ART AS PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCE:
EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF
THREE PARTICIPATORY SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART PROJECTS

by

Eunji Lee

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Mary Hafeli, Sponsor
Professor Olga Hubard

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ABSTRACT

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Eunji Lee

This qualitative multiple case study examines how learning is elicited in three artist-led socially engaged artworks. Three contemporary artists created their process-based artworks by intentionally employing educational methods and formats to promote a learning experience with an audience group. This type of participatory artmaking is often associated with the educational turn in contemporary art. However, the majority of contemporary art literature has focused on the artist, often overlooking the audience’s experience. Hence, from the position of an art educator, I investigate not only the artists’ intentions and pedagogical frameworks in creating the artworks, but also the learning outcomes from the perspectives of the audience members.

The three artworks in my study all shared a two-tier structure: first, a private working phase in which the artists collaborated with participating audience members whom I identified as “core group members”; and second, a public presentation phase in which the work was presented to “public audience members.” In order to examine the perceived learning from the three perspectives, I carried out on-site observations, and interviewed the artists, core group members, and public audience members, respectively.

The findings revealed how artists created their artworks as a process and platform to promote collective knowledge-making, particularly using current affairs as themes to instill political consciousness among the core group members. The core group members
shared their salient learning experiences in relation to collaboration within their groups and with the artists, and “gaining confidence” in tandem with overcoming the challenges of public engagement. Aspects of self-directed learning, social bonding, and sense of belonging promoted motivation and eventually deeper learning. The public audience members shared their learning experiences regarding public dialogue and display of the artworks.

This study supports recognizing the value of pedagogy-based artworks in relation to learning that is intrinsically motivational and meaningful. The artworks in my study serve as arts-based models for learning and teaching social justice issues and civic engagement. In conclusion, artists’ approaches can diversify educators’ pedagogical approaches, and educational outcomes can support artists in creating empowering work with participants. Ultimately, this study advocates for the value of artmaking as a collective, transformative experience.
DEDICATION

For Immanuel
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If we are always arriving and departing, it is also true that we are eternally anchored. One’s destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things (Miller, 1957, p. 25).

The years spent at Teachers College, New York City, opened an entirely new chapter of my life. Navigating the differences and experiencing the nuances, figuring out meaning in the midst of all that, this dissertation tries to portray a portion of my interests that weave life and art together during these recent years. Through an artistic sensibility and creative spirit, these community-based works became alive—as an invigorating way of learning and a way of being. I’m only grateful to those who shared their time with me and cared. I dedicate this book to all of you.

First and foremost, I thank my beloved mentor R.J. who instilled the critical value of learning and the beauty of human growth within me. I eventually came to education because of your teachings. You are the greatest artist I know and the greatest teacher I could ever have.

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E. J. L.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

What might be possible and thinkable if we were to take pedagogy to be sensational? (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 24)

From October to December, 2015, I participated in a free, six-week online course called *Art of the MOOC¹: Merging Public Art and Experimental Education²* offered on the e-learning platform *Coursera*. This course was designed by artist and art professor Pedro Lasch, and overviewed major concepts and often-used strategies of socially engaged public art in recent decades. Interestingly, as implied in the title, the course itself was also designed as a form of “public art”³ with a teaching and learning approach, as

---

¹ MOOC is an acronym for Massive Open Online Course.

² *Art of the MOOC: Merging Public Art & Experimental Education* was the title of the first version of the course that was started in 2015 and continues to present day. The course developed into three *Art of the MOOC* courses as of 2019: *Activism and Social Movements, Public Art & Pedagogy,* and *Experiments with Sound*. The first version was co-taught by Pedro Lasch and former Creative Time chief curator, Nato Thompson. Creative Time is a New York City-based public art organization that supports and commissions artists working in the public sphere. *Art of the MOOC: Public Art & Experimental Education* was presented at the Creative Time Summit 2015, New York City. References to the course: http://creativetime.org/projects/art-mooc, https://www.coursera.org/learn/public-art-pedagogy, MOOC wiki: http://artofthemooc.org/wiki.

³ “Public art” is an umbrella term for works of art planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the public domain (Association for Public Art, n.d.; Cher Krause Knight, 2008). “Public art can take a wide range of forms, sizes, and scales—it can be temporary or permanent. Public art can include murals, sculpture, memorials, integrated architectural or landscape architectural work, community art, digital new media, and even performances and festivals” (Americans for the Arts, n.d.).

As art has intersected with the public sphere in various ways, the terms referring to this type of public art have concretized and diversified over time. For example, since the 1990s, artistic practices taking place in the public sphere have been specified by the names “new genre public art”
Lasch conceived the course as a socially engaged, interactive online educational platform to be activated by global artist participants (Creative Time, n.d.).

As I observed through my participation, the course followed the format of a conventional online class by including lectures and assignments. However, the online course was activated as a collaborative platform through active dialogue and sharing of socially engaged local project productions created by participants across the globe. For the lecture components, Lasch created dynamic video lectures by performing the conceptual themes and often-used strategies of public art. For example, Lasch would perform the concept “displacement” by placing a sculpture in the middle of a baseball stadium, and would perform “flash mobs” with his Duke students to introduce this often-used strategy in protests. He also incorporated video interviews with internationally renowned artists, curators, critics, and activists based on topics pertinent to the theme of each course module.4 Even after the official six-week online course was over, in order to continue the heated discussion among the global participants, Lasch carried out themed Google Hangouts on a monthly basis. Eventually, participants from different parts of the world hosted the monthly Google Hangout sessions by sharing their work as well as introducing their local socially engaged art scene to the group.


4 The 2015 version of the course Art of the MOOC: Merging Public Art & Experimental Education was comprised of the following six modules: Public Art and Spatial Politics; Experimental Pedagogy; Fictions, Alternative Structure, and Mock-Institutions; Aesthetics, Art History, and Cultural Institutions; Embodied Knowledge; and Activism and Social Movements. As noted in footnote 2, the 2015 version of the course was developed into two Art of the MOOC courses as of 2019—Activism and Social Movements, and Public Art & Pedagogy.
This experience of participating in a pedagogy-based “art” project naturally made me consider two perspectives: the stance of the artist as educator, and the stance of the project-participant. Even though the framework of the art project was created by the artist, the content of the art project was created through the engagement of the participants. Moreover, as the artist had created this art project in the form of an educational online course, the learning experience of the participant could not be overlooked. Thus, considering both perspectives was critical to me, especially considering my positionality as an artist-educator deeply vested in merging artistic practices with learning.

From the perspective of the artist, the project was conceived as an educational, socially engaged public artwork. The artist encouraged the participants to treat the MOOC itself as a public art medium as stated in the course website: “...by participating and engaging in the course’s practical components, local project productions, global exchanges, and critical feedback” (Lasch, n.d.). On the other hand, from my perspective as a participant, the pedagogical experience promoted by the course curriculum and motivation for engagement was most significant. I was excited to have free access to a comprehensive survey course on socially engaged public art, which has been difficult to find due to its short history in the academia of contemporary art. The design of the entire content and the careful coordination of the six-week modules were very impressive. As mentioned above, I was particularly astonished by how Lasch filmed each video lecture like a movie to convey the pedagogical content in such a clear and engaging way. In addition, the video interviews with multiple renowned artist activists and contemporary contributors to the field helped bridge the theoretical content to actual local practices.

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5 I emphasize that the project was considered as a “work of art” conceived and executed by the artist.

6 I describe my positionality in the subsequent section.
This all contributed to creating a captivating learning experience that drew active engagement by global participants and an ongoing dialogue, even after the course ended. Even though the course was free of charge, it yielded heated engagement that was self-motivated.

Taken together, the project exceeded my expectations as an online course by its unique instructional format, the originality of its content, and the active participation level of the learners from all over the world. I believe this was only possible because of Pedro Lasch’s extensive experience as a socially engaged artist and educator who created multiple projects with diverse audiences and populations. His creative and curatorial sensibility was projected in the entire conception and execution of the course as an artistic endeavor. Overall, there were several aspects that contributed to Lasch creating an enriching, multi-dimensional learning experience: the design of the course and curriculum; the intensity created by the six-week duration of the project with moderation by Lasch, including reminders for assignments; facilitation of discussions, even after course completion; and the compilation of relevant reference materials and student projects in the form of a wiki site.

I questioned how this course would have been different if it were not designed and taught by an artist—Lasch, in this case. The artistic sensibility embedded in the overall design and execution of the project seemed to make a significant difference in promoting a rich and unique pedagogical experience. Thus, this experience prompted me

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7 Along with more traditional medium-based artworks, such as paintings and prints, Lasch has been carrying out socially engaged and participatory work since the late 1990s through his ongoing projects such as the 16 Beaver Group, Naturalizations, LATINO/A AMERICA, and Tianguis Transnacional. He founded and directed the experimental afterschool program Art, Story-Telling, and the Five Senses (El Arte, El Cuento Y Los Cinco Sentidos, 1994-2005) in collaboration with grassroots organizations like Asociación Tepeyac de New York and Mexicanos Unidos de Queens. Lasch is the current director of the Social Practice Lab at Duke University since 2016 and Artist-in-Residence directing the Usdan Summer Camp for the Arts (2017-2019).

8 Art of the MOOC’s wiki site: http://artofthemooc.org/wiki
to think about how these types of artist-led participatory art projects could lead to new pedagogies of learning art and learning through art. This motivated me to study multiple cases of art projects, conceived and executed by different artists—each project with its specific focus on promoting learning with its participants.

**Personal Background**

All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that’s more social, more critical, and more real than art. (Graham, 1998, as cited in Bishop, 2006, p. 178)

My interest in artworks produced by socially engaged artists with a specific focus on learning is closely tied to my trajectory of becoming an art educator. Coming from a fine arts background with more than 20 years of studio experience, I became interested in the experiential qualities that could be cultivated through artistic practices. Although trained in a discipline-based art fashion from a young age, specializing in painting, my artistic interests gradually expanded to seek communication among the audience members and to generate meaning through participatory processes. Specifically, in participatory contemporary art projects, I became intrigued by the reciprocal process between the artwork (in which the framework has been set up by the artist) being made and the people making the artwork. The open-endedness of how these artworks were set to be completed by the participants and how each participant collectively contributed to creating the content of the work seemed to be closely connected to learning and meaning-

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9 Participatory art refers to contemporary visual and performance art created through a participatory process, a mode of contemporary art that has taken place in the recent decades. In some cases, participation by a range of people creates an artwork; in others, the participatory action is itself described as the art (Finkelpearl, 2014, n.p.).

10 Artists who work in a socially engaged manner. Socially engaged art (SEA) specifically situates art in the public interest, as it foregrounds social issues, political activism, and community collaborations (Kwon, 2002). In SEA, the artist creates his or her artwork in relation to social issues that promote civic awareness and social change which often involves audience participation.
making. The participating audience members would have an “experience” and create new knowledge through this interactive engagement, which would often incorporate dialogue and discussion, hands-on making, collaborative actions and efforts, etc.

This interest most likely stems from my background of running a drama club (where I created plays for English learners in Korea) for some years while earning my BFA and MFA in Fine Arts, and work experience as a cultural event coordinator, then as a public art curator. These experiences eventually culminated into pursuing a doctorate in art education, as I found most value in the meaning-making fostered through artistic practices of hands-on making, interpretation of artworks, performance, and curatorial practices.

**Artistic Trajectory**

As I had always wanted to become a visual artist since a very young age, I was thrilled to attend an afterschool program in art at a private art institute in Seoul, Korea, after arriving from the United States in third grade. At the end of fourth grade, I started with easel drawing and learned to draw basic geometric objects that later shifted to real-life objects and human figures. My training continued at a specialized arts secondary school that was heavily technique- and skill-based. Although my junior and high school’s art curriculum was quite rigid, I enjoyed working with different mediums, such as sculpture, Western painting (oil, acrylic, and watercolor painting), traditional Korean painting, dessin (French for “draftsmanship”), and being immersed in an art studio culture, learning from professional artists.

After entering college, however, as my artistic training was highly based on an art-for-art-sake tradition that focused on exploring the intrinsic value of artistic materials and far from socio-political or utilitarian artmaking, I felt a disconnection between the art I was making and the larger world I was living in. Most of my college art professors created object-based work exploring materiality, hardly reflecting social issues or
involving any community interaction. Making art in a socially engaged manner was quite rare in the fine arts field of the early 2000s of Korea. I still recall my memorable exposure to the highly process-based and critically engaged artworks through the catalogue of the 2002 Documenta XI — Platform 5: Exhibition, directed by the late curator Okwui Enwezor. The format of the entire Documenta XI comprised of series of symposia in five continents during an 18-month period, including the exhibition in Kassel as the last culminating platform of its series. Although I was not able to experience Documenta XI in person, it was eye-opening to see how artistic practices could be carried out in various formats in time and space and serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and production.

My desire for further communication and direct engagement with people through the arts led me to work, after graduating from my Fine Arts graduate studies, as a cultural event organizer and researcher for a culture and arts management company that was well-known for its musical productions in Korea. While working as a researcher and organizer in the cultural planning sector, I became interested in public art and arts education through major projects, such as curating an optimal plan to transform the Seoul Train Station, a national historic asset, into a civic multi-cultural art center; and establishing the Academy for Culture & Arts Education, a non-profit institution initiated by the company, to discover and foster future musical talents from low-income families. Working with various organizations and institutions provided me insights into the diverse perspectives of stakeholders and other participating members engaged through the arts. This

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Documenta is an exhibition of contemporary art which takes place every five years in Kassel, Germany. It was founded by artist, teacher and curator Arnold Bode in 1955 who endeavored to bring Germany back into dialogue with the rest of the world after the end of World War II, and to connect the international art scene through a presentation of twentieth century art. Documenta is considered as a platform that presents complex contemporary cultural issues through artistic engagement and works of art, reflecting culture as an agent of reconstruction, healing and dialogue (Documenta website, n.d.).
experience later led me to work as a public art curator for the Seoul City Gallery Project, affiliated with the Seoul Metropolitan City government.

As a public art curator, our curatorial team would propose and execute public art projects that could invigorate urban spaces such as plazas, public schools, parks, subway stations, and hospitals. As chief curator for the School Gallery Project, I worked with the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education by visiting public schools in underserved communities and meeting with school principals and teachers to learn about their needs for artistic programming and resources. Overseeing and executing various forms of aesthetic public engagement furthered my understanding of the complexity of these projects. However, my experiences also made me deeply question the experiential and educational outcomes and effectiveness, and sustainability of such efforts.

These questions led me to study abroad in the Arts Politics program at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. I was inspired by the courses that revolved around issues of artistic experiences and the public—Education in the Art Museum taught by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) education staff, and Public Interventions taught by the internationally renowned artist Alfredo Jaar. The Education in the Art Museum course at MoMA provided me field experience in the museum setting with public visitors pertaining to “the visitor experience” through interpretation, research, and diverse programming for specific audiences. Although I was aware that marketing aims were implied, experiencing the various ways of enhancing audience engagement provided me the tools and means to engage museum audiences that included students inside and outside schools. In this context, I found most value through the meaning-making processes facilitated through artistic practices that involved creativity and appreciation, which led me to eventually pursue a doctorate in art education.

In retrospect, my experiences learning from influential artists, such as Alfredo Jaar, who shares a deep commitment to education; Pato Hebert in the Arts Politics program at New York University; and Lee O Young, renowned cultural critic in Korea and a former
professor from college, have kindled my passion and commitment to artist-led learning experiences. My previous experiences as an artist, educator, and public art curator have naturally led me to research the multiple perspectives (the artist, curator, educator, and participants) involved in meaning-making from process-based, participatory, socially engaged artworks. Through this study, I aim to alter my preconceptions and gain insight on facilitating experiential and meaningful ways of learning and teaching through such artistic practices.

**Problem of the Study**

**Background to the Literature**

The socially engaged art projects of my study lie in the context of contemporary art history. I first relay background information on the modes of contemporary art that are closely related to the types of art projects I will be examining.

**Participatory art.** In the context of Western European and American contemporary art, since the 1990s in particular, visual and performance art created through a participatory process has emerged as a prevalent phenomenon in the art world. These types of art practices have often been categorized as “participatory art”—a form of art where the audience member directly engages in the creative process—activating the artist’s work and becoming part of the actual artwork itself. In contrast to object-based artworks, where the viewer is often a passive observer or consumer, participatory art engages public participation by letting the audience members become co-authors, editors, and observers of the work (Bishop, 2006, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2014).

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12 Throughout my study, the term “art world” (Becker, 1982; Danto, 1964; Dickie, 1974, 1980-1981, 1984) specifically refers to “the contemporary art world” that functions based on its mechanisms established by contemporary artists, art critics, and the art market.
Indeed, participation in the collective creation of art is not new. Throughout global history, people have participated in the creation of art, from traditional music and dance to community festivals and mural arts (Finkelpearl, 2014). My dissertation study, however, is based on the recent participatory art genre that has emerged in particular relation to social processes in the 20th century to the present, not on historical participatory art. Contemporary art critic and historian Claire Bishop (2006, 2012) argues this phenomenon as “a return to the social, part of an ongoing history of attempts to rethink art collectively” (2012, p. 3). From a Western European perspective, she identifies three historical moments in relation to this tendency of collectivity in modern and contemporary art history: first, the historic avant-garde in Europe circa 1917; second, the so-called neo-avant-garde leading to 1968; and third, the resurgence of participatory art in the 1990s influenced by the fall of communism in 1989 (p. 3). The art projects in my study specifically relate to the most recent mode of participatory art that has been embraced by the art world since the 1990s.

