational family groups. And finally, although there is a developing body of research in the area of the therapeutic potential of museums (Jones, 2009; Silverman, 2002), there is a need to investigate further the specific therapeutic benefits associated with continuing engagement with one museum. For example, the ways in which social connectedness and community engagement contribute to personal well-being (Seligman, 2002).

New Understandings about Research, Place, and Self

In addition to gaining new understandings about sustained visitor/museum relationships, the research journey has also provided me with new understandings about research, place, and self.

Research

My thinking about research has changed as a result of the inquiry process. Although prior to enrolling in the PhD program I had experience with various research methodologies, I was not familiar with narrative inquiry. While I continue to see value in many different approaches to research, I have come to see much more clearly the important contribution to new knowledge that narrative inquiry makes. The narrative inquiry process provides unique opportunities to delve deeply into the complexities and gain novel insights surrounding a research phenomenon. An additional strength of narrative inquiry is the change and growth both researcher and participants undergo as a result of the research process (Pinnegar & Daynes,

2007). Through the inquiry process, many of the study's participants came to new understandings about themselves. Upon reflection, Cecilia came to understand that although she was raised in an environment where the arts and creativity were not valued, she was inspired and shaped by her natural surroundings. "[I] realise I had landscape paintings in front of me all the time and was playing in them—hills, rivers, creeks, beautiful sunsets on distant hills, rock sculptures, clay soil." She also came to understand the important role the museum has played in her life, as a place that keeps her "connected," and where she connects "solidly to something." Virginia too came to understand the significance of her relationship with the museum. She does not "want to think about the time that will come when [she] can't enjoy the group known as the Friends of the Museum and Art Gallery."

During my final conversations with the participants, I asked them to reflect on our experiences together and express whether their thoughts or feelings about themselves or their relationship with the TMAG changed as a result of the research process.

Mary: Being asked to talk to you about my feelings for it [TMAG], was the biggest thing, because I really didn't realise, until we started chatting, how strongly I do feel about the museum. Um, and I guess to think about (pause) you know, how I've developed as a person, and how I've come to embrace my family, Tasmanian history a bit more as I've grown up, um and therefore understand the museum differently. Yeah, I can look back and think, I'm glad I've got to where I am now, and I'm really glad I'm the sort of person that appreciates the museum, and want to go and visit, yeah. So it just reaffirmed, if you like, having chats with you about it, reaffirmed, for me, um, you know, why I do think it's a special place.

Diana: I found it really interesting to read this [narrative account]. You might think all these things and say all these things, but when you see it all written down, you think, oh my goodness. You see a thread through that, that you don't necessarily see yourself when you're living that. You tell someone your story and still you don't see the threads, but when it's written down you start to see, oh, look at that. ... But, you don't realise that it's important to share it, until you've shared it! ... And it's a lot about, you know, it's an opportunity that someone is just listening to you, all they're doing is listening to you. And there's no, um what's the word, there's no judgment or anything other than listening and affirming what you've said.

And that's a reflection on our life in these times. That, you know we don't have extended families and nurturing networks so much and so we don't have time, or you don't have time to talk to people necessarily, or there's no one that really wants to listen to what you're gonna tell them, and that's a shame isn't it? ... And you know people could scathingly say, "Oh you know, you just sit around, you listen to people, you tape record it, you write it down, what's that? That's no study." But in fact it's a very powerful tool!

I remember walking home from those interviews thinking about the ways in which the research process affected my participants. It made me think about employing narrative inquiry as the methodology for my study. I wondered if other methodologies would have yielded the same depth of understanding about the phenomenon. I came to understand the importance and value of the relational aspect of the inquiry process—how meaning constructed through negotiation and collaboration between the participants and the inquirer strengthens the study by providing a richer and deeper understanding of the research puzzle (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Place and Self