Looking at the resurgence of socially engaged artworks since the 1990s, including works related to Nicolas Bourriaud’s (2002) concept of relational aesthetics, Bishop

13 Claire Bishop (2012) defines participatory art based on the involvement of many people as opposed to the one-to-one relationship of “interactivity.” In participatory art, people constitute the central artistic medium and material in the manner of theater and performance (pp. 1-2).

14 European historic avant-garde refers to collective groups that were formed in the early 20th century to defend new ideals, lead critical rebellion against tradition-laden society and questioned the great legacy of figurative Western art. Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism are considered as the first wave of avant-garde. For example, Dadaism developed in reaction to World War I, and consisted of artists who rejected the logic, reason, and aestheticism of modern capitalist society, instead expressing nonsense, irrationality, and anti-bourgeois protest in their works (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2000, n.p.).

15 Neo-avant-garde refers to a supposed second wave of avant-garde art such as Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, Neo-Dada and Fluxus. The distinction and terminology as “historic” and “neo” are based on German literary critic Peter Bürger’s (1974/1984) publication Theory of the Avant-Garde (Art and Popular Culture, 2008, n.p.).

16 Relational aesthetics refers to artistic practices that center on the interactivity and relationality with the audience members usually in the gallery and museum context (Bishop, 2012).
(2006) specifically coined the term “the social turn” (p. 178). Bishop posited this term to describe “the increase of contemporary art practices produced in relation to collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies” (p. 178). These activities often take form as social events, publications, workshops, or performances and are difficult to collect by the commercial art world. As mentioned above, Bishop argues that the fall of communism contributed to a tendency of artists conceiving art projects as a utopian experimentation, as well as a form of counteraction to neoliberal capitalism. She also identified factors contributing to this trend as “the exponential expansion of biennials and the increase in new models of commissioning agencies dedicated to the production of experimental engaged art in the public realm” (p. 179).

From a practitioner perspective, artist and art educator Pablo Helguera (2011), who has widely used the term “Socially Engaged Art,” states that most artists who produce socially engaged works are interested in creating “a kind of collective art that affects the public sphere in a deep and meaningful way, but not by creating a literal representation of a social issue” (p. 7). Artists work directly with people as a medium to create experiences for the project-participants to bring awareness and change to existing societal issues. Helguera states that socially engaged art practices are “hybrid, multi-disciplinary activities that exist somewhere between art and non-art” (p. 8) and thus are difficult to categorize.

**The “pedagogical turn” in contemporary art.** Interventions into social processes as art have expanded to educational experiments as well. Artists who work with

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17 According to Marxist scholar and geographer David Harvey (2005), “‘neoliberalism’ is a theory of political economic practices which proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (p. 2).

“Neoliberalism is often characterized in terms of its belief in sustained economic growth as the means to achieve human progress, its confidence in free markets as the most-efficient allocation of resources, its emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs, and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital” (Smith, 2014, para. 1).
education as part of their artistic practice often address social issues, raise questions, and critique current education systems. They propose alternative ways of knowledge-making that challenge the norms of education of the current neoliberal social system. These types of work are often categorized under the “pedagogical turn” in contemporary art (Bishop, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2013; Helguera, 2011; Kalin, 2012; Lazar, 2013; O’Neill & Wilson, 2010; Podesva, 2010), which I further elaborate in Chapter II.

Although artists since the 1970s, such as Joseph Beuys, Luis Camnitzer, and Lygia Clark, have been precursors of merging art and education in their artistic practices, the trend of “pedagogical explorations as art” has particularly become prevalent in the past 15 to 20 years. Phrases such as “art as education, education as art” used by artist Luis Camnitzer (2007), “transpedagogy” by Pablo Helguera (2009, 2011), or “pedagogic projects” by Claire Bishop (2012) have referred to such pedagogy-based artistic practices. Both artists and curators have increasingly engaged in these types of projects, where art converges with the activities and goals often found in the field of education (Bishop, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2013; Helguera, 2011; Kester, 2002; O’Neill & Wilson, 2010; Podesva, 2007; Rogoff, 2008).

Participatory pedagogy-based art projects “employ education as both a method and a form” (Bishop, 2012, p. 241). Often, artists work with participants as a way of creating an “experience” that is open-ended and interpreted freely by each participant, or as a way to promote collective knowledge-making and learning experiences. Such practices take the form of lectures, classes, discussions, knowledge exchanges, and reading groups inside and outside the art world. Artists even create educational platforms, such as (free) universities and schools experimenting with curriculum and formats, to provide alternative knowledge-making that goes against the normative school model of a capitalist society. Some examples include the Danish artist duo Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen’s *Copenhagen Free University* (2001–2007, Denmark), Cuban artist Tania Brugera’s *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (translated as “Behavior Art School,”

**Background to the Problem**

As previously stated, in the recent years, artist-led pedagogy-based projects conceived with different purposes and processes have formed a trend in the contemporary art world referred to as “the pedagogical turn.” From the positionality of an art educator, however, I argue that the term “pedagogy” in the context of contemporary art needs to be closely examined. Pedagogy-based artworks are often created or enacted with the artist’s assumption that participants will learn something. Since artists are directly working with people rather than materials in creating their art, artists and curators need to take into account the positionality of participants, including their pedagogical experience, background, and facets of their identity that are incorporated into the artistic experience.

When creating public art with pedagogical elements, some artists may sensationalize their work through end results, such as publicizing the work through nice-looking visual documentation rather than the actual content, often at the cost of neglecting the learning experience of the participants. I highlight the following anecdote shared by Helguera, who worked as an educator at the Guggenheim Museum in the mid-2000s. He described a renowned contemporary artist who worked with children to create an educational experience:

> By that time, *relational aesthetics*\(^\text{18}\) was in vogue. Artists were out there doing projects that were based on creating intersubjective relationships. But I became suspicious of the quality of those exchanges. I remember I was

\(^{18}\)As said earlier, the term was coined by French art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) in his curated group exhibition, *Traffic* in 1996. The term was used to describe developments in interactive conceptual art practices that emphasize participation and social interaction among the public audience members in the museum and gallery context.
working at the Guggenheim, and I remember, once, Rirkrit
saying he wanted to do a project that used a gallery for children’s activities. I remember the curator calling us in the education department, “Quick, quick... we have to come up with kids and bring them to the gallery to do activities with them.” Nothing against Rirkrit, but I felt that the whole project was so haphazard and so artificial. Because really, we are pretending that we are doing education here, that we were creating a great experience for these kids. I have no idea what ended up happening with the project. But those were the kind of experiences that made me suddenly realize: isn’t it interesting that I’m here, a mere educator, like many other educators who actually know very well how to produce these experiences, that’s our expertise; and yet we have absolutely no power over this certain situation where people (artists), who know absolutely nothing about these audiences, decide they want to do an educational experience for them in the guise of an artwork, which has to happen promptly and efficiently. And the action will likely be covered by art magazines; then people will most likely be convinced that something really great happened. While those, who supposedly the activity was created for, most likely were hurried into a situation self-proclaimed as educational and perhaps manipulated into being photographed as part of the documentation. (para. 8)

Although it is difficult to tell how the actual artist-led experience with the children went, this incident may serve as an example of how artists can tokenize education for the sake of their own artistic career aspirations. As the incident above indicates, the art-world audience would think that a very exciting event had happened with the artist and children through photographs that partially represent the event rather than the entire experience.

In a personal conversation with Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful, a New York City-based community artist and educator, Raful echoed using caution regarding the term “education,” and described how he uses education as a tool to engage and relate with people when he enters a community. He stated that he refuses to use the term “art-as-education” because it often “abuses” the concept of education. Raful explained that “education is a craft that is honed through time, that requires a depth of knowledge and experience. It turns me off when artists try to promote their artwork in relation to

19 Rirkrit Tiravanija is an Argentina-born, U.S. citizen of Thai descent and an artist well-known for his art practice of cooking and serving curry to gallery and museum visitors. He is often cited in tandem with relational aesthetics.
education so lightly, without much consideration.” For Raful, his experience as an educator at New York City’s City and Country School for 20 years strongly shaped his educational philosophy, which is embedded in his artistic practice. Inquiry-based approaches and facilitations of agency among participants are educational methods used to nurture deeper engagement in his community-based art projects (N. Raful, personal communication, July 10, 2016).

Although several contemporary art critics and art historians have been writing about art’s pedagogical turn and audience participation, most of the literature has been focused solely on the artists and not on the participants. Moreover, not much has been written in depth on artist-led, pedagogy-based art practices from the stance of art education (Kalin, 2012). Similarly, Helguera (2011) insists on the need for more extensive discussions on how artist-led, pedagogical projects are, or can be, similar to or different from more traditional means of education. He states, “Artists, curators, and critics liberally employ the term ‘pedagogy’ when speaking of these kinds of projects, but they are reluctant to subject the work to the standard evaluative structures of the education sciences” (p. 78).

I find artist-led, pedagogy-based projects very interesting, especially as artists incorporate unconventional approaches to education. However, there is a need to examine how these projects foster learning among participants. In addition, pedagogy-based art projects are an amalgam of various aspects that form their character, such as: the artist’s intention, design, and execution of the work; the artist’s understanding of and goals for teaching and learning; the content and artistic medium of the work; the demographics and background of the participants; the level of participation among the audience; the physical site of the work; the duration of the production phase and public presentation.

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20 A progressive independent pre-school and elementary school for children aged 2–13, located in Greenwich Village, New York City.
phase; and the politics of contemporary art. It is important to be mindful of the interplay among these aspects that naturally influence the participants’ learning process. Although there are some studies that examine these types of projects, there is a lack of research on the artists’ and project-participants’ understanding of the educational outcomes of these projects. Moreover, there are few cases where artist-led projects are implemented in the field of formal learning, such as higher education. Thus, my dissertation study aims to investigate the educational outcomes of artist-led, pedagogy-based projects from the different positionalities of both the artists and the project-participants engaged in the artwork, and projects that take place in different contexts including informal and formal spaces of learning.

**Research Questions**

Given that artists create their artwork (art projects) with groups of participants using educational methods and formats,

- How do three artists merge art with pedagogy? What are the ways these artists describe and use strategies and elements of pedagogy in their participatory community-based art projects?\(^{21}\)
- How do their project-participants\(^ {22}\) (core group members and public audience members) describe their experiences with these art projects?

Specifically:

\(^{21}\) According to Bishop (2012), the term “project” came to rise during the 1990s as an umbrella term for many types of art that include collective practice, self-organized activist groups, transdisciplinary research, participatory art and socially engaged art, and experimental curating (p. 194).

\(^{22}\) I identified two groups of project-participants in my study: first, the core group members (CGMs), who directly worked with the artist during private workshop sessions before the work was publicly presented; second, the public audience members (PAMs) who engaged with the art project during the work’s public presentation phase.
(1) What are the purposes or aims of these artists in implementing specific educational methods or strategies in their artwork?

(2) How do these artists understand learning and concepts of education?

(3) How do the core group members (CGMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?

(4) How do the public audience members (PAMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?

Type of Study

This is an exploratory qualitative multiple-case study (Stake, 2005) that investigates the pedagogical implications that emerged from three artist-led, pedagogy-based art projects from the perspectives of the artist and the project-participants. I investigate each artist’s approach and attitude toward education, how his or her artistic sensibilities operated throughout the process of the project, and how pedagogical strategies or methods were carried out in the project. In order to examine the pedagogical experience from the perspective of the project-participants, I studied what the project-participants perceived as learning by being part of the project. Each of the three cases consisted of two groups of project-participants: (1) Core Group Members (CGMs) who directly worked with the artist, and (2) Public Audience Members (PAMs) who engaged with the art project during its public presentation phase. I looked into both groups to obtain an overview of the art project-participants’ responses.

Data pertinent to the different study participants were collected through multiple methods. For the artists, I carried out preliminary and in-depth interviews; performed project site observations of their most recent and previous work; analyzed their critical reviews retrieved offline and online; and attended their artist talks and workshops in cultural institutions. I interacted with the artists and directly experienced their work to
embody a greater sense of their artistic tendencies and approaches to artmaking. For the CGMs, I carried out individual interviews and multiple site observations during both the private production phase and the public presentation phase. I was able to observe their engagement with the artist and their involvement in the project. For the PAMs, I carried out individual interviews and site observations during the public presentation phase of the art project in order to observe how they engaged with the publicly presented artwork.

**Educational Aims and Rationale**

Pedagogical projects in the contemporary art context often develop new methodologies that allow democratic access to knowledge and shift the conventional role of the artist, the curator, the artwork, and the viewer in the process (Lazar, 2013). Myriad art projects engaged with pedagogy elicit knowledge construction in creative and collective ways beyond conventional methods. Helguera (2011) states this as “a powerful and positive re-envisioning of education as it depends on art’s unique patterns of performativity, experience, and exploration of ambiguity” (p. 81). In the following, I state the educational aims that support the study.

First, as artists often have their own unique modes of inquiry, which may be unconventional, ambiguous, emergent, and explorative, investigating their artistic and pedagogical approaches can diversify educational practices. Examining the actual practices, strategies, and narratives of artists who have conceived and realized their ideas can enhance our thinking about what art is, how we talk about it, think about it, and teach with it. It can provide resourceful ideas for teaching and learning through art.

Second, investigating these different modes of education through art promotes an understanding of art in a larger social context that goes beyond the classroom. The artist-led cases in my study provide examples of integrating art with real world issues and incorporate elements of civic engagement. Contemporary artist Tania Bruguera (2008)
stated that it is time for Marcel Duchamp’s urinal to go back to the restroom, as she emphasizes the usefulness of art in society. The cases I present might provide creative and artistic ways to cope with the world we are living in. This, however, does not mean that I argue that art should be instrumentalized to solve issues of the society, nor that I am against object-based art making. I consider hands-on making experiences, which have been the core in traditional art education, to continue to yield significant artistic development. I believe that the visceral hands-on making experience cultivates an embodied sensitivity that serves as a basis for further development, such as intuition, divergent thinking, and critical thinking, played out in our daily interactions with the material culture we are living in. Therefore, I insist that we must develop nuanced and diverse ways of making art that also entail the many issues we confront in our daily lives, including the social.

Third, the study may shed new insights on integrating art into other fields of study. The art projects discussed in the study carry educational implications for interdisciplinary learning and art integration. For example, if the artist’s case is related to a social issue, then the case may provide models of teaching and learning about the social world, social issues, and social activism. Vice versa, it can evoke thoughts about what the social sciences contribute to our understanding of ourselves and how that understanding is applied in the world of contemporary art (Marshall, 2014b; Marshall & Donahue, 2014). As education is related to learning and acquiring knowledge, artistic creativity can be applied to all categories of knowledge acquisition and application.

Fourth, this study may contribute to the increasing literature and scope of work that intersect with contemporary art and education (Desai, Hamlin, & Mattson, 2009; Marshall, 2014). Although there are several cases published in the curatorial and exhibition making sector, there is not much published in relation to examining artists’ practices that actively engage pedagogy, nor in particular regard to the participants’ experience. Not enough has been written from a pedagogical stance, nor from an art
education stance (Kalin, 2012, 2014). Additionally, this study will not only pertain to contemporary artists per se, but also educators and teaching artists working in the education sector. Thus, an empirical study on the topic can shed light on learning outcomes supported with evidence that may contribute to both fields.

Finally, in a similar vein as the fourth aim, the study will provide an understanding of not only how education and art can reveal unique qualities about themselves but also how the two intertwine in creating a synergetic combination. Helguera coined the term “transpedagogy” (2009) to describe how pedagogy becomes something more than just pedagogy with an artistic approach. This study might be able to reveal certain aspects of how artists’ practices can inform education, and how education can influence artists’ practices. Art educator and scholar Nadine Kalin (2012) addresses pedagogy-based art projects “to creatively confront interrelations among education, institution, power, and market capitalism, they allow us to reconsider the institution of education [particularly higher education in Kalin’s case] as a site of critique” (p. 43). Moreover, she says, as art educators in higher education are already undertaking this work, collaboration among educators, curators, and artists could benefit one another. She states that learning from these pedagogy-based art projects “can help art educators consider how to further inspire future art educators and researchers to creatively respond to tightly governed and regulated pedagogies in current or future art classrooms and research sites” (p. 46).

As philosopher and psychotherapist Felix Guattari (1995) posed the question, “How do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a piece of art?” (in Bishop, 2012, p. 241), examining the process of “education as art” and “art as education” through several cases may bring benefits to both sides.
Limitations to the Study

There are several limitations to this study that must be considered:

(1) Limitations of the study as a qualitative, multiple-case study: As this is a qualitative, multiple-case study, the findings are not universally representative and cannot be generalized.

(2) Varying definitions of what is considered “pedagogical art”: My research topic of investigating artists whose art practice entails pedagogical elements may itself be subjective. An art project or practice that is considered “pedagogical” may differ not only by individual, but also by the person’s positionality while engaging with the art project. For example, even though the artist may not claim his or her artistic practice to be pedagogical, critics or project-participants may find salient pedagogical implications in their work. Moreover, the artist-led project may consist of several components and processes, where the emphasis on pedagogy may be considered as only partial in comparison to the overall project. Additionally, even if the project uses educational formats, the reception by the project-participants may not necessarily be educational. Therefore, my research questions are based on a subjective value judgment that is determined either by the artists or their audience members who engage with the artwork in different phases and from varying positionalities. As explored in Chapter III, I have focused on art projects where there is a clear educational agenda by the artist, or projects that have applied a format that is often used in educational settings (e.g., workshops, lectures, discussions carried out as part of the art projects).

(3) Researcher’s positionality: What is viewed as pedagogical may be contingent on time, location, person, or context. Therefore, in this qualitative multiple-case study, it is inevitable that the researcher’s perspective will be reflected throughout the process of the study from the design, selection of participants, data collection, and discussion. My
intention is to be transparent about my positionality and to engage with self-reflexivity\textsuperscript{23} (Creswell, 2013; Dowling, 2006; Hesse-Biber, 2007) throughout the process.

**Usage of Terms in the Study**

It is necessary to define the following terms in the context of my study as they are vital in the discussion of this research.

**Art**

Art is a broad term to define, and its meaning differs according to each individual and its context in use. It may refer to a field of study or discipline, a cultural artifact from the past, an artwork created by an artist, etc. In this study, “art” connotes the following meaning elaborated below.

First, when I say “art project,” it refers to a work of art that is created by an artist who presents his or her own work in the framework of contemporary art, particularly an artwork that is process-based and engages participation with a group of people (see footnote 22). The three cases in this study are art projects/artworks produced by artists who have been actively presenting their work in the contemporary art world. Thus, throughout my study, I use “artwork” and “art project” interchangeably.

Second, this approach to art is based on a broader understanding, where art is part of culture that entails aspects of social communication. As projected in the concept of socially engaged art, art is infused with the social and everyday culture. The three cases selected for my study imply such aspects, often categorized as socially engaged art.

\textsuperscript{23} Reflexivity pertains to the “analytic attention to the researcher’s role in qualitative research” (Gouldner, 1971, p. 16, as cited in Dowling, 2006). Reflexivity entails self-awareness, which means being actively involved in the research process but recognizing that the researcher is part of the social world being studied. Reflexivity is a continuous process of reflection on the researcher’s value and understanding how their “social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17).
engaging the audience directly as a way to critically think through social issues and applying creative ways to grapple with these issues.

I support this understanding of art referring to the following accounts. Anthropologist Richard Anderson (1990) defined art as “culturally significant meaning encoded in an affecting sensuous medium” (p. 238). In that capacity, aesthetic anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake (1988) states that art serves a basic, biological, survival function in that it facilitates the social cooperation that is a primary means for our survival as a species. It does this by aesthetic display that causes us to pay attention, making concrete a group’s core values and beliefs through ritual, ceremony, and other public presentation. In a similar sense, archaeologist Steven Mithen (1996c, p. 149) defines art as “artefacts or images with symbolic meanings as a means of communication,” echoing the views of Dewey (1934/1958/2005), Gardner (1994), Goodman (1978), and Langer (1980). Simply put by art educators Tom Anderson and Melody Milbrandt (2005), “the arts are forms of communication between human beings about things that count.”

Art World

Although the term “art world” was first coined by American art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto in 1964, the meaning of the term has been debated and expanded by several aestheticians such as George Dickie (1974, 1980-1981, 1984) and sociologists such as Howard Becker (1982) and Pierre Bourdieu (1979/1983). According to Martin Irvine (2007), the art world refers to:

a “social-economic network” that continuously defines, validates, maintains, and reproduces the cultural category of art. The artworld is distributed through a network of institutions (schools, museums, galleries, commercial market systems, and professions), all of which participate in constructing a global, international system or network of networks for art. The artworld is thus part of our system of professions, and many parts of the artworld network are now highly professionalized and careerist. (n.p.)
In a similar vein, I refer to the art world that determines the validity and value of the artworks by the network of institutions and the professionals that constitute the institutions as mentioned above.

**Artist**

I define “artist” based on art educator Harrigan Bowman’s (2011) definition from her unpublished dissertation study with teaching artists. She states:

> Artist is a person who self-identifies as someone who sees the making of art as vital and necessary to his or her own personal and professional growth and survival. An artist is active when he or she is continually in the process of developing as an artist. This may be accompanied by times of more or less “production” or productivity in the creation of specific works of art. However, it is the overarching commitment to the active making of and engaging with art that this speaks to. (p. 19)

In my study, I particularly focus on artists who actively present their work in the contemporary art world.

**Art Practice**

The definition of “art practice” for my study is also aligned with Bowman’s (2011) definition from her study: “a way of thinking, of being, that includes the research or inquiry around works of art, the continual engagement with artistic ideas and concepts, and the making of works of art, including the kind of exploration and play that happens in a studio that may or may not result in a finished work” (p. 19). I would add that art practice does not necessarily need to take place in the physical space of the artist’s studio but anywhere, as it is more about an attitude and approach to artmaking as part of a profession pursued in life. This closely connects to John Dewey’s notion of practice cited by Mary Jane Jacob (2018): “To have a practice also gives form to our beliefs and, as we embody them, communicates our values to others as we put them into practice. So as a life path for artists,… practice goes to the core of their being” (p. 59).
Education

Etymologically, the word “education” is derived from the Latin word ēducātiō (“a breeding, a bringing up, a rearing”) from ēducō (“I educate, I train”), which is related to the homonym ēdūcō (“I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect”) from ē- (“from, out of”) and dūcō (“I lead, I conduct”) (The Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). Education scholar Mark K. Smith (2012) states that people often confuse education with “schooling” and states the nature of education as “a deliberate process of drawing out learning (educere), of encouraging and giving time to discovery as an intentional act” (n.p.). In my study, likewise, I do not confine education to schooling but apply a broader definition that encompasses human growth based on the social process that entails the deliberate acts of “learning and teaching.” As Dewey (1916) stated, “Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself” (p. 234).

Pedagogy

Pedagogy often refers to the method and practice of teaching, or the discipline that deals with the theory and practice of education. In this study, I use the word “pedagogy” in relation to the artist’s approach in creating an artwork that facilitates a learning experience among the project-participants.

Learning as Meaning-Making

I view learning as meaning-making based on the sociocultural perspective of learning, which I further explain in Chapter II. It is a process by which people interpret situations, events, objects, or discourses, in the light of their previous knowledge and experience. Thus, “learning as meaning-making” is an expression emphasizing the fact that in any situation of learning, people are actively engaged in making sense of the environment that also involves identities and emotions (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012).
Choice-based learning researchers Dierking and Falk (2018) define learning in a broad sense “to include not only the acquisition of facts and concepts, but emotional, aesthetic, psychomotor, and social learnings about oneself and one’s place in the world” (p. 111).

Public Art

I refer to “public art” as a broader term of social art that takes place in the civic public sphere. Public art not only encompasses artworks/projects that engage civic participatory engagement processes, but also public sculptures and installations that are not necessarily produced by a civic participatory process but installed in public spaces. In comparison, I view the term “socially engaged art” as specifically tied to art that emphasizes the intention of the artist to create his or her artwork in relation to social issues to promote civic awareness and social change.

Overview of Chapters

Following from this introduction to my research, Chapter II provides a detailed exposition of the background literature of my study related to contemporary art and education literature. I specifically position my study in relation to the “educational/pedagogical turn” in contemporary art literature, pertinent to socially engaged art practices. As my study bridges such contemporary art practices with learning, contemporary learning theories form the basis of my discussion drawn from education literature.

Chapter III focuses on the methods of inquiry and the research design I used for this qualitative multiple-case study. Data collection methods, data sources, and data analysis methods are introduced. The participants of each case are explained in detail with background information and selection criteria.
Chapter IV provides the results from the data analysis of Case 1. The findings are comprised of results pertinent to the three different participant groups: the artist, core group members, and public audience members.

Chapter V provides the findings from the data analysis of Case 2, comprised of results pertinent to the artist, core group members, and public audience members.

Chapter VI provides the findings from the data analysis of Case 3, comprised of results pertinent to the artist, core group members, and public audience members.

Chapter VII extends the results of the findings pertinent to my research questions and to the literature reviewed in Chapter II. In-depth interpretation and discussion are found in this chapter.

Chapter VIII provides a conclusion to the study, discusses the educational implications, and poses questions for further investigation.
Chapter II
THE LITERATURE

Art has come to operate as an expanded educational praxis. (O’Neill & Wilson, 2010, p. 13)

Education itself—its practices, theory, and issues—is a legitimate medium for artmaking. (May, O’Donoghue, & Irwin, 2014, p. 165)

As this study attempts to investigate the educational implications of participatory contemporary art projects that employ educational methods and formats, I present the literature in two strands—relevant contemporary art literature and contemporary learning theories.

In the first part of this chapter, I position these types of pedagogy-based art projects in the vein of contemporary art history. The early modes of blurring art with the everyday, audience participation, and the social turn in contemporary art are discussed. Then the educational turn in contemporary art, which specifically relates to the three cases in my study, is discussed in terms of methods and formats.

In the second part of the chapter, I address contemporary learning theories that have particular relevance to the learning evoked by the art projects discussed in the study. I first discuss the sociocultural learning perspective and meaning-making as learning. Among several sociocultural learning theories, the type of learning elicited from the three art projects in this study closely relate to the following concepts: Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger’s (1991) “situated learning,” Wenger’s (1998) “community of practice,” and “social emotional learning” (Elias et al., 1997; Goleman, 1995; McCown, Jensen,
Freedman, & Rideout, 2010), which are respectively discussed. Lastly, critical pedagogy and *Theater of the Oppressed* are addressed as the pedagogical philosophy that underpins the work of these three artists, and socially engaged art in general.

**Historical Accounts in Contemporary Art Literature**

**The Blurring Between Contemporary Art and the Everyday**

Ever since Marcel Duchamp named his collection of found objects “readymades” (1914) and submitted a signed urinal *Fountain* (1917) to the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York, art produced in the Western Hemisphere has continued to merge with the everyday. This tendency to blur the boundaries between art and the everyday has been reflected in several movements, practices, or works of art initiated and led by artists since the early 20th century.

Among many art movements, the most notable example of this approach was the Fluxus movement in the U.S. that started in the late 1950s. Fluxus artists proposed that art could “arrive at a closer connection to concrete reality” and intended to create “anti-art forms directed against art as a profession, against the separation of producer and performer, against the separation of art and life,” arguing “that art should tend towards collective spirit, anonymity and anti-individualism” (Marcuinas, as cited in Finkelpearl, 2014, p. 21). U.S.-based Fluxus artist Alison Knowles created performance and sound pieces such as *Make a Salad* (1962), where sounds of her chopping vegetables were amplified as she made a salad, presenting it as a form of art (Jackson, 2011). Although Fluxus faded out after two decades, similar attempts to bridge art and the everyday can be seen in the works of Allan Kaprow, who had also been involved in Fluxus earlier, through the participatory performances of his “happenings” and “life-art” in the late ‘60s and ‘70s. In the 1970s, New York City-based artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles created a series of “maintenance art,” where she performed and presented domestic chores of
cleaning and washing in public spaces as public art activities. Ukeles later formed a partnership with the City of New York Department of Sanitation, where she has served as artist-in-residence since 1977 (Finkelpearl, 2014).

In France, the artist collective Situationist International (1957-1972) was against the advance of capitalism of that time, which they particularly refer to as social alienism and commodity fetishism (Debord, 1958). Having its conceptual roots in Dada\(^1\) and Surrealism\(^2\) movements, the Situationist International created work that “challenged the assumptions of everyday life and its institutions” through their writings, films, and physical intervention, such as drifting—spontaneous walking throughout the city emphasizing playfulness and emotions that were genuine to moments of life of the everyday (Debord, 1958). Guy Debord, the core member of the movement, who was a French writer and filmmaker, argued against passivity and the divide between actors and spectators. He differentiated “the ‘spectacle’ that is grand and impersonal, and the ‘situation’ that is local, personal, and interactive” (Debord, as cited in Finkelpearl, 2013, p. 27) and strove to activate the spectator to become an active actor. His later political involvement and writings such as Society of the Spectacle (1967) became influential in the Paris-based events of May 1968.

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\(^1\) Dada was an informal international avant-garde, anti-establishment art and literary movement that started in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1916. The beginnings of Dada correspond to the outbreak of World War I. For many participants, the movement was a protest against the bourgeois nationalist and colonialist interests, which many Dadaists believed were the root cause of the war. They were against the cultural and intellectual conformity in art and more broadly in society that corresponded to the war (The Art Story, n.d.)

\(^2\) Surrealism was an avant-garde literary and visual art movement founded in 1924 by Andre Breton and influenced by Dada, psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud’s theories of the unconscious. Although the term ‘surrealist’ was coined by the French avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire in his play (written in 1903 and performed in 1917), Andre Breton proclaimed the movement through his Surrealist Manifesto (1924). Surrealism aimed to revolutionize human experience, rejecting a rational vision of life in favor of one that asserted the value of the unconscious and dreams. The movement’s poets and artists found magic and strange beauty in the unexpected and the uncanny, the disregarded and the unconventional (Tate, n.d.).
The active role of the audience—Audience participation. The role of the viewer in the physical or conceptual realization and reception of the artwork has also been a major characteristic in these types of art that attempted to merge art with the everyday. Marcel Duchamp not only acclaimed readymades as a work of art, as mentioned above, but he was one among the first artists who sought the role of the viewer to complete the meaning of his artwork (Kraus Knight, 2008). This approach became prevalent in avant-garde art movements such as Dada, Surrealism, Fluxus, and International Situationists mentioned above.

Artists associated with these movements raised questions in regard to notions of originality and authorship, and challenged conventional assumptions about the passive role of the audience. In doing so, they adopted an anti-bourgeois position on the role and function of art (IMMA³ catalogue). For example, the artists who were involved in the early stages of Fluxus (such as Allan Kaprow and Joseph Beuys) rejected traditional principles of craftsmanship, permanency of the art object, and the notion of the artist as specialist. Fluxus artists viewed art not as a finite object but as a time-based experience, employing performance and theatrical experiments. They were interested in the “transformative potential of art through collaboration, and spectators were encouraged to interact with the performer, while plotless staged events left artworks open to artistic chance and interpretation” (IMMA, p. 6). For example, Yoko Ono’s Cut Piece (1964-1966) was a performance where the artist invited the audience to cut away her clothing as she sat completely still and expressionless on stage. The audience members participated in the work by having control in the interaction with the performer.

The Fluxus artists also created work that could take the form of a set of instructions, where participants were directly involved in the co-creation of the artwork. Instructions were communicated through a variety of media, such as photography, video, ³

³ Abbreviation for “Irish Museum of Modern Art.”
drawing, text, performance, sound, sculpture, and installation. For instance, Ben Vautier created *Total Art Matchbox* (1966), a matchbox that had prompts for the viewer to burn anything that was art by using the matches in the box, using the last match to burn the box in the end (Di Tolla, 2016, n.p.). These types of artmaking are still common today and are used to engage the viewer through multiple activities in multiple media. Although questions of authorship have raised concerns about who participates in the definition and production of art, the relationship between the artwork and the audience has become a central part of these art practices.

As reflected in the artworks mentioned above, the level of audience participation varies according to each artist and project. Helguera (2011) categorized four levels of “multi-layered participatory structures” often found in contemporary art projects that engage audience participation:

1. **Nominal participation.** The visitor or viewer contemplates the work in a reflective manner, in passive detachment that is nonetheless a form of participation...
2. **Directed participation.** The visitor completes a simple task to contribute to the creation of the work (for example, Yoko Ono’s *Wish Tree* [1996] in which visitors were encouraged to write a wish on a piece of paper and hang it on a tree).
3. **Creative participation.** The visitor provides content for a component of the work within a structure established by the artist (for example, Allison Smith’s work *The Muster* [2005], in which fifty volunteers in Civil War uniforms engaged in reenactment, declaring the causes for which they, personally, were fighting).
4. **Collaborative participation.** The visitor shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in collaboration and direct dialogue with the artist (Caroline Woolard’s ongoing project “Our Goods,” where participants offer goods or services on the basis of interest and need, is an example of this way of working). (pp. 14-15)

Concerning the cases in my dissertation study, each project is comprised of different levels of participation among the audience. For example, in each case, there is a group of participants who directly work with the artist in creating the content of the artwork on a durational basis, which I have identified as core group members (CGMs).
Then, there are the public audience members (PAMs), who engage with the artwork once it has been presented to the public. In this study, the PAMs’ participation level was closer to “nominal participation” mentioned by Helguera above, and the participation level of the CGMs was closer to “creative participation.”

**The Social Turn in Contemporary Art**

Artists continued to respond to the social, political, and cultural upheavals during the 1960s. Specifically, the civil rights movement, the counterculture movement, and feminism contributed to new forms of politicized, reactionary, and socially engaged art practices (Bishop, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2013). Years later, the economic downturn of the 1980s, combined with the alienating effects of capitalism and its impact on community structures, resulted in an increasing awareness of the potential of the arts as a vehicle to address social issues. To raise issues of social inclusion and bring social change, socially engaged and activist art became more prominent since the 1980s with the collaborative/collective groups such as Gran Fury, Guerrilla Girls, Group Material, and PAD/D (Political Art Documentation and Distribution), among many. Several community arts organizations and initiatives that emerged during the 1990s eventually contributed to bringing the “social turn” to the forefront in art criticism (Bishop, 2006).

The “social turn” in contemporary art, coined by Claire Bishop (2006), refers to:

> the increase of contemporary art practices produced in relation to collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies which often take form as social events, publications, workshops, or performances that are difficult to collect by the commercial art world. (n.p.)

This phrase became widely used when directed to the types of work mentioned above in the field of contemporary art criticism and exhibition-making.