Through the narrative inquiry process, I have also come to new understandings about place and self. As I worked to try to understand my participants' connection to place, I began to reflect on my own feelings about connections to place. For the last 30 years, since I left home at the age of 18, I have been on the move. I have lived in 15 different cities in two different countries. I have never put down roots. I have always been an outsider, never feeling a connection to place. This research process has provided me with that feeling. Although I am now living far away from Hobart, through the relationships I have formed with my participants, I finally feel a connection with place—Tasmania, the Derwent Valley, Hobart, and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Feeling connected changes the way you experience a place. Thinking back on the first time I visited the TMAG while on holiday in Tasmania a year before my husband and I moved to Hobart, I remember leaving the museum thinking that it was an peculiar place—confusing to get around and exhibiting a mish-mash of collections. And thinking that there was nothing particularly appealing or special about it. Since that time I have experienced the museum through the eyes of my participants. Being able to see the museum through their eyes was an extremely meaningful experience for me. Having my participants share their personal connections to particular objects deeply affected me. I feel as though I have come to know and appreciate the TMAG and Tasmania more fully through them. Although I lived there for only two years, because of the strong relationships I formed with my participants, and the stories they shared with me, I was filled with an overwhelming sense of sadness when it was time for me to leave Hobart.

Through my encounters with my participants, I have also come to new understandings about myself. My participants taught me so much. They taught me about art, Tasmania, and how to experience a museum. Seeing the ways they engage with objects made me reflect on the way I engage during visits to museums. After their descriptions of numinous experiences I wondered why I don't experience objects in a similar way. Do I not allow myself to experience a full range of sensations—a deeper level of engagement? I came to the conclusion that my reasons for visiting influence the ways in which I engage with museums. Often, I experience museums through the lens of a researcher and educator. I also visit museums with the intention of learning. As a close friend once said to me during one of our visits to an art gallery, "If we get separated, I always know where to find you—at the text panels." But after my experiences of looking at artworks and artifacts with my participants, I can never experience objects the same way again.

When I look at a painting I will be thinking about the artist's hand touching the canvas. I will experience the work in multiple ways—observing, appreciating, enjoying, and communicating. My participants could never know how much they have taught me. They taught me how to experience museums in ways I have never experienced before. They have opened new avenues for me to explore.

I will take my new understandings about museum visitors, research, place, and self with me to future experiences, both personal and professional. In my narrative beginning, I stated that through my research I hoped to put more pieces of the museum visiting puzzle together. Through my research journey I have added new pieces to the museum visiting puzzle and discovered new and important pieces of my own puzzle.

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APPENDIX A**RECRUITMENT MATERIALS**

Recruitment Notice – *FTMAG Newsletter*

Dear TMAG Friend,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Tasmania working under the supervision of Associate Professor Margaret Barrett. I am asking for your assistance in helping identify participants for my study. My research project, *Guided tour: A study of museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement and learning*, aims to understand:

- the ways individuals develop and sustain a relationship with a museum,
- the ways individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum,
- outcomes that result from a sustained relationship with a museum,
- the ways museums serve members of their communities as sites for sustained cultural engagement and learning.

We seek 12 “co-researchers” to help us investigate the ways in which visitors develop and sustain a relationship with a museum. The participants for my study should have the following characteristics:

- Visit the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery approximately three or more times per year
- Have been visiting the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for at least one year
- Are 5 years of age or older (We would like to find two people from each of the following age groups: 5-12 years; 13-17 years; 18-26 years; 27-40 years; 41-55 years; 56 and over.)

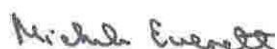
Procedures

Individuals who agree to participate in the study will be interviewed by me on three occasions. Each interview will last for approximately 45 minutes. Interview questions will focus on past, present and anticipated future museum experiences. At the end of the second interview, I will ask participants to guide a brief tour (20-30 minutes) of the Museum—to show and tell me about some of their favourite areas and objects. In addition to the interviews, I would like participants to contact me prior to one of their visits to the Museum so that I can “tag along” and observe a typical museum visit. Finally, I will need to have a brief chat (30 minutes) with a family member or friend—someone who can provide me with additional information concerning the participant’s interest in museums. With the participant’s consent, audio and/or video devices will be used to record interviews and museum experiences.