As stated earlier in Chapter I, Bishop (2012) viewed this tendency as “a return to the social, part of an ongoing history of attempts to rethink art collectively” (p. 3), and
identified three historical moments\(^4\) throughout the 20th century in relation to this tendency toward artistic collectivity. The three cases that are the subject of the dissertation study are rooted in the resurgence of socially engaged artworks since the 1990s, supported by relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) and the educational turn, upon which I will elaborate in the next sections. These artworks intend to overturn the relationship between the art object, the artist, and the audience, as Bishop (2012) states:

The artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of situations; the works of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term project\(^5\) with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as “viewer” or “beholder,” is now repositioned as a co-producer or participant. (italics in original text, p. 2)

Bishop posits this tendency of art toward “putting pressure on conventional modes of artistic production and consumption under capitalism” (p. 3). She views this approach to artmaking as a utopian rethinking of art’s relationship to the social and the political potential that are manifested in reconsidering the ways in which art is produced, consumed, and debated. However, she states that oftentimes these projects propose better ideals rather than actualized realities.

**Terminology and concepts pertinent to the social turn in contemporary art.**

**Relational aesthetics.** This term was coined by Nicholas Bourriaud (2002), a French art critic, in his description of the exhibition *Traffic*, which he curated at [Centre d’arts Plastiques Contemporains] (CAPC) in Bordeaux. This exhibit presented a diverse body of work made by artists in the 1990s that involved interactivity, conviviality, and

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\(^4\) In relation to the political upheaval and movements for social change, Bishop (2012) identifies three historical moments: “the historic avant-garde in Europe circa 1917; the so-called ‘neo’ avant-garde leading to 1968; and the resurgence of participatory art in the 1990s based on the fall of communism in 1989” (p. 3).

\(^5\) The term “project” came to rise during the 1990s as an umbrella term for many types of art that include “collective practice, self-organized activist groups, transdisciplinary research, participatory art and socially engaged art, and experimental curating” (Bishop, 2012, p. 194).
relationality with audience members as a subject matter of the work. The work of artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, who created the piece *Pad Thai* (1990) by transforming the Paula Allen Gallery in New York into a kitchen/restaurant serving curry to the gallery visitors, is often cited as an example of relational aesthetics. Bourriaud’s definition of relational aesthetics is based on the following:

a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space. (p. 113)

… the possibility of a relational art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space), points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by Modern art. (p. 14)

In these types of artworks, the relational artist becomes a catalyst in creating social experiences for the audience. In most cases, the artists that Bourriaud (2002) references create a social environment in which people come together to participate in a shared activity. Bourriaud claims (in contrast to Bishop) that “the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist” (p. 13).

Although relational aesthetics has received significant attention, the artists’ works referenced by Bourriaud have been criticized for promoting shallow relational social interaction or intensifying gallery politics (Bishop, 2004, 2006, 2012; Did, 2013). Conversely, art critic Brian Hand (2008) states that even though Bourriaud acknowledges institutionally supported contemporary art’s complete immersion in capitalist relations and submission to capitalist imperatives, Bourriaud believes that relational art can, within this system, “create free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the ‘communication zones’ that are imposed on us” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 16).
Regardless of the criticism, relational aesthetics has laid the foundation for promoting process-based artworks that actively engage the audience and real-life social issues. It has motivated others to further develop this critique in specifying artworks through various aspects and dimensions.

**Dialogical/discursive aesthetics.** These terms were coined by art critic and historian Grant Kester (1999, 2002, 2011), stemming from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Paulo Freire, in relation to a model of artmaking that related to community and social needs. Kester argues that art exists in the discursive relationship established with the viewer: “It grows out of a process of dialogue and collective exchange, the artist’s active listening and empathetic identification, and a willingness to let the community influence art and artist” (Kester, 2002, p. 14). For Kester, the art and its meaning occur outside the mind of the artist and develop in the exchange between the artist and viewers, ultimately affecting the identities of both.

I elaborate on “dialogue” as a primary method in pedagogy-based art projects in the next section.

**Social practice.** The term “social practice” originates from the field of psychology and human development, which seeks to determine the link between practice and context within social situations (Smolka, 2001). However, in the contemporary art context, the term became widely used to reference socially engaged art practices when the California College of the Arts established an MFA program under the name “art and social practice.” According to Pablo Helguera (2011), the term “social practice” excludes an explicit reference to artmaking that relates to the growing general discomfort toward the concept of the “artist.” Helguera argues that using the term “social practice” avoids evocations of both the modern role of the artist (as an illuminated visionary) and the postmodern version of the artist (as a self-conscious critical being). Instead, the term “democratizes the construct, making the artist into an individual whose specialty includes working with society in a professional capacity” (p. 3). In general, this term is
interchangeably used with “socially engaged art,” referring to works of art that aim to create social or political change through collaboration with individuals, communities, and institutions.

**Socially engaged art.** Helguera (2011) prefers the usage of “socially engaged art (SEA),” a term that had originally emerged in the 1970s, as it specifies the practice stemming from the field of art. Helguera argues that SEA falls within the tradition of conceptual process art and that the social intercourse is its core content (p. 2). In short, he states, “SEA is a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved. SEA depends on actual—not imagines or hypothetical—social action” (p. 8).

In my study, as stated in Chapter I, I use SEA to describe artworks that emphasize the intention of the artist to create artwork that addresses social issues to promote civic awareness and social change among its participants or public audience members.

**Cooperative art.** Tom Finkelpearl (2013) prefers using the term “cooperative art” over Claire Bishop’s term of “social collaboration.” Finkelpearl suggests that “collaboration” refers to co-authorship that implies equal contribution, whereas “cooperation” is a more inclusive term that encompasses the various levels of collaboration within these types of artworks. For Finkelpearl, the term “socially cooperative” is indebted to John Dewey’s pragmatist perspective and is used to describe “works that examine or enact the social dimension of the cooperative venture, blurring issues of authorship, crossing social boundaries, and engaging participants for durations that stretch from days to months to years” (p. 6). Socially cooperative projects place a larger emphasis on allowing the participants to have more agency and creating social benefit in comparison to projects where the artist has more authorship and directs the audience’s participation.
The Educational Turn in Contemporary Art

The educational turn naturally engages with political and social issues in modern society, and many of these explorations have been initiated and developed by a number of artists over the past two decades. Both artists and curators have become increasingly engaged in pedagogy-based projects, where art converges with the activities and goals often found in the field of education (Bishop, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2013; Helguera, 2011; Kester, 2002; Podesva, 2007; Rogoff, 2008). As mentioned in Chapter I, pedagogy-based art projects employ the forms and methods of education, such as lectures, seminars, libraries, reading-rooms, publications, workshops, and even full-blown schools into their artistic practices. Initiatives related to these projects revolve around the aims of gaining and sharing knowledge, artistic/curatorial research, and critiquing current educational systems.

Art educator Nadine Kalin (2012) states that these projects are “not as beholden to existing educational and institutional structures, freeing them up to experiment with education as alternative cultural practices.” Thus, these artist-driven education projects “embrace self-education as they concurrently confront interrelations among education, institution, power, and market capitalism” (p. 43). Artist and art critic Lee Podesva (2007) put together a list of shared concerns and characteristics in surveying art projects that use educational forms as their medium:

1. A school structure that operates as a social medium.
2. A dependence on collaborative production.
3. A tendency toward process (versus object) based production.
4. An aleatory or open nature.
5. An ongoing and potentially endless temporality.
6. A free space for learning.
7. A post-hierarchical learning environment where there are no teachers, just co-participants.
8. A preference for exploratory, experimental, and multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge production.
9. An awareness of the instrumentalization of the academy.
10. A virtual space for the communication and distribution of ideas. (n.p.)
As mentioned earlier, in conjunction with the social turn by Bishop, pedagogy-based projects often develop new methodologies that allow democratic access to knowledge and shift the conventional role of the artist, the curator, the artwork, and the viewer throughout the process of the project (Lazar, 2013). By doing so, “students, instructors, community members—are transformed into participatory agents actively shaping and analyzing both the nature and outcome of the learning experience itself” (Sholette, 2018, p. 282).

**Pioneers of pedagogy-based art projects.** This unconventional approach to learning has emerged particularly since the 1960s in relation to progressive education in the Western hemisphere (Bishop, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2013, Sholette, 2018). John Dewey’s progressive education of the early 20th century underpins such educational approaches, but among artists, postwar German artist Joseph Beuys’s (1921-1986) work has been the prominent precursor germane to the artmaking tendencies of the educational turn.

Joseph Beuys was a Fluxus artist but also an influential pedagogue. His deep commitment to education is reflected in his quote in an *Artforum* interview with Willoughby Sharp in 1969: “To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is the waste product, a demonstration” (Beuys, as cited in Lippard, 1973, p. 121). His artworks and performance-lectures were intended not just to end with the performative event itself, but to further prompt critical thought and discussion among the audience members. For example, his piece installed at Documenta V in 1972, *Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum*, was an office space where audience members would come in and have conversations with the artist on a range of topics, including politics and art (Podesva, 2007, n.p.). Beuys actively engaged the audience as part of his process-based

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6. The touring exhibition titled *Beuys and Beyond—Teaching as Art* (2010-2013) explored Beuys’s teaching as an important extension of art practice and supports his view that art is a pro-active means toward individual growth and social progress.
artistic practice to think and learn together, and eventually to bring positive change to society.

In particular, Beuys’s notion of “social sculpture” underpins his philosophy and approach to artmaking that describe an expanded conception of art in which every human being—in their inherent creativity—is potentially an artist. Beuys not only talked about social art forms but also about an open society where he viewed the social organism as a work of art. In Beuys’s A Public Dialogue, a performance-lecture carried out at the New School for Social Research, New York, in 1974, he stated:

Here my idea is to declare that art is the only possibility for evolution, the only possibility to change the situation in the world. But then you have to enlarge the idea of art to include the whole creativity. And if you do that, it follows logically that every living being is an artist—an artist in the sense that he can develop his own capacity. (in Kuoni, 1990, pp. 25-26)

This implied that everyone is the co-creator of the social architecture, which he further explained in his interview with Georg Jappe in 1972, by emphasizing “participation” as a way to achieve ideal democracy:

A total work of art is only possible in the context of the whole society. Everyone will be necessary co-creator of social architecture, and, so long as anyone cannot participate, the ideal of democracy has not been reached. Whether people are artists, assemblers of machines or nurses, it is a matter of participating in the whole. (as cited in Harrison & Wood, 1992, p. 891)

In the same interview, Beuys’s extended definition of art is reflected in his strong conviction about art/aesthetic education, which echoes today’s concept of art integration and interdisciplinary learning:

Art looks more towards a field where sensitivity is developed into an organ of cognition and hence explores areas quite different from formal logic … most people think they have to comprehend art in intellectual terms—in many people the organs of sensory and emotional experience have atrophied … man needs the Aesthetic Education. The isolated concept of art education must be done away with, and the artistic element must be embodied in every subject, whether it is our mother tongue, geography, mathematics or gymnastics. I am pleading for a gradual realization that there is no other way
except that people should be artistically educated. This artistic education alone provides a sound base for an efficient society. (p. 892)

In order to achieve this purpose, dialogue-based communication was critical to Beuys. In 1973, he said, “Communication occurs in reciprocity: it must never be a one-way flow from the teacher to the taught. The teacher takes equally from the taught” (in Kuoni, 1990, p. 22). Beuys’s philosophy of collaborative learning, dialogue-based learning, and interdisciplinary learning through aesthetic education shares commonalities with that of John Dewey and today’s pedagogy-driven artists and art educators alike. Moreover, Beuys’s approach toward art, education, and politics ran parallel to teachings of the seminal figures of his time, such as Paulo Freire in Brazil and Guy Debord in France. It also has ties with the calling for participatory democracy reflected in the Port Huron Statement (1962) in the U.S., and the political theory put forth by the U.S. community activist Saul Alinsky (1909-1972) (Finkelpearl, 2013). Although his character as a symbolist, expressionist, and mystical romanticist has drawn much criticism counter to his global fame (Levin, as cited in Kuoni, 1990, p. 1), Beuys still remains as an eminent influence to a number of artists and cultural producers to this day.

Current art projects that respond to changes in institutionalized pedagogy can also be found in the free university movements, which propose alternative platforms for knowledge-making that go against the normative school model of the capitalist society, for example, the Copenhagen Free University (2001-2007), founded in 2001 by Danish artists Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen, who took the traditions of the Situationist Internationals and realized them in a publicly shared domestic setting. Their apartment functioned as an experimental education hub to investigate the social relations within the framework of an institution (as it was intentionally named a “university”). The artist founders Heise and Jakobsen (2001) state that they work with forms of knowledge that are “fleeting, fluid, schizophrenic, uncompromising subjective, uneconomic, acapitalist,
produced in the kitchen, produced when asleep or arisen on a social excursion—collectively” (n.p.).

As evidenced in Beuys’s work and free university movements, projects were later produced in relation to the educational turn, to subvert the previous structures of art, as a way to pursue a more democratic structure for learning and civic participation, and to criticize the institutionalization of education in current neoliberalist capitalism. However, these pedagogical projects take on a range of forms that vary according to each artist or collective. More examples are discussed in the next section, where I introduce methods and formats that are often used in these types of projects.

**Methods and formats of pedagogy-based art projects.** Over the last two decades, the pedagogical methods and interventions carried out by artists emerged and became more popular in artistic and curatorial practices under the tendencies addressed above. As stated by the curators O’Neill and Wilson (2010), “the education process often becomes the object of curatorial production in these types of work” (p. 13). The emphasis was not on the object-based production, but rather around themes of education, sharing knowledge, collaborative learning, and artistic or curatorial research of knowledge-making. I will now discuss the educational methods and formats prevalent in pedagogical projects.

**Timeframe: Durational and temporal.** In the art projects mentioned previously and in the three cases in my study, the duration of time has been a critical component in pedagogy-based projects. In my interviews with the three artists in the study, they all shared data about the necessity of negotiating the timeframe (series of workshops and public engagement sessions) with commissioners/curators to better achieve their project goals with the core group members (CGMs), as well as working with the tension generated by the tight timeframe as part of the work.

Thus, in order to foster a transformative experience among the project-participants, artists have been creating their work in durational time but also with temporality.
Timeframes of art projects are usually influenced by logistics such as budget and the limited commitment available by project-participants, but artists also intentionally work with temporal timeframes to facilitate a more impactful experience among the project-participants, which I further elucidate in the findings of my study.

One example of an artist working with time as a critical component is the Cuban artist Tania Bruguera. In an interview with Tom Finkelpearl (2013), Bruguera spoke about her failure in her earlier work *Untitled* (2002) presented at Kassel Documenta XI in terms of the disjunction between the political process she wanted the audience to go through and how little time they actually got to spend in the piece. Based on this perceived failure by Bruguera, she specifically addresses conceiving her next work by changing the use of time and having the actions of people as the subject matter of the work:

> I came back thinking that I needed to change the use of time in my work, the time required to experience it. I wanted to situate the thinking process within the work and not outside it. I started thinking about appropriating the structure and the resources of power as my medium, as my material. Instead of representing them, I wanted to put them in action; that would be my work. (p. 182)

This eventually prompted Bruguera to create her next piece, *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (translated as “Behavior Art School”), which was a durational piece and an educational platform she carried out from 2002 to 2009 that I further discuss in the following (Alternative) Schools section. In *Cátedra Arte de Conducta*, the duration and temporality were critical in the conception and operation of the piece. After seven years, Bruguera decided to conclude the work, as it was gaining excessive fame and success, worried that it could potentially become institutionalized (Finkelpearl, 2013).

Other examples of art project that have duration of time as a significant component include Anton Vidkole’s *unitednationsplaza_ the exhibition as school* (Berlin, 2006-2007) and *Nightschool* (New York, 2008-2009), which each ran for a year with series of
workshops and events. I elaborate more on these projects in the later section related to “(alternative) school” formats.

In short, the temporal framework creates a distinct contrast to the normative educational systems and schools, allowing other ways to experience learning by enhancing the intensity or elasticity of the project.

**Dialogue grounded in critical pedagogy.** Dialogue is one of the most commonly used methods for producing content employed in pedagogical art practices. With its origin in the work of the Russian literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, this method further evolved through Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics, Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy, and others for whom the act of dialogue is a process of emancipation (Helguera, 2011).

According to Bakhtin’s theory (Pechey, 1989), dialogue is not simply about verbal exchange between two or more people but a philosophy of language or communication. It is the constituent factor of dynamic interrelations between self and other in dialogic encounters. In other words, dialogue is a way of understanding and creating the self in relation to the other. For example, intersubjectivity⁷ is a practice of active listening, responsive understanding, and action or an ethics based on reciprocity. Dialogic approaches are often used to create space for open-endedness, difference of opinions, ambiguity, critical reflection, and the possibility for learners to develop their own voice in relationship to social others across differences. Therefore, it is natural for artists concerned with education or knowledge-based production through artistic experiences to engage the audience or participants through dialogue.

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⁷ Intersubjectivity is a widely used term in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology, referring to the psychological relation between people. It is usually used in contrast to solipsistic individual experience, emphasizing our inherently social being. “Simply stated as the interchange of thoughts and feelings, both conscious and unconscious, between two persons or ‘subjects,’ as facilitated by empathy” (Cooper-White, 2014, p. 882.).
Brazilian education theorist Paulo Freire’s (1968/1970) approach to pedagogy was based on dialogue in which the teacher and the student become co-constructors of learning. This collaborative and relational learning process through dialogue is clearly stated in Freire and Shor’s writing (1987) *What is the “Dialogical Method” of Teaching?:*

Dialogue is the sealing together of the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowledge and re-knowing the object of the study. Then, instead of transferring the knowledge statically, as a fixed possession of the teacher, dialogue demands a dynamic approximation towards the object. (p. 14)

In art, dialogue is interchangeably used with “conversation.” The theorist and art curator Irit Rogoff (2008) considers the emphasis on “conversation” in the contemporary art scene in recent years to be the most significant shift in the art world since the late 1990s. She refers to platforms such as Documenta X (1997) and Documenta XI (2002) that allowed the “conversational mode” to emerge and make great change in the production of culture that stemmed from the artworld. Rogoff states this was made possible by the infrastructure within the art world and facilitated by available spaces, small budgets, existing publicity machines, exhibitions, gatherings, lecture series, interviews, and interested audiences, such as art students, cultural activists, etc.

According to Rogoff, this conversational mode led to a new set of conversations among artists, scientists, philosophers, critics, economists, architects, and planners to be engaged, where new subjects were invented and emerged. However, she questions the quality of the conversations, “for the art world has become a site filled with extensive talking, and raises the question to not only find new formats but to find other ways of recognizing when and why something important is being said” (p. 9).

More recently, Helguera (2011) addressed the conversational mode by insisting that “artists and their interlocuters must find the right balance of openness and mutual interest” and “construct relationships in which both parties offer help and contribute to
new insights, while still challenging their interlocutors’ assumptions and demanding their investment in the exchange” (p. 49).

**Collaborative group work—Group creativity.** As mentioned previously, Debord (who envisioned situations lived by their constructors), Beuys (who talked about the co-creation of social architecture), and Freire (who spoke of people who coauthor the action they perform on the world), all emphasized the responsibility and collectivity in groups rather than placing the emphasis solely on the individual. Although pedagogy-based projects vary by artist, many artists carry out their artistic practice as a way to encourage collectivity and collaboration among their participants. This approach is counter to the individual competition promoted through neoliberalist capitalism and promotes compatibility and responsible collaboration among participating members to work together to achieve betterment for their community. It is also a way to acknowledge the tacit knowledge and potential expertise each member holds within. This explains why collaborative problem-solving and group work is often encouraged in pedagogy-based projects that involve groups of participants.

**Lecture-performance.** As reflected in its name, “lecture-performance” is a performance in a lecture format. Since the 1960s, artists have been turning the lecture into a performance space where aspects of drama and education interplay, also involving intellectual, emotive, and affective commitment from the audience (Oliveira, n.d.). It is a practice that highlights the tensions among knowledge, artmaking, and institutional frameworks. Lecture-performance has become increasingly popular since the 2000s, coinciding with the discursive turn in contemporary art featured in numerous festivals and exhibitions. Examples of lecture-performance include works such as Jerôme Bel’s *Veronique Doisneau* (2004), Rabih Mroué’s *Pixelated Revolution* (2012), Robert Wilson’s re-enactment of John Cage’s *Lecture on Nothing* (1949/2012), and works by the theater group Forced Entertainment, among many others. Although this approach is often
used as a strategy in artworks for institutional critique⁸ (de Lima, n.d.), its practices vary, making it difficult to define.

As mentioned earlier, Joseph Beuys carried out his lectures in the form of performance. According to Westerman (2016), Beuys’s lecture-performance⁹ *Information Action* was presented on February 26, 1972, at the Tate Gallery as part of the group show *Seven Exhibitions*. *Information Action* was performed as a lecture and discussion on innate human creative capacity and the potential power of direct democracy to shape society, as described earlier. Beuys illustrated his ideas by chalking his conceptual schema on three blackboards and engaged the assembled crowd in freeform and tense discussion.

**(Alternative) schools.** When we think about education, “school” would be one of the most representative forms of education that first comes to mind. Artist Anton Vidokle (2010) states that ideal art schools are one of the few places left where experimentation is to some degree encouraged, and where process and learning are emphasized along with the outcomes. He says, “Art schools are multi-disciplinary in some sense, and discourse, practice, and presentation can co-exist without necessarily privileging one over the other” (p. 152). These qualities have prompted artists to reimagine educational sites such as schools, institutes, and academies, as a form of art that also serve as alternative sites for knowledge-making and learning over the last two decades.

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⁸ Institutional criticism began in the late 1960s when artists began to create art in response to the institutions that bought and exhibited their work. In the 1960s, art institutions were often perceived as a place of “cultural confinement” and, thus, something to attack aesthetically, politically, and theoretically. Artists such as Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke have been associated with this movement since the 1960s. These artists sought to expose the ideologies and power structures underlying the circulation, display, and discussion of art.

During the 1990s, it became common for curators and directors to hold critical discussions within art galleries and museums that centered on this very subject, thereby making the institution not only the problem but also the solution (Artsy, n.d.; Tate, n.d.)

⁹ Photographs and the transcription of this lecture-performance can be found in the Tate Archives.
In addition to the Copenhagen Free University (2001-2007) initiated by Danish artists Heise and Jakobsen mentioned previously, Tania Bruguera’s *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (translated as “Behavior Art School”) (2002-2009) is considered a significant example of a durational pedagogy-based project of the 2000s. Bruguera ran the school (conceived of as a work of art) at her home to provide training in political and contextual art for art students in Cuba. She created the project to make a concrete contribution to the art scene in Cuba, as well as to prevent young Cuban artists from being rapidly integrated into the Western market without control. Bruguera trained a new generation of artists to deal self-reflexively with Cuba’s contemporary political situation, mindful of a global market while producing art that addressed their local context (Bishop, 2012; Finkelpearl, 2013).

It is unique that Bruguera conceived *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* as a work of art. Upon visiting Bruguera’s *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* as a guest lecturer, the art critic Claire Bishop (2012) described the school as a variation of Bruguera’s “useful art” (*arte util*)—art that is both symbolic and useful, which refutes the traditional Western assumption that art is useless or without function. According to Bishop, Bruguera defines useful art more broadly as a performative gesture that affects social reality, such as civil liberties or cultural politics that are not necessarily tied to morality or legality. Bishop states that even though “Bruguera always privileges the social over the artistic, the entire shaping of the school is reliant on an artistic imagination, an ability to deal with form, experience and meaning” (p. 250). Thus, “art becomes integral to the artist’s conception of each of her projects” (p.250).

Another example of a school conceived of as a work of art is Anton Vidokle’s *unitednationsplaza_ the exhibition as school* (2006-2007). *unitednationsplaza_ the exhibition as school* first took place in Berlin, and then in New York under the name *nightschool* (2008-2009). Initially, Vidokle was invited to co-curate Manifesta 6, which was supposed to take place in Nicosia, Cyprus, in the fall of 2006. However, the
complicated political situation in the region prevented the biennial from being actualized, resulting in the project’s cancellation three months prior to its opening. Eventually Vidokle brought his ideas to Berlin’s eastern section, United Nations Plaza, which became the new name for the school after Manifesta 6’s cancellation. By working in collaboration with other artists, the project was independently realized as a self-organized initiative (Vidokle, 2010).

The structure of the school project was a free, informal, university-type series of seminars, conferences, lectures, film screenings, and occasionally performances focused on contemporary art. The project was open to the public for the duration of one year and disseminated its content through publications, a radio station, and online. The content of the lectures and seminars stretched over several weeks, which brought people together every night, including weekends. Vidokle (2010) emphasized the autonomous quality of the unitednationsplaza “functioning as an artwork in its own setting: an art project that did not need anyone to display it or promote and bring audiences to it—it did all that for itself” (p. 155). He claims that this offered a certain kind of ownership of the situation, in that everyone who attended could participate to the degree that they wished. He insists that “productive engagement is possible under the circumstances when passive spectatorship is avoided and traditional roles of institution, curator, artist, and public take on a more hybrid complexity” (p. 156).

In particular, Vidokle (2010) stresses “the political agency of the ‘public’ referring to the potential to transform their community through art’s critical function, in comparison to the ‘audience’ who are groups that are passive and consumers of leisure and spectacle” (p. 151). He further quotes artist Martha Rosler’s observation that “although the audiences for art have become enormous (since the 1980s), there is not a ‘public’ as such among them” (p. 151). Thus, Vidokle’s interest was in the idea of an art school as a model that could restore such agency of art in the absence of an effective public by combining the two models of a temporary and publicly accessible exhibition
and a potentially innovative and experimental but publicly restricted school. He states this as “a way to provide a viable alternative to exhibitions of contemporary art and that could reinstate the agency of art by creating and educating a new public” (p. 156).

**Contemporary Learning Theories**

Although the three artists in my dissertation study did not earn degrees in teaching and learning, their passion for meaningful lifelong learning and civic responsibility is strongly reflected in their art making and is shared with their participants. To provide the context for the findings of this study, I present relevant contemporary learning theories and concepts in the following sections. First, I introduce the sociocultural learning perspective and discuss meaning-making as learning. Among the different sociocultural learning theories, I have found Lave’s and Wenger’s (1991) concept of “situated learning” and “communities of practice” relevant for the learning that was cultivated in the three art projects in the study. Moreover, I discuss the five learning competencies grounded in social emotional learning (SEL) in close relation to the learning outcomes voiced by the CGMs and PAMs. Lastly, I discuss critical pedagogy and the *Theater of the Oppressed*, as these theories and methods underpin the art projects of my study.

**The Sociocultural Learning Perspective**

The sociocultural learning perspective posits that learning occurs in the social, cultural, and historical context of any human activity (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Miller, 2011; Palincsar, 1998; Rogoff, 2011; Scott & Palinscar, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). It does not view the individual as an isolated entity; rather it focuses on the fluid boundaries between the self and others. Sociocultural learning is sensitive to cross-cultural diversity in contrast to other universalist theories, and acknowledges both differences in individuals within a culture and differences in individuals across cultures.
Contemporary social learning theories stem from the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986), who is known for identifying the role of social interactions and culture in human development. Vygotsky’s insights about the dynamic “interdependence between individual and social processes in the construction of knowledge” (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192) have laid the groundwork for the sociocultural perspective of learning. I briefly discuss the three core themes often identified with Vygotsky’s ideas of sociocultural learning as they relate to the learning promoted by the artists in my study.

**Vygotsky’s core concepts.**

*Learning through social, historical, and cultural interactions.* Vygotsky (1978) wrote,

> Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers … learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions. (p. 90)

Thus, it is through working with others on a variety of tasks that a learner adopts socially shared experiences and associated effects and acquires useful strategies and knowledge (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). Several sociocultural learning scholars posit that a “process of guided participation” is essential for the learner to acquire new culturally valuable skills and capabilities through a meaningful, collaborative activity with an assisting and more experienced other (Rogoff, 1990). Furthermore, development is about “transformation of participation in a sociocultural activity” (Matusov, 2015, p. 315) and “transformation of socially shared activities into internalized processes” (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192).
Psychological tools mediate development of higher mental functions. Vygotsky (1986) reasoned that social and individual work is mediated by tools and signs, or semiotics such as language, systems of counting, conventional signs, and works of art. More specifically, he suggested that the use of tools or semiotic mediation facilitates co-construction of knowledge and mediates both social and individual functioning. Therefore, semiotic means play an important role in development and learning through appropriation. Through the process of appropriation, an individual adopts these socially available psychological tools to assist future independent problem solving (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). This concept suggests that children and learners do not need to reinvent already existing tools in order to use them; rather, they only need to be introduced to how a particular tool is used. Then the learner can use it across a variety of situations solving new problems (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). Vygotsky (1986) viewed language as the ultimate collection of symbols and tools that emerge within a culture based on its two critical roles in development—to communicate with others, and to construct meaning.

Zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978) defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Vygotsky argued that productive instructions align toward the ZPD, and that providing instruction and guidance within the ZPD allows the learner to develop skills and strategies they will eventually apply on their own in other situations.

Vygotsky’s contribution to contemporary instructional design. Sociocultural learning emphasizes the importance of the types and quality of interactions in designing effective learning experiences. Moreover, the ideas of ZPD and scaffolding\(^\text{10}\) have

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\(^{10}\) Scaffolding refers to a set of tools or actions that help a learner successfully complete a task within the zone of proximal development. Scaffolding typically include a mutual and dynamic nature
redefined the role of the instructor to serve as more of a “facilitator” of learning rather than the source of knowledge. This eventually shifts the responsibility to the learner for determining one’s learning goals, becoming a resource of knowledge for peers, and actively collaborating in the learning process (Grabinger, Aplin, & Ponnappa-Brenner, 2007).

These learning theories have contributed largely to practical applications of creating learner-centered instructional environments. Instructional designers use these approaches to facilitate learning by discovery, inquiry, active problem solving, and critical thinking fostered through collaboration with experts and peers in communities of learners and to encourage self-directed lifelong learning habits (Polly, Allman, Casto, & Norwood, 2018). According to the book *Foundations of Learning and Instructional Design* (2018), there are three important aspects of this instructional approach:

1) Authentic and cognitively challenging tasks within a context of collaborative activities  
2) Scaffolding learner’s efforts by providing a structure and support to accomplish complex tasks  
3) Provide opportunities for authentic and dynamic assessment. (n.p.)

**Meaning-Making as Learning**

“Meaning-making” has become widely used in the fields of psychology and education since the 1970s as a term referring to learning that has developed in tandem with the socio-cultural learning theories developed by various scholars. Throughout this study, I refer to learning as a meaning-making process that not only includes information acquisition but also engages emotional and sociocultural learning about oneself and one’s place in the world (Falk & Dierking, 2018). I provide a brief overview of the development of the term, as it highlights the type of learning promoted in the three cases in this study.

_of interaction where both the learner and the one providing the scaffold influence each other and adjust their behavior as they collaborate (Innovative Resources for Instructional Success, n.d.)._
The term “meaning-making” in the context of education emerged in Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner’s (1969) publication, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. As educational critics who promoted inquiry education, Postman and Weingartner wrote a chapter called “Meaning Making,” which described why they preferred the term “meaning making” to other metaphors for teaching and learning, and placed the emphasis on the active process of the mind in learning:

In the light of all this, perhaps you will understand why we prefer the metaphor “meaning making” to most of the metaphors of the mind that are operative in the schools. It is, to begin with, much less static than the others. It stresses a process view of minding, including the fact that “minding” is undergoing constant change. “Meaning making” also forces us to focus on the individuality and the uniqueness of the meaning maker (the minder)…. The “meaning maker” has no such limitation. There is no end to his educative process. He continues to create new meanings…. (p. 77)

By the end of the 1970s, “meaning-making” became more prevalent in constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is something that is actively created by people as they experience new things and integrate new information into their current knowledge. Developmental psychologist Robert Kegan (1980) used meaning-making as a key concept in several widely cited texts on counseling and human development published in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, Kegan (1980) wrote, “Human being is meaning making. For the human, what evolving amounts to is the evolving of systems of meaning; the business of organisms is to organize, as Perry (1970) says” (p. 11).

Jerome Bruner (1990) contributed to the study of meaning-making by considering aspects of cultural anthropology and psychology. Bruner describes this interdisciplinary approach as discovery of “meanings that human beings created out of their encounters with the world, and then to propose hypotheses about what meaning-making processes were implicated” (p. 2). This approach is focused upon “the symbolic activities that human beings employed in constructing and in making sense not only of the world, but of
themselves” (p. 2). Similar to the contributions of Vygotsky, Bruner (1996) made a shift away from the focus on biology as the primary factor of meaning construction toward the emphasis on cultural dynamics that influence behavior as “tools of mind” (p. 2).

Bruner’s most significant contribution was the notion that narrative construction lies at the foundation of making sense of the self and others. Bruner argues that humans are predisposed to organizing life experiences through narratives. As culture is embedded within symbolic systems, meanings are inherently shared within the community that allows for consistent patterns and negotiations of interpretation. Without these cultural, embedded systems of meaning, one would be unable to understand the behaviors and actions of others. The sense of self, as well as the identification process, is in a constant dialogue with others as meaning is made through the tools of culturally embedded narratives.

Jorgensen and Keller (2008) and Ligorio (2010) emphasize a socio-cultural constructivist perspective of meaning-making as a trajectory that connects the learner’s experience and interpretation of the various human activities occurring in surroundings. The scholars Moje and Lewis (2007) explained learning as “situated participation” not only within particular groups but also within conceptualized cultural communities. Based on this view that learning is a process of enculturation, a person can be shaped not only by personal interactions but also by the discourse of a community in which the individual is participating.

In the next section, I discuss how meaning-making is fundamental to the concept of “community of practice” at both the individual and group level.

**Pedagogies of Collaborative Practice**

As stated previously, learning is social, as people learn while interacting with each other through shared activities and language, as they discuss, share knowledge, and problem-solve during these tasks. Thus, “learning takes place through interaction,
negotiation, and collaboration in solving authentic problems while emphasizing learning from experience and discourse” (Polly et al., 2018, n.p.). This collaborative approach to learning relates to “situated cognition (situated learning)” and learning through a “community of practice.” I will address collaborative learning pedagogies in depth, as they inform the type of learning elicited among the three cases in this study, which all involved groups of learners participating in artist-led art projects.

**Situated learning.** Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1987) coined the concept of “situated cognition” in their argument that “activity and situations are integral to cognition and learning” (p. 32). They insisted that by socially interacting with others in real-life contexts, learning occurs on deeper levels, stating that “people who use tools actively rather than just acquire them, by contrast, build an increasingly rich implicit understanding of the world in which they use the tools and of the tools themselves” (p. 33). For example, while language learners can study a dictionary to increase their vocabulary in isolation, this work only teaches basic elements of learning a language. However, when language learners talk with someone who is a native speaker of the language, they learn important aspects of how these words are used in the native speaker’s culture and in everyday social interactions (Brown et al., 2017). Learning through situated cognition can bring benefits such as “developing the ability to apply knowledge, and learners become effective problem solvers after learning in novel and diverse settings” (Brill, 2001, n.p.).