Perhaps you know someone who fits the description of a frequent visitor to the Museum. If you think they might be interested in participating in the study, please provide me with their name and address (by phone or email). I will send them an Information Sheet and Expression of Interest Form.

If you would like additional information about the study please contact me at 03 6224 3567 or email me at michelee@utas.edu.au. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Yours Sincerely,



Michele Everett
 Doctoral Candidate
 Faculty of Education
 University of Tasmania

Expression of Interest Form

Museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ post code _____

Phone: (h) _____ (w) _____ (mobile) _____

Email: _____

Age: ☐ 5-12 years ☐ 13-17 years ☐ 18-26 years

☐ 27-40 years ☐ 41-55 years ☐ 56 years and over

Number of years you have been making visits to the TMAG: _____

Number of visits to TMAG per year (average): _____

Thank you for your interest. Please return the completed form in the reply-paid envelope provided.

APPENDIX B**INFORMATION SHEET / CONSENT FORM TEMPLATES****Key Participants**

Information Sheet / Consent Form (Adult)

Guided tour: A study of museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement

Supervisor: Associate Professor Margaret Barrett

Doctoral Candidate: Michele Everett

Dear Frequent Visitor of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study, *Guided tour: Museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement*. Your participation is extremely important and will contribute new understandings about the ways in which visitors engage with museums. Once again, my study aims to understand:

- the ways individuals develop and sustain a relationship with a museum,
- the ways individuals who have a sustained relationship with a museum engage with that museum,
- outcomes that result from a sustained relationship with a museum,
- the ways museums serve members of their communities as sites for sustained cultural engagement.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be interviewed by me on three occasions. Each interview will last for approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted at a mutually convenient time and place. Interview questions will focus on your past, present and anticipated future museum experiences. At the end of the second interview (to take place at the Museum), I will ask you to guide a short tour (20-30 minutes) of the Museum, to show and tell me about some of your favourite areas and objects. In addition to the interviews, I would like you to contact me prior to one of your visits to the Museum so that I can “tag along” and observe a typical museum visit. Finally, I will need to have a brief chat (30 minutes) with a family member or friend—someone who can provide me with additional information concerning your interest in museums.

Use of audio and video tapes

All interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. You will be provided with an opportunity to review a transcript of the interviews to ensure it is a faithful account of your views. In addition, your “guided tour” will be video-taped. This video tape will then be used to prompt our discussion in interview three. Should you feel uncomfortable for any reason during the interviews or museum experiences, you may choose to not answer any question and/or to stop taping.

Confidentiality

Your name and personal identification will be kept confidential. To ensure confidentiality, a pseudonym (chosen by you) will be used in all transcriptions, presentations and publications. Cross-references from pseudonyms to real names will be kept in a password-protected file on a secure file server at the University of Tasmania.

All data (audio/video tapes) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and electronic files will be kept on a secure server at the University of Tasmania for a five-year

period, after which it will be destroyed (electronic files deleted, audio/video tapes erased and documents shredded).

Freedom of consent

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw consent at any time before or during the study without effect or explanation. Should you wish you may also withdraw any data you have supplied.

This project has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the project is conducted, you may contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network (Amanda McAully 6226 2763).

For further information about this project feel free to contact me by phone at 03 6224 3567 or by email at michelee@utas.edu.au or, you may contact my Supervisor, Associate Professor Margaret Barrett at 03 6324 3248, Margaret.Barrett@utas.edu.au.

If you agree to participate, please read, sign and date the consent form and return it to me in the reply-paid envelope provided. You will receive a copy of the consent form to keep for your records.