Situated cognition is related to the concept of “cognitive apprenticeship,” which was also coined by Brown et al. (1987); it acknowledges the situated nature of cognition by contextualizing learning through apprenticing learners to more experienced experts who model and scaffold implicit concepts to be learned. Brown et al. suggested that during the social interaction between a novice learner and an expert, important skills, interactions, and experiences are shared. The novice learns from the expert as an apprentice, and the expert often passes down methods and traditions that the apprentice
can learn only from the expert. The three progressive phases of learning a new skill are the cognitive stage, the associative stage, and the autonomous stage (Anderson, 1983; Fitts & Posner, 1967). In the cognitive stage, learners develop declarative understanding of the skill. In the associative stage, mistakes and misinterpretations learned in the cognitive stage are detected and eliminated while associations between the critical elements involved in the skill are strengthened. Finally, in the autonomous stage, the learner’s skill becomes honed and perfected until it is executed at an expert level (Edmondson, 2006).

Situated learning theory has helped researchers understand more widely about how people learn because it focuses on what people learn in their everyday lives, which presents an authentic context for learning a variety of skills. Moreover, it helps educators incorporate tacit knowledge and skills their students may already possess in order to help them learn new content and skills. (Brown et al., 2017).

In relation to “cognitive apprenticeship,” Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) used an anthropological approach by studying tailors in Liberia and found that new tailors developed necessary skills by serving as apprentices to experienced tailors. Their studies on situations of apprenticeship led them to construct the concept of “legitimate peripheral participation,” which is about the participation of the novices (newcomers) starting on the periphery—“a region that is neither fully inside nor fully outside” (Wenger, 1998, p. 117) that leads toward the center through growing involvement. Legitimate peripheral participation led to the construction of the concept of a “community of practice” (CoP), which occurs in social contexts and emerges and evolves when people who have common goals interact in the process of achieving the goals.

**Community of practice (CoP).** As mentioned above, the concept of CoP is credited to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, who published *Situated Learning: Legitimate Periphery of Participation* in 1991. It was based on their belief that learning is not just receiving or absorbing information, but “learning is increasing participation in
communities of practice” (p. 49). Since 1998, Wenger has been expanding this idea of CoP and articulating how social resources shape people’s learning trajectories and their professional identity.

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning within a shared domain of human endeavor. Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner (2015) define CoPs as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1).

CoPs have always existed since human beings have learned together at home, at work, at school, in our hobbies. Everyone belongs to numerous CoPs, and we interact through them over the course of our lives. As they are familiar to us, we do not notice them. Thus, as described by Wenger-Trayner (2015), “giving a name and bringing them [CoPs] into focus allows us to see past more obvious formal structures such as organizations, classrooms, or nations, and perceive the structures defined by engagement in practice and the informal learning that comes with it” (p. 3).

However, even though we exist by engaging in numerous CoPs throughout our lives, not everything can be called a CoP. According to Wenger-Trayner (2015), the following three elements are crucial in comprising a CoP:

(1) **The Domain**: A CoP is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people.…

(2) **The Community**: In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussion, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other; they care about their standing with each other … members of a community of practice do not necessarily work together on a daily basis.…

(3) **The Practice**: A community of practice is not merely a community of interest – people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of
a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short, a shared practice…. (p. 2)

Wenger (1998) describes the “negotiation of meaning” as how we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful. If all change involves a process of learning, then processes of effective change consciously facilitate negotiation of meaning. In Wenger’s model, negotiation consists of two interrelated components—reification and participation.

For Wenger, participation involves acting and interacting, and reification involves producing artifacts (such as tools, words, symbols, rules, documents, concepts, theories, and so on) around which the negotiation of meaning is organized. Participation and reification are complementary processes in that each has the capacity to make up for the limitations of the other. For instance, when an individual is confused about an idea in a reading, peers who have a better grasp of the idea can facilitate understanding through conversation, a form of participation. In the same way, giving shape to an idea through writing (a form of reification) may enhance one’s meaning-making in ways that discussions with others could not. Wenger, White, and Smith (2009) noted that learning within a CoP “requires both participation and reification to be present and in interplay” (p. 57). I viewed this complementary relationship between participation and reification as closely related to multi-modal learning, which the artists in this study promoted through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic engagement.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has been associated with conflict resolution and character education, and developed as an approach used in schools like Nueva established in 1967 by Karen McCown to blend academic and emotional development. Although these approaches were developed into methodologies, such as in the case of Karen McCown and Anabel Jensen (1983) under the name of “Self-Science,” SEL approaches
gained large recognition after science journalist Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* in 1995. The publication addressed the importance of teaching skills that cultivate emotional intelligence, a concept that later developed into social emotional learning. Goleman co-founded the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL\(^{11}\)), with the mission to bring evidence-based programs in emotional literacy to schools worldwide. CASEL defines SEL as “the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (n.p.).

Those competent in SEL have an enhanced awareness and ability to manage their emotions, implement effective problem-solving strategies, and build positive relationships within their networks (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 234) and “integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve important life tasks” (Zins et al., 2004, p. 194). Maurice Elias (2006), a psychology professor at Rutgers University and director of the university’s Social-Emotional Learning Lab, suggests that SEL is about “education of the ‘whole person’ and is ‘the missing piece’ because it links academic knowledge with a specific set of skills important to success in schools, families, communities, workplaces and life in general” (p. 6).

Although there are several education research centers and institutions based on SEL, CASEL (2005) provides one of the most widely adopted evidence-based resources\(^{12}\) in the field to date. According to CASEL, the focus of SEL programming and interventions is the development of the following five interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies:

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\(^{11}\)www.casel.org

\(^{12}\)CASEL’s mission is to establish social and emotional learning as an essential part of education. The organization is focused on research that builds a body of data to convince schools and especially districts of SEL’s efficacy (CASEL, n.d.).
**Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

**Self-management:** The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

**Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

**Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

**Responsible decision-making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others. (n.p.)

Considerable research has been published in the last two decades that supports the positive outcomes achieved when applying SEL in schools: development of resilience, academic-self-efficacy, metacognition, independent learning skills, emotional intelligence, and social integration (Dweck, 2010; Parker et al., 2004; Stallman, 2011; Tinto, 1997, 2003; Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). A meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 students in grades kindergarten through high school yielded an 11-percentile-point improvement in social emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance in comparison to a control group, who did not have the SEL intervention (Durlak et al., 2011). SEL has also gained further recognition with the increasing awareness of significant mental health issues in university students (Said, Kypri, & Bowman, 2013; Stallman, 2010).
Although the learning that took place within the three art projects in my dissertation study was not based on the SEL model, the intentions behind the projects (as described by the respective artists) overlap with several SEL competencies. Moreover, the learning outcomes that were voiced by the CGMs and PAMs also align with the five competencies outlined by the CASEL model.

**Critical Pedagogy**

In the art world, critical pedagogy has been influential particularly among artist activists and socially engaged artists since its reception in the U.S. in the 1970s. As critical pedagogy seeks to give those who have been excluded from power the right and ability to have an input into civic life, and it has served as a foundational philosophy for those striving for social inclusion and change against the status quo. In the dissertation study, although the forms and processes of the three art projects differed greatly, all three employed critical pedagogy as the foundational philosophy at the root of their work.

**Foundation on Paolo Freire.** Critical pedagogy, which is grounded in critical theory, originated with the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire. Critical pedagogy was promoted through Freire’s book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968/1970, 2009), which subsequently spread internationally, developing a particularly strong base in the U.S. The book was written as a class-based practice based on Freire’s own experience offering dialogic literacy programs to Brazilian peasants and workers through a problem-posing process. The aim of Freire’s educational programming was to stimulate critical consciousness by helping the local residents to gain an understanding of the political, social, and economic conditions they lived within and, by taking their input seriously, to help increase their self-confidence.

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13Critical theory emerged out of the Marxist tradition and was developed by a group of sociologists at the University of Frankfurt in Germany who referred to themselves as The Frankfurt School. Critical theory is inspired by Marx’s theory of the relationship between economic base and ideological superstructure and focuses on how power and domination operate (Crossman, 2020).
Freire (1970, 2009) called the traditional pedagogy the “banking model of education” because it treats the student as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge (like a piggy bank). He argues that pedagogy should instead treat the learner as a co-creator of knowledge:

Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. (p. 36)

In moving away from the banking model of education, Freire (1970) envisioned schools as critical spaces where students would be empowered to interrogate and question social conditions through dialogue and relevance to their lives (Marzano, 1991). Freire emphasized instructional practices with the concept of “praxis” referring to “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (p. 91). In this model, educators sought to synthesize and critique power systems and to dissect the truths upon which these systems were based. His model posited that “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

As stated earlier, “dialogue” is a method commonly used in socially engaged and pedagogy-based art projects, inspired by Freire’s deep belief in the power of dialogue to promote mutual and reciprocal learning between both the teacher and student:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-students with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (P. Freire as cited in Finkelpearl, 2003, p. 278)

Thus, the teacher works to lead students to question ideologies and practices considered oppressive (including those at school) and encourage liberating collective and
individual responses to the actual conditions of their own lives. The student often begins as a member of the group or process (including religion, national identity, cultural norms, or expected roles) they are critically studying. After they reach the point of revelation where they begin to view their present society as deeply problematic, they are then encouraged to share this knowledge with the intent to change the oppressive nature of the society.

Critical pedagogy has been applied widely, particularly adopted in critical literacy studies. U.S. critical literacy scholar Ira Shor, who co-wrote *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987) with Freire, defines critical pedagogy as:

> Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional cliches, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (p. 17)

Shor (2009) states that although critical pedagogy involves practices and frameworks derived from the foundational work of Paulo Freire, “the challenge has always been to diversify the singular focus on social class and to reinvent the approach for other times and places outside Brazil” (p. 119). In recent years, critical pedagogy has spread far beyond Brazil and continues to be applied and developed alongside other critical theories including postmodern theory, feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and queer theory.

**Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed (TO).** Influenced by Freire, Augusto Boal used theatre as means of promoting social and political change and wrote the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974) from his previous theater experiences based on dialogue and interaction between the audience and performers carried out since the 1950s. TO is a participatory form of theater to empower the participants through social problem-solving and civic action. In TO, the plot usually revolves around a social problem or an oppressive situation. The audience members become active “spect-actors” who actively
participate in the play by voicing their ideas to the actors, and sometimes even take on the role as the actor on stage (as in the case of Forum Theater, explained below). Here I present the specific techniques used in TO that have been widely adopted by artists and are employed in two cases in the dissertation study.

**Joker system and Simultaneous Dramaturgy.** In many of Boal’s theatrical processes, there is a facilitator—a neutral party at the center of the proceedings called the “joker,” whose role is similar to that of the joker in a deck of playing cards. For example, during the play, the joker might stop the stage action and ask the audience members if they agree with it, giving the audience the opportunity to voice/give directions that move the play forward. The audience can voice new directions in which the play can move forward. In other words, in moments when the scene reaches a crisis, the spect-actors provide the actors with alternative solutions that are/can be enacted on the spot, that can change the direction of the play. Thus, the audience members participate in writing the script that the actors perform “simultaneously.” Boal named this theatre method as “simultaneous dramaturgy.” Using the joker and simultaneous dramaturgy gives audience members the opportunity and empowers audience members to voice their ideas for social change.

**Forum Theatre.** Forum Theater applies these techniques addressed above to present unresolved problems of oppression to specific audiences. For example, during a scene, the Joker invites audience members to voice their ideas or to replace the actors at any point in the scene if they can imagine an alternative, leading to a solution. Based on the audience members’ ideas, the actors then perform the scene numerous times with the different interventions proposed by the audience members or bring the audience member on stage to perform the scene. Thus, the actors and audience members engage in a dialogue about the oppression, examine the alternatives, and create “rehearsals” that can be applied to real life situations (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994).
According to Boal (1979), this whole process is designed to be “dialectic” as it is reaching a conclusion by considering opposing arguments, rather than being “didactic,” in which the moral argument is one-sided and pushed forward by the actors without providing the audience members an opportunity to respond or for a counter-argument. Boal has stated that this practice is not intended to show the correct way, but rather to discover all possibilities to be examined. New media scholars Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (2003) describe the educational effects of using Forum Theater’s techniques:

The audience members (the “spect-actors”) learn much from the enactment even though the acting is fiction, because the fiction simulates real-life situations, problems, and solutions. It stimulates the practice of resistance to oppression in reality, and offers a “safe space” for practicing making change. When faced in reality with a similar situation as they have rehearsed in theatre, participants who have experienced Forum Theatre ideally will desire to be proactive, and have the courage to break oppressive situations in real life, since they feel much more prepared and confident in resolving the conflict. (p. 346)

**Image Theater.** Image Theatre applies a performance technique in which one person, acting as a “sculptor,” molds one or more people acting as “statues,” by using only touch and mirror-imaging without using any words. “The body becomes an expressive tool used to represent non-verbal, a wide repertoire of feelings, ideas, and attitudes” (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort, p. 339). By using selected themes, participants “sculpt” images onto their own and others’ bodies through a sequence of movement-based and interactive exercises.

**Four developmental stages of TO.** Boal described the four stages of development that TO fosters according to its complexity:

1. **Knowing the Body:** Involvement in a series of exercises, through which everyone starts to get acquainted with the limitations and possibilities of their own bodies, acknowledging previous social deformations and considering possible paths of recovery.
(2) *Rendering the Body Expressive*: Involvement in a series of games through which each person becomes able to express him/herself exclusively through the body, abandoning more usual daily forms of expression.

(3) *Theatre as Language*: The specificity and originality of this theater practice (in relation to other theater aesthetics), as it involves the participation of the spectator in the construction of the dramatic action, again in crescent complexity stages (“simultaneous dramaturgy”; “Theatre Image”; “Theatre Debate/Forum”)

(4) *Theatre as Discourse*: Affirms the merging of former rigid dualistic notions of the roles of actors and spectators in a newly formed concept of “spectator-actor.” This stage consists of simple (and non-onerous) possibilities for presenting the emerging artistic discourses (e.g., “Invisible Theatre”; “Journal Theatre” amongst many others). These possibilities are to be used in accordance with the need to discuss certain themes or rehearse collective actions, allowing autonomy, freedom and independence on behalf of their creators. (Silva & Menezes, 2016, p. 44)

Education psychologists Silva and Menezes (2016) argue that these developmental stages are structured by increasing complexity, where the next stage integrates all the previous stages, similar to other developmental schemata and theories, such as those presented by Damasio (2003), Perry (1970), and Piaget (1972).

Theater educator Vicky Clarks (1998) suggests that applying TO methods and techniques to education leads to better understanding of self, expression, and self-confidence among learners, as TO encourages students to discuss difficult issues and problems, and to improvise and rehearse solutions. Based on her research, Clark explains that “by learning to improvise in class, students would become empowered to tackle difficult issues outside of class. They would discover that they do have a voice and they do hold solutions to their problems” (p. 2). I found similar pedagogical outcomes in the two cases in the dissertation study where the artists purposefully applied the techniques of TO as a critical part of their art projects.
Summary

In the recent decades, art movements and artist-led practices have increasingly blurred the boundaries between everyday activities, learning activities often found in educational institutions, and forms of human exchange. Evolving from the Fluxus art movement and artists such as Joseph Beuys and many others, this interactive approach has become widely accepted as a medium for artmaking. Since the 1980s, artists have responded to social conditions in relation to movements for social inclusivity. This social turn in contemporary art was prompted by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the advance of relational aesthetics in the 1990s, and the proliferation of international biennials. Knowledge-making and educational methods have become integrated in the process-based and participatory art practices that have been manifested in various forms in the 2000s.

In relation to contemporary learning theories, I first presented the sociocultural learning perspective. Sociocultural learning recognizes that learners develop individually with support of others in their community, receive support from others more knowledgeable or within their zone of proximal of development, and within meaningful situations that are likely to deepen their understanding. Thus, sociocultural learning supports the importance of creating learner-centered instructional environments that encourage inquiry and critical thinking fostered through collaboration with experts and peers in communities of learners, and fosters self-directed, lifelong learning habits. Examining the pedagogies of collaboration, specifically situated learning (Brown et al. 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2010; Wenger-Trayner, 2011, 2015), provides insight into knowledge-making processes occurring in groups that function as sites for learning. Lastly, I discussed the history, techniques, and educational effects of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1968) and Theater of the Oppressed (Boal, 1974), as the basis for the pedagogical
philosophy embraced by the three artists in this study. Overall, the learning theories and methods discussed in this section support the type of learning pertinent to the pedagogy-based art projects of my study.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology and design of the study. As stated in Chapter I, my research is guided by the following questions:

Given that artists create their artwork (art projects) with groups of participants using educational methods and formats,

- How do three artists merge art with pedagogy? What are the ways these artists describe and use strategies and elements of pedagogy in their participatory community-based art projects?
- How do their project-participants (core group members and public audience members) describe their experiences with these art projects?

Specifically:

1. What are the purposes or aims of these artists in implementing specific educational methods or strategies in their artwork?
2. How do these artists understand learning and concepts of education?
3. How do the core group members (CGMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?
4. How do the public audience members (PAMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?
In the following sections of this chapter, I first discuss my research as a qualitative multiple-case study (Stake, 2005), which applies triangulation (Denzin, 1978, 1989) on multiple levels in the design of the study. Next, I provide an overview of each of the three cases (art projects) by outlining the basic structural components of each art project. Each case is presented in the chronological order of my engagement while conducting the study¹—Case 1. *La Austral, S.A. de C.V.*, Case 2. *The Council*, and Case 3. *A Pressing Conference*.

I then discuss the participants of the study. I have identified three types of participants that engage in the meaning-making process of learning² tied to my research question: the artist, core group members (CGMs), and public audience members (PAMs). As each project for my study was designed by the artist, I first explain the selection of the artists. I introduce the three selected artists with brief biographies and information relevant to their art projects that serve as each case. Then I explain the selection of the CGMs, and then PAMs of each case, respectively, supported with their demographic information.