Yours Sincerely,

A/Prof Margaret Barrett
Faculty of Education
University of Tasmania

Michele Everett
Doctoral Candidate
University of Tasmania

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project – Guided tour: A study of museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves the following procedure:
 three audio-taped interviews lasting for approximately 45 minutes each; a brief (20-30 minutes) tour of the Museum—showing and telling the researcher about my favourite areas and objects (to be audio and video-taped); observations of me during a typical museum visit; a brief interview (30 minutes) with a family member or friend; an opportunity to review a transcript of the interviews to ensure it is a faithful account of my views.
4. I understand that the following risks are involved: I may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable during the interviews or tour. If this happens, I am free to stop the interviews and/or museum experiences at any time.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for a period of 5 years. The data will be destroyed at the end of 5 years.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published (provided that I cannot be identified as a participant).
8. I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish, may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant _____ Date _____

- ☐ I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.
- ☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet in which my details have been provided so that participants have had opportunity to contact me prior to them consenting to participate in this project.

Name of investigator _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

Information Sheet / Consent Form (Child)

Dear Frequent Visitor of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study, ***Guided tour: Museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement and learning***. I am looking forward to getting to know you and hearing about your experiences at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Your participation is very important to me. You will be helping me learn why people like to visit museums.

Procedure

If you agree to participate in the study, I will have three chats (interviews) with you. Each chat will last for about 45 minutes. During the chats we will talk about your experiences with museums. I would also like to have a brief chat with someone in your family who can tell me a bit more about your interest in museums.



As part of the second interview, I would like you to take me on a tour of the Museum—to show me the parts of the Museum you like best. I would also like to go with you on one of your visits to the Museum—to “tag along” to see what sorts of things you like to do while you are there.



Use of audio and video tapes

I will be using a tape recorder and/or a video camera to record our chats and museum visits to help me to remember what we talked about and did at the Museum. Our chats will be transcribed (written down) and you will have a chance to check that what I have written is an accurate record of your views. Should you feel uncomfortable for any reason during the interviews or the tour you may choose to not answer any question, end the tour and/or to stop taping.

Confidentiality

In order to protect your identity, your name will not be used in any of the reporting of the study. A made-up name (chosen by you) will be used in all presentations and reports.

Freedom of consent

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time before or during the study—simply let me know that you no longer want to be involved.

If you agree to participate, I will need you and your parent or guardian to read, sign and date the consent form and return it to me in the reply-paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me by phone at 03 6224 3567 or email me at michelee@utas.edu.au.

Title of Project – Guided tour: A study of museums as sites for sustained cultural engagement and learning

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me and my child.
3. I understand that the study involves the following procedure:

my child's participation in three audio-taped interviews lasting for approximately 45 minutes each; a brief (20-30 minutes) tour of the Museum—showing and telling the researcher about his/her favourite areas and objects (to be audio and video-taped); observations of my child during a typical museum visit; a brief interview (30 minutes) with a family member; an opportunity for my child to review a transcript of the interviews to ensure it is a faithful account of his/her views.
4. I understand that the following risks are involved: My child may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable during the interviews or tour. If this happens, my child is free to stop the interviews and/or museum experiences at any time.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for a period of 5 years. The data will be destroyed at the end of 5 years.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to our satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published (provided that my child cannot be identified as a participant).
8. I understand that my child's identity will be kept confidential and that any information s/he supplies to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.
9. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that my child may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish, may request that any data s/he has supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.

Name of parent / guardian _____

Signature of parent / guardian _____ Date _____

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant _____ Date _____

☐ I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet in which my details have been provided so that participants have had opportunity to contact me prior to them consenting to participate in this project.

Name of investigator _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Key Participants

Interview Guide – Key Participant (Adult)

Interview One: Focused Life History [past]

Icebreaker questions /Background

- Can you tell me a little about your personal history, where you were born, for how long you've lived in Hobart etc.
 - How would you describe how you feel about Hobart?
- Tell me a little about your interests, interests in the arts, community involvement, preferences for leisure activities, etc.
- What words would you use to describe yourself?

Personal life story of your involvement with museums and/or art galleries

General...

- Tell me about your history of visiting museums and art galleries.
 - What are your earliest memories of visiting museums and/or art galleries?