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¹ Presenting the cases by the chronological order of my engagement is aligned with Creswell’s (2013) statement in regard to the nature of qualitative research:

> The procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data. The logic that the qualitative researcher follows is inductive, from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer. (p. 22)

Thus, it made most sense for me to write the cases in the order of my engagement as my qualitative research evolved.

² As stated in Chapter I, in my study, “meaning-making” refers to the process by which people interpret situations, events, objects, or discourses, in the light of their previous knowledge and experience. This emphasizes the fact that in any situation of learning, people are actively engaged in making sense of the situation—the frame, objects, relationships—drawing on their history of similar situations and on available cultural resources. It also emphasizes the fact that learning involves identities and emotions (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012, n.p.).
I next discuss the data collection methods and relevant data sources used for the study. These comprise site observations, individual interviews, and relevant online and offline data sources in relation to the artists and their art projects. Finally, data analysis is discussed, and I conclude the chapter with the methodological limitations of the study.

Type of Study

Qualitative Case Study

This is a qualitative study (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2011; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2002; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), more specifically, a qualitative multiple-case study (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009) that investigates the learnings that emerged in three artist-led, participatory art projects. Within qualitative research, the case study represents a particular type of research design and practice. Education researcher Robert Stake (2005) states,

A case study must be “bounded” so the case is a separate entity in terms of time, place, or some physical boundary. This bounded system may be as simple as a single individual or group, or as complex as a neighborhood, organization, or culture. It may also include programs, events, or an activity. (p. 44)

As I was examining art projects that took place at a certain project-site within a certain time frame, each art project served as a “case” for my study. Each case (art

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3I particularly adhere to the definition of qualitative research by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Creswell (2013), as their emphasis on “situation and process” is fitting to my research design:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible…. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3)

To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an “emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns and themes. (Creswell, 2013, p. 44)
project) was comprised of interactions and events among the various people who engaged with the project, such as the artist, the core group members (CGMs), public audience members (PAMs), and the curator. According to Yin (2009), a case study is two-fold:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that (a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 18)

In addition, Yin (2009) and Gerring (2007) state that a case study is a valuable research design when the question is an exploratory question—when “what” (descriptive) or “how” and “why” (explanatory) questions are being proposed. Maxwell (2013) also states that an exploratory study provides researchers “with an understanding of the meaning that … things, actions, and events have for people who are involved with them, and the perspectives that involve their actions” (p. 67, emphasis in original). My study was exploratory, as I was investigating the ways artists used educational methods and formats as part of their artistic practice and what emerged as perceived learning among the project-participants. Furthermore, the data for my study were collected from specific situations and settings of art projects that were performance-based in local settings (Miles et al., 2014). In order to study the phenomenon of learning occurring in the process, I used multiple sources of evidence, such as site-observations; oral interviews; and analysis of written, audiovisual data and artifacts. In sum, considering the characteristics mentioned above, applying a qualitative case study method best suited my research.

Multiple-Case Study

Stake (2005) refers to the multiple-case study as case study research in which several instrumental bounded cases are selected to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, rather than a single case (p. 43). Although I was interested in studying the specificity and uniqueness of each case, I wanted to explore the phenomenon of learning in diverse pedagogy-based art projects. Therefore, I decided to
carry out my study with more than one case. Each of the three cases was conceived by a
different artist using different artistic mediums and formats. Furthermore, each case
engaged different project-participants and took place in a different setting—a
community-based storefront gallery (Case 1), a museum (Case 2), and a university
classroom (Case 3).

**Triangulation**

As researchers in social situations frequently deal with impressions, triangulation is
a process to gain assurance in the meaning gained from interpretations of the
phenomenon (Stake, 2005). Denzin (1978) argued that “triangulation, or the use of
multiple methods, is a plan of action that will raise sociologists above the personalistic
biases that stem from single methodologies” (p. 294). Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999)
both identified four basic types of triangulation: (1) data triangulation: the use of multiple
data sources in a single study; (2) investigator triangulation: the use of multiple
investigators/researchers to study a particular phenomenon; (3) theory triangulation: the
use of multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret the results of a study; and
(4) methodological triangulation: the use of multiple methods to conduct a study.

As mentioned above, the nature of my study was exploratory and attempted to
investigate the perceived learning that emerged in the process of engagement from
different positionalities of project-participants. Therefore, it was important to study the
multiple perspectives from the three different positionalities of the participants (artist,
CGMs, and PAMs). This approach was relevant to the first “data triangulation,” as each
participant of the study provided different data according to their positionality within a
single case. Second, in terms of “investigator triangulation,” I was the solo researcher of
the study and did not use multiple investigators/researchers. However, a peer reviewed all
the collected data and provided feedback on my first draft of findings. She reviewed the
collected audio, visual, and written data and then reviewed my findings. We had
extensive discussions about our respective analyses. I have incorporated her feedback in the final writing of this study. According to Creswell (2013), “peer review or debriefing” provides an external check of the research process (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson et al., 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988), in the spirit of inter-rater reliability (Cohen, 1960; Keyton et al., 2004; Krippendorf, 2004a) in quantitative research. Thus, having a peer reviewer increased the validity and trustworthiness of my study. Third, in terms of “theory triangulation,” although I incorporated various contemporary learning theories to interpret my findings and carried out a cross-analysis among the three cases, I did not use multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret the results. Fourth, “methodological triangulation” was applied for each case, as I used multiple methods of collecting data: on-site observations, individual interviews, and analysis of written and audiovisual data. In sum, I have made an effort to consider all forms of triangulation asserted by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) as validation strategies (Creswell, 2013) throughout the design of my study.

Outline of Each Case

To provide an overview of the three cases that comprise my multiple-case study, I present the basic information pertaining to each case (art project), organized in tables. Each table outlines the structural components of the project in terms of: the artist, commissioning organization and curator of the project, artistic medium, the characteristics of the CGMs, project site for the private workshop sessions and public presentation, and the duration of the project.
Table 1. Case 1: *La Austral, S.V. de C.V.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Case 1. La Austral, S.A. de C.V.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Helguera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curator / Commissioning Organization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curator: Juliana Cope, Director of Development and Programs Manager, ISCP (International Studio &amp; Curatorial Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Program Manager/CGM: Nora Boyd (Personal acquaintance of Pablo Helguera, Art History graduate student at Hunter College)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistic Medium/Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling for adults as a powerful vehicle that creates sympathy, bonding, and connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private workshop sessions for CGMs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Various storytelling and performance techniques; games and improvising exercises; individual and group work; field trips to the Theatre of the Oppressed, NYC; transforming a storefront gallery space into an inviting living room-style space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public reception sessions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stories performed by CGMs, playing games to create short stories, and story exchanges between PAMs and CGMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core Group Members</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 adults (age 20-35) of DACA recipients, undocumented, and immigrants recruited through an open call sent out by Juliana, ISCP curator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Site</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storefront gallery <em>El Museo de Los Sures</em>, Brooklyn, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- All private workshop sessions and public presentations took place here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private workshop sessions: 4 sessions in Fall 2017, 6 sessions in 2018, Dress Rehearsals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public reception sessions (all 2018): 4/11 (Opening Reception), 4/24 (Theme: Birthday Stories), 5/3 (Journeys), and 5/10 (On Farewells) in conjunction with the Open Engagement conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open hours: 12pm-5pm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4Throughout the study, I often call this project by its shorter name, “La Austral,” instead of the entire title “La Austral, S.A. de C.V.”
### Table 2. Case 2: *The Council*

| **Artist** | Adelita Husni-Bey |
| **Curator/Commissioning Organization** | • Curator: Lucy Gallun, Assistant Curator Photography Department, MoMA  
• Program Manager: Calder Zwicky, Education Department, MoMA Teens Program Associate Director |
| **Artistic Medium/Activities** | Engaging with critical pedagogy-based theater activities and exploration of the architectural space, students critically thought about the function of the institution (the Museum of the Modern Art, but more in a general sense as “the institution”) and its future through collective-decision making.  
- Photography (for final representation) which was a visualization of the process that took place within each group council and the plenary session.  
- Writing, conceptual brainstorming/planning: Individually and in groups.  
- Dialogical activities: Decision-making based on debate and discussion to reach collective consensus.  
- Performance: Several exercises applying Augusto Boal’s theater techniques that emphasize movement with the body and the haptic experience, promoting trust-building among the participants.  
- Reading out-loud in the galleries.  
- Role-playing: Playing different characters of the executive council board members during the plenary session. |
| **Core Group Members** | 13 young adults & teens (age 17-23) recruited through an open call sent out by Calder Zwicky. |
| **Project Site** | Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
- Intro session & 4 private workshops: MoMA’s Education building, the galleries, sub-basement, the Founder’s Room.  
- Public view of the final photographs from the workshops: Exhibited in 3rd floor MoMA’s gallery as part of *Being: New Photography* show (March 18-August 19, 2018) |
| **Duration** | Private workshop sessions (2017-2018): Intro meeting (10/13), four all-day workshops (12/2, 12/9, 12/16, 12/23), and final photo-viewing day (1/26) with the artist and participants.  
Public engagement (2018): Opening reception (3/13), MoMA ArtSpeaks public tour (3/24), MoMA board of trustees (4/21), and press people for interviews with the participants. |
### Table 3. Case 3: A Pressing Conference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Case 3. A Pressing Conference</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curator/Commissioning Organization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artistic Medium/Activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programmed Installation:</strong> The sculptural platform installation was hand-made by the artist with paper clay. The installation was enacted, however, by the participating audience members, to function as a social platform for participants to voice pressing issues and concerns in the current political climate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core Group Members</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 students enrolled in the Arts &amp; Design Forum (ARFD 400) taught by Dr. Livia Alexander.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Site / Duration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers College, Columbia University version (New York, 2018):</strong> Three days at the Everett Lounge, Teachers College, Columbia University (10/8, 10/9, 10/10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arts &amp; Design Program, Montclair State University version (New Jersey, 2018):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Throughout the course Art &amp; Design Forum (ARFD 400) of Fall 2018 semester, at the Library 10 classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Montclair Art Museum: A Pressing Conference Event (11/28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Teachers College (TC), Columbia University version:**
Commissioned as part of the campus-wide international exhibition *Unleashing.*
TC’s *A Pressing Conference* was a three-day open platform installed at TC’s first floor lounge, carried out in conjunction with TC’s Office of Government Relations.

• **Arts & Design Program, Montclair State University version:**
Dr. Livia Alexander (*Unleashing* co-curator, and faculty member at Montclair University) invited Macon to be part of her course the Art & Design Forum (ARFD 400), Fall 2018. Dr. Alexander played the role of mediating the artist with the students and the invited speakers.
Participants for Each Case

As the purpose of my study was to investigate the perceived learning among the people who engaged in the art project, I identified three types of participants for each case according to their different positionalities: the artist, the core group members (CGMs), and the public audience members (PAMs).

Table 4. Participants of Each Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Core Group Member 1</th>
<th>Core Group Member 2</th>
<th>Core Group Member 3</th>
<th>Core Group Member 4</th>
<th>Core Group Member 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Audience</td>
<td>Public Audience Member 1</td>
<td>Public Audience Member 2</td>
<td>Public Audience Member 3</td>
<td>Public Audience Member 4</td>
<td>Public Audience Member 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section is organized by each type of participant—(1) the Artist, (2) the CGMs, and (3) the PAMs. Within each participant section, I discuss the recruitment and selection process pertaining to each case. In terms of sampling, I applied “purposeful selection” (Creswell, 2013; Light et al., 1990; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002) for the artists (I specifically applied “criterion sampling”) and the CGMs. For the PAMs, “chain referral sampling” was applied throughout all three cases. Maxwell (2013) provides a detailed account of purposeful selection, which was applied to my study:

Purposeful selection is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that is particularly relevant to the questions and goals, and that can’t be retrieved from other choices…. Purposeful selection is opposed to “random selection” when the goal of the findings is to adequately represent typicality of settings and to establish comparisons that elucidate processes, meanings, and contextual influences. (p. 97)
The Artist

As the artist was the main figure who designed and carried out the overall art project from its conception to its implementation and public presentation, the selection of the artists naturally determined the cases of my study. Thus, in order to select cases that aligned with the purpose of my study, I set out specific criteria to select the artists (i.e., “criterion sampling”).

Selection criteria of the artists. The following are the five criteria that determined the choice of the artists for my study:

1. The artist should directly interact with project-participants, intending to facilitate a pedagogical experience as his or her art work/project.

As I was specifically looking into pedagogy-based contemporary art projects, the artist’s intention for the project had to be relevant to creating a learning experience with project-participants, using educational methods or formats. Direct engagement with project-participants had to be an integral part of the artwork rather than a subsidiary part.

2. The artist should be someone who considers education or pedagogy as a critical component of his or her artistic practice.

The artist had to be someone who projected strong interest in education and pedagogy. The working mode and pedagogical interests of the artist would be reflected in relevant materials, such as the artist statement, previous body of work, and published critical reviews and interviews. These materials served as a basis for identifying the fitting artists for my study.

3. The artist should be in mid-career, having established a reputation either in the contemporary art world or in the artist’s locality.

“Mid-career” refers to a stage of maturity of the artist who has had prior experience of making art and publicizing his or her work in a public setting. I wanted to study artists who had prior experience working with pedagogy as a critical component of their artistic practice rather than someone who was just experimenting with pedagogy for the first
time. My understanding of mid-career not only refers to a tendency where the artist has a clear rationale about his or her work, but also is reflective and able to further develop or change while retaining a sense of exploration. I viewed this willingness for reflection and development as closely connected to a spirit of learning.

(4) The artist’s project for the study must be current so that the researcher can observe the process of the art project in real-time.

As these projects were often process-based, the purpose of the study was for myself as researcher to gain a first-hand experience and to examine how learning emerged in the process of these pedagogy-based art projects. Thus, the art projects needed to be current to access.

(5) The artist’s project had to be accessible within the geographical reach of the researcher, to allow multiple site-observations.

I had to be able to carry out multiple site-visits either during the production phase or public engagement phase, and to carry out personal interviews both with the artist and the project-participants. This eventually determined the cases for the study, which were selected within the proximity of my reach—in New York City and New Jersey.

Selection of the artists. The recruitment process went through several phases, which spanned over nine months. Eventually, the sampling of the artist participants was determined by a snowball method (Goodman, 1961). This was the most feasible way for me to recruit the artists that were in my reach, fitting the selection criteria explained in the previous section.

I had been creating a list of potential artists for the study since 2017. I first sent out an email for recruitment to ten artists in late 2017. Unfortunately, only one artist responded after a week. In a Skype interview with the artist, I learned his future project was taking place overseas. He did, however, give me the names of three artists that he considered to have a strong interest in making art connected to education. I individually reached out to all three artists. One of them was having an artist residency exhibition in a
New York City-based museum; although she had published an article specifically addressing contemporary artists working with pedagogy, her current work did not meet the criterion of direct interaction with project-participants. The second artist responded with great enthusiasm, and he was someone I had been very interested in for a long time; but he was too distant for me to make multiple site visits. I eventually was able to secure the third artist for my study (as my second case) by getting in touch with her through her gallery in Italy months later.

I visited shows and artist residencies to directly engage with artists to see if their work would be suitable for my study, while sending out emails to over 17 additional artists who were recommended by curators and educators of my acquaintances. The response rate by email was 20-25%. Oftentimes, the artists would only reply after I resent the email two or three times. Even though some artists responded, most of them did not have projects that were current or that fit my specific criteria.

After several rounds of disseminating emails, I finally received a positive response from an artist about a current project taking place in Brooklyn, New York. By the invitation of the artist, I was able to visit the site the next day (February 28, 2018). This became the first case among the three cases of my study. My second and third cases were respectively finalized two months later.

For the second case, I was not able to observe the private workshop portion, but the artist and the project commissioning organization were able to provide me raw recordings of and notes on the workshops, and I was able to see the public presentation portion of the project. Moreover, I was able to carry out individual interviews with 10 out of 13 CGMs, and they provided a vivid description of their experience. Therefore, I pursued this artist as a participant for the study.

For my third case, although I had an artist who had consented to be part of my study, the artist later declined to participate. I managed to secure an alternative third case
with an artist who was recommended by the curators from the exhibition *Unleashing*,5 with which I had been involved. As my previous two cases were restricted in accessing the private workshops, I purposefully selected the third case, which allowed full access to the entire process from the production phase to the public engagement phase.

In retrospect, securing the artists who fit the criteria of the study took over nine months, which made it the most time-consuming and challenging part of my study. As the selection criteria for the artists were very specific, it was not easy to secure artists that met all the criteria above. Moreover, as the premise of my study was to examine an “artwork” that directly involved participants through educational formats and methods, the stakes were high since the artists were “making their art with participants.” Often, these artists were commissioned by cultural institutions and organizations that supported this type of art making, which would eventually be publicly presented. Artists would often work in private phases (e.g., private workshops series) with specific groups of participants (i.e., CGMs) in tandem with their conceptual theme or the agenda of the work. In doing so, artists were attentive to creating an exclusive environment entirely focused on their CGMs. In most cases, the artists did not want the presence of a researcher who did not fit the identity (and age in some cases) of their CGMs. Therefore, even though I had proposed to be a participant observer (Creswell, 2013; Spradley, 1980), most of the time I was not allowed to be part of the private workshops. In stark contrast, when the art project was publicly presented, I was allowed to come as much as I wanted, and my presence was greatly appreciated. This was the same for the public programming or talks that the artists carried out at various cultural institutions.