Site specific... [Forming and Developing a relationship with the TMAG]

- Tell me about your first visit to the TMAG. (age, context, description)
- How did you become interested in visiting TMAG? Who or what has influenced your interest in visiting the TMAG?
- What has your involvement with the TMAG has looked liked over the years.
- What have been the most memorable experiences you've had during your visits to TMAG?

Interview Two: Details of Experience [present]

- Can you describe the way/s in which you are currently experiencing TMAG? (Explore: frequency, context, motivations, expectations, planning, what you normally do during, how you feel after, what you take away from)
- How would you describe the ways in which you interact/engage with the TMAG and its collections during your visits? (Explore: aesthetic/emotional, social & cognitive engagement)

Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning... [and anticipated future]

- When you think about the relationship you've had with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery over the years, what sorts of thoughts and/or feelings come to mind?
- What value do you place on the relationship you have with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery? What meaning does it hold for you?
- What sense do you make of it, why you're someone who's had an ongoing relationship with TMAG?

Engagement

- Because of your history here, do you think you engage differently with the TMAG and its collections as compared to people who do not have an on-going relationship with the TMAG? If yes, in what ways?

Benefits

- Thinking about the different ways you've experienced TMAG over the years, in what ways (if any) have those experiences been meaningful for you or enriched your life?
- Do you think you derive additional benefits as a result of having a sustained/on-going relationship with the museum (as opposed to people who visit the museum only once)? If yes, what additional benefits do you receive?

Sustain

- Thinking back on the relationship you've had with TMAG over the years, what do you think it is that sustains that relationship?
- In light of your involvement with the Museum and Art Gallery to date, what do you think your future involvement with TMAG (and/or museums) will look like?
 - Can you think of any reason/s why you would stop visiting the TMAG?
- Thinking back on everything you've shared with me about your involvement with the TMAG (chats, tours, etc), has anything changed about how you think and/or feel about yourself and/or your relationship with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery?
- Can you think of anything I haven't asked you that I should know in order to write a full account of your relationship with TMAG? If yes, what?

Interview Guide – Key Participant (Child)

Interview One: Focused Life History [past]

Icebreaker questions

- Tell me a little about your family, your interests, what you like to do for fun, favorite subjects in school, etc.
- What words would you use to describe yourself?
- Can you tell me what a museum is?

Personal life story of involvement with museums

- How many different museums have you visited? (Which ones? When? With whom?)
- How many years have you lived in Hobart?
- When did you start making visits to the TMAG?
- Do you remember your first visit to the TMAG? Can you tell me what you remember about that visit?
- Can you tell me what sorts of things you've been doing at the museum from when you first started visiting to today? (frequency of visits; purpose of visits)
 - Can you tell me about a really fun time you've had at the museum?

Interview Two: the Details of Experience [present]

- How do you decide when you want to go to the TMAG?
- What are your main reasons for wanting to go to the museum? Why do you like to go there?
- What sorts of things do you hope you'll do during a visit?
- Do you ever plan ahead of time what you want to see and do, or do you just decide what you're going to do once you get there? If you do plan your visits, what sorts of things do you plan to do while you're there?
- Can you tell me what you do here when you come with... family... friends... school (Explore: aesthetic/emotional, social & cognitive engagement)
- What's your favorite thing to do at the museum? Why do you think you like doing that?
- Can you describe how you feel during / after a visit to the museum?

Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning... [and anticipated future]

- When you think about your visits to the museum, what's the first thing that pops into your head?
- Thinking back on all your experiences you've had at the museum, why is visiting the museum something you like to do?

- Is there one thing you like best about visiting the museum (or do you like all of it?)
 - Is there anything you don't like about your visits to the museum? If yes, what?
- Is the museum special to you in some way or would you say it's just another place to visit? If it's special, what makes it special?
 - Do you think it's important that we have places like museums to visit? If yes, why?
- What you think you get out of your visits to the TMAG?
- Thinking back on all your visits to the museum, what do you think it is about the museum that makes you want to keep going back there?
- Do you think you'll continue to visit the museum as you grow up? Why? Why not? If yes, what sorts of things do you think you'll be doing there?