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5*Unleashing* was a campus-wide exhibition at Teachers College, Columbia University (April–May, 2018) based on philosopher and former faculty member Maxine Greene’s concept of “social imagination.” The exhibition showcased 28 international artists, including several site-specific works created in correspondence to the campus. I had worked as directorial assistant throughout the exhibition, and manager for public programming (http://www.unleashing.tc.columbia.edu).
As these accounts reveal, it was extremely difficult for me to observe the entire process of the work, in particular, the private workshop phases. In order to compensate for my inability to observe the workshops, I carried out other ways to collect data fitting to my research purpose: first, I interviewed more than five CGMs in each case to obtain rich data coming from multiple perspectives\(^6\); and second, I attended other workshops and projects, and artist talks facilitated by the artists. This was to obtain a direct experience of each artist’s work (even though it was a different project), which deepened my understanding of the artist’s approaches in artmaking. I was also able to relate better to the CGMs’ experiences of participating in the artist-led work, as there were some overlaps in the activities carried out by the artists.

**Selected artists.** Pablo Helguera (Mexican, born 1971), Adelita Husni-Bey (Italian-Libyan, born 1985), and Macon Reed (American, born 1981) were the three artists finalized for my study. The artists were all in their mid-career, actively making and presenting their work mostly in the framework of the contemporary art world.\(^7\) Although they are avid travelers, they were based in New York City throughout the duration of my study. The artists all received training in Fine Arts from professional art schools in English-speaking countries. They are fluent English speakers and share a strong interest in education and pedagogy. In this section, I provide simple biographical information in the form of a table. I further present their representative biographies in Chapter IV in order to connect each artist’s personal background information with his or her pedagogical approaches and attitudes presented as my findings.

\(^6\) For Case 2, as I was not able to observe all of the four workshops, besides retrieving raw recordings of the workshops from the artist, I interviewed 10 CGMs among 13. This was to gain a thorough sense of what had happened during the workshops and their experience of it.

\(^7\) I state this to imply that the contemporary art world has its own politics that contextualize and influence the functioning and reception of the artwork.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Birth year, location, nationality</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Work focus and format</th>
<th>Highlighted works with focus on education, art, and public engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
From this point onward, I refer to the artists mostly by their first names. Not only did the artists prefer to be called by their first names in their projects, but it is also a reflection of the relationship I, as researcher, have developed through the multiple interactions and meetings with the artists.

**Overview of the three artist-led art projects—Cases 1, 2, and 3.** The art projects designed by the artists featured in each case well reflect their backgrounds and interests and share commonalities with their previous work. In the following, I provide an abridged overview of each art project. The activities carried out in each project are outlined in Tables 1, 2, and 3, and a detailed explanation of each project is presented in Chapter IV.
**Pablo Helguera’s La Austral, S.V. de C.V. La Austral** was comprised of a series of performative storytelling workshops presented to a group of undocumented and immigrant adults (CGMs) by Pablo, and later performed for the public at a storefront gallery in Brooklyn, New York. Stories performed by each CGM called upon social bonding among the CGMs themselves and empathetic responses from the public audience members, as well as raising awareness of the abolishment of DACA.

**Adelita Husni-Bey’s The Council.** The Council was carried out in collaboration with 13 former attendees of the Museum of Modern Art’s Teens Program. The CGMs participated in a series of workshops facilitated by the artist, which entailed a variety of activities to foster critical understanding of the role of an institution—the museum in this case—and to envision its future based on collective-decision making processes. The participatory processes (the theatrical exercises, the small and large council sessions accompanied with visualizations created by the CGMs) were photographed and displayed as part of the MoMA’s *New Photography 2018* exhibition.

**Macon Reed’s A Pressing Conference.** A Pressing Conference is an installation in the sculptural form of a playful version of the Presidential press briefing room (similar in dimension), hand-crafted by the artist. The installation was programmed differently according to its site.8 In my study, I write about the piece taking place in two different venues—Teachers College, New York and Montclair State University, New Jersey.

**Teachers College version.** I first met Macon through the international exhibition *Unleashing* that took place at Teachers College, as described earlier.9 As Assistant Director for *Unleashing*, I oversaw several aspects of the show and was specifically in

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8Prior to the TC version and Montclair version, *A Pressing Conference* was exhibited at the Abrons Arts Center, New York (January, 2018), and SPRING/BREAK Art Show in New York (March, 2018).

9Macon had a video work *Gymnasts* (2014) and a site-specific mural *Physical Education: Mind, Body, Ghost!* (2018) created in tandem to the video work on display in *Unleashing* from April to May, 2018.
charge of public programming and production management of multiple site-specific participatory art projects. As Macon’s *A Pressing Conference* required a specific time and space for programming to be enacted by the audience members, it was installed separately from the main exhibition in early October 2018, to draw broader participation from the entire college. The political and civic participation element of the piece involved collaboration between Macon and TC’s Office of Government Relations. *A Pressing Conference* was installed in TC’s 1st floor Everett Lounge for three days, as described earlier, and was open to the public so that anyone could come up to the podium to voice their concerns about the political climate, which would be filmed and sent to Congress.¹⁰

*Montclair State University version.* *A Pressing Conference* was an overarching theme and event that was embedded in a senior-level undergraduate course, *Art & Design Forum* (*ARFD 400*), taught by Dr. Livia Alexander at Montclair State University in the fall of 2018. Dr. Alexander, who was one of the curators of TC’s *Unleashing* exhibition, invited Macon to be part of the course by having students coordinate their own version of *A Pressing Conference*. The course syllabus was created in collaboration with Macon by slightly modifying the original course syllabus from previous years, which involved weekly visits by artists, designers, and cultural producers in the field. Throughout the course, students first worked individually, and then in four groups of six to seven people, to study a societal issue of their concern. Then each student group collaborated with a cultural practitioner, who spoke on behalf of them at the event *A Pressing Conference*, which took place at the Montclair Art Museum later in the semester.

**Core Group Members (CGMs)**

As one of the most critical criteria applied to the selection of the artists was that of direct engagement with project-participants, this naturally led to cases of art projects that

¹⁰A media release was posted in the entrance of the project-site, which indicated consent for media release upon entering the lounge.
involved a specific group of project-participants, apart from the general public. As previously mentioned, the three cases all ended up having a private working phase involving the artist and this specific group of project-participants who also later participated in the public presentation of the work. As this group directly worked with the artist as part of the artist’s artistic agenda, they played a key role in creating the content of the artwork. As previously indicated, I particularly identified them as “core group members” (CGMs).

As my study was focused on exploring the pedagogical experience from the multiple perspectives of the project-participants, studying the responses of the CGMs in each case was critical. Although the total number of the CGMs differed according to each case—Case 1: 7 CGMs, Case 2: 13 CGMs, Case 3: 27 CGMs— I purposefully selected (Maxwell, 2013) five CGMs in each case to be interviewed for my study. The selection of five was decided by my site-observations, as I considered the importance of including diverse voices of the CGMs that comprised the overall content of each art project. Three seemed insufficient to convey the different perspectives that comprised each case, and more than five did not seem necessary.

**Pablo Helguera’s La Austral, S.V. de C.V.** The CGMs for La Austral were seven adults (age 20-40) who identified themselves as DACA recipients, undocumented, and immigrants who were recruited by Juliana, curator from the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) through an open call in July, 2017.

**Sampling.** I interviewed five of the seven CGMs. By attending all the public receptions and public office hours during the public presentation phase (April–May, 2019), I was able to establish mutual trust among the CGMs. All seven were willing to take part in the interview with me, but I ended up interviewing five CGMs based on mutual convenience by available time and schedule. The basic demographic and background information of the interviewed CGMs is listed in Table 6.
Table 6. Background Information of the Core Group Members of *La Austral, S.A. de C.V.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age / Gender</th>
<th>CGM 1 (Carlos)</th>
<th>CGM 2 (Jose)</th>
<th>CGM 3 (Alyssa)</th>
<th>CGM 4 (Heliis)</th>
<th>CGM 5 (Camelia)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 yrs. Male</td>
<td>25 yrs. Male</td>
<td>29 yrs. Female</td>
<td>29 yrs. Female</td>
<td>23 yrs. Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration to the U.S.</td>
<td>Crossed border to U.S. at age 15 with cousin.</td>
<td>Crossed border to U.S. at age 2 with family.</td>
<td>Her parents sent her (permanently) to the U.S. at 12 telling her to visit her aunt’s house in NY.</td>
<td>Visiting the U.S. at age 28, for internship at ISCP. Wants to migrate to U.S.</td>
<td>Crossed border to U.S. at age 10 with family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Status</td>
<td>Attained U.S. citizenship</td>
<td>Undocumented. DACA recipient</td>
<td>Undocumented. DACA recipient</td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Undocumented. DACA recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation / Interests</td>
<td>First met Pablo when working at a bodega near Pablo’s house. Developed friendship and mentorship since then. Pablo suggested Carlos to attend college. Currently attending college and works as Uber driver. Father of two children. Interests: Latin literature and education</td>
<td>Pre-medical student at Stony Brook Univ. after several transfers. Wants to become part of <em>Doctors Without Borders</em> to help his community. Was granted “Dream Without Borders,” a one-month trip to Mexico through the U.S. Mexico Foundation which was his first and only international trip.</td>
<td>Majored in Linguistics at Hunter College. Worked at an immigration-related non-profit org. while being part of <em>La Austral</em>. Taught ESL to immigrants. Currently independent English/Spanish translator. Came to her aunt’s house without knowing it would be her last time seeing her parents.</td>
<td>Majored in Arts and Culture Management for Masters. Self-sponsored Intern at ISCP. Interested in performance art. Has prior experience carrying out several cultural projects in the UK and Italy, receiving funding from the EU.</td>
<td>Majored in Film &amp; Photography at Brooklyn College. Passionate about making films about immigrant communities, particularly from her native country El Salvador, using oral storytelling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Adelita Husni-Bey’s *The Council*. Thirteen young adults (age 17-23) were recruited for *The Council* through an email sent out by Calder Zwicky, Associate Director of Teens Program at MoMA. All CGMs had been MoMA Teens Program attendees for at least three years. They all took the most senior-level program, Digital Advisory Board (DAB), where they carried out leadership in developing content and programming for other teens across the country. The 13 CGMs all attended the first introduction session (October 2017), four workshops (December 2017), and a review session of the photographs before the exhibition opening (January 2018) facilitated by Adelita and coordinated by Teens Program.

**Sampling.** With Adelita’s consent, I first met with Calder, the Project Manager of *The Council*, who recruited and communicated with the CGMs for *The Council*. I met with Calder at MoMA to explain the purpose of my study. Calder sent me the contacts of the CGMs, and I sent out an email to them that explained the intention of my study and what they would be asked to do if they agreed to be interviewed. I received responses from ten members within one week. As stated earlier, although I had set out my study to have five CGM interviews, I decided to interview all ten, as I was not able to observe the four workshops in action. I met them individually at MoMA or near their workplaces. Their elaborate and vivid descriptions of the experience provided me a well-rounded overview of the project. In relation to the findings pertaining to the CGMs, I purposefully selected (Maxwell, 2013) five participants who provided me unique perspectives, while considering diversity in their personal backgrounds. The following table outlines the five selected CGMs’ background information.
Table 7. Background Information of the Core Group Members of *The Council*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age / Gender</th>
<th>CGM 1 (Joe)</th>
<th>CGM 2 (Marco)</th>
<th>CGM 3 (Lynn)</th>
<th>CGM 4 (Kiera)</th>
<th>CGM 5 (Jesse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age / Gender</td>
<td>23 yrs. Male</td>
<td>19 yrs. Male</td>
<td>20 yrs. Female</td>
<td>18 yrs. Female</td>
<td>20 yrs. Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Area</td>
<td>Born and raised in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, NY.</td>
<td>Born and raised in Ozone Park, Astoria, Queens, NY.</td>
<td>Born and raised in Ridgewood, Queens, NY.</td>
<td>Born in Manhattan, grew up in Yonkers, NY, and moved to Brooklyn four years ago.</td>
<td>Born and raised in Staten Island, NY.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Macon Reed’s *A Pressing Conference.***

*Sampling.* Among the 26 students enrolled in the course at Montclair State, I approached 8 students as potential CGM-interviewees, and 6 of those students were willing to interview with me. My recruitment was based on my in-class observations as I sat in the class sessions to observe how the content of *A Pressing Conference* was implemented (see “Observation” section). A month into the course, students were asked to submit an individual paper assignment on identifying a pressing societal issue. The course instructor (Dr. Alexander) grouped the students into four groups according to
shared topic themes. The groups worked together in selecting and specifying a unified theme and carried out group presentations in class. Then each group identified an artist or cultural producer who would be able to speak on their behalf at the event *A Pressing Conference*, which took place close to the end of the semester at the Montclair Art Museum.

Therefore, in the selection of CGM-interviewees, I made sure to include a CGM from each group, as the groups had different topics. I approached students who I observed had actively engaged in the course content during class. This was based on the following factors: my observation of how they participated in class discussions, their interactions with peers and with the course instructor, and group presentation performance.

As I carried out the interviews with the six CGMs, I discovered that four of them played the role of the lead coordinator for their group and were the main contact person for their speakers for the event. The individual interviews with the CGMs (two males and four females) were carried out a week after *A Pressing Conference*. I purposefully selected (Maxwell, 2013) five interviews among the six for my study that provided me rich data.
Table 8. Background Information of the Core Group Members of A Pressing Conference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CGM 1 (Xavier)</th>
<th>CGM 2 (Heather)</th>
<th>CGM 3 (Melissa)</th>
<th>CGM 4 (Chloe)</th>
<th>CGM 5 (Tracy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age / Gender</strong></td>
<td>21 yrs. Male</td>
<td>21 yrs. Female</td>
<td>22 yrs. Female</td>
<td>21 yrs. Female</td>
<td>21 yrs. Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Area</strong></td>
<td>Born and grew up in Newark, and East Orange, NJ</td>
<td>Born in Newark, and grew up in South NJ</td>
<td>Born and raised in NJ</td>
<td>Born and raised in Jefferson, NJ</td>
<td>Born and raised in NJ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Audience Members (PAMs)**

As described earlier, the artists not only intended their projects to be participatory and educational for their CGMs, but were also mindful about the public audience’s experience. Two artists expressed their intention of the artwork to function as a pedagogic tool for public audience members (PAMs). I was also intrigued by how the pedagogical experience designed for the CGMs would translate to the public audience and what their responses would be. This prompted me to investigate the experience of the PAMs, in particular with regard to their learning experience.
I used a snowball method (Goodman, 1961) to secure the PAMs for the study. For each case, I recruited four PAMs, to study their pedagogical experience by engaging with the work. Although I wanted to have five PAM-interviewees for each case, it was challenging to find PAMs who had seen the show and were willing to share their experience with me. Thus, I ended up interviewing four PAMs for each case.

Pablo Helguera’s *La Austral, S.V. de C.V.* As previously described, after the series of private workshops involving the artist and the CGMs, the public presentation took the form of live storytelling performances presented by the CGMs. The public engagement sessions took place from April 13, 2018 until May 13, 2018 at the storefront gallery *El Museo de los Sures*, the same space where the private workshops took place. The PAMs were the public visitors who came to see *La Austral* during the “public receptions” that were held during weekday evenings, or the “public office hours” over the weekends. PAMs listened to the stories told by the CGMs that took place in the front room and back room of the gallery space, and participated in game activities facilitated by the CGMs. PAMs also shared their own stories related to the theme of the evening receptions, which were about “birthday stories” (4/24), “journeys” (5/3), and “farewells” (5/10). They participated in activities such as choosing three cards from a card deck and telling a story on the spot involving the words on the cards they drew from the deck. They also engaged with the various types of objects displayed throughout the gallery space. During the weekend public hours (12-5 p.m.), they followed the facilitation of the CGM-storyteller and had direct conversations in a more intimate and quiet setting, in comparison to the bustling evening reception hours.

**Sampling.** I recruited PAMs who engaged with *La Austral* after the project had concluded. I carried out individual interviews with them to study their overall response to *La Austral*, and to understand how they perceived their experiences as “learning.” In order to recruit the PAMs, I reached out to the CGMs and my acquaintances. Through a snowball method, I was able to interview four PAMs. The PAMs do not represent or
generalize the experience of the entire group of public visitors. Their interviews act more as case examples to illuminate how certain audience members engaged and responded to the project.

In terms of demographic information, I collected data in regard to the PAMs’ personal background information, such as ethnicity, age, gender, legal status, occupation, and interest areas. All four PAMs were Spanish speakers. Three out of four were either immigrants or their parents were immigrants from Central or South America. As the project was specifically targeted and even titled as *La Austral* (“the south” in Spanish), this did not seem to be a coincidence. In a way, it seemed that the project was targeted for a specific audience. Many visitors came to the gallery as acquaintances of the CGMs, who were mostly from Central or South America. The following table outlines the demographics and basic background information of the PAMs.

Table 9. Background Information for the Public Audience Members of *La Austral*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation to the Event / Motivation of Visit</th>
<th>PAM 1 (Lola)</th>
<th>PAM 2 (Alex)</th>
<th>PAM 3 (Jade)</th>
<th>PAM 4 (Yessenia)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age / Gender</td>
<td>43 yrs, Female</td>
<td>50 yrs, Female</td>
<td>51 yrs, Female</td>
<td>32 yrs, Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race / Ethnicity</td>
<td>Spanish, Born and raised in Spain.</td>
<td>Hispanic, Parents are from Colombia and Argentina. Describes herself as Colombian.</td>
<td>Hispanic, Mexican</td>
<td>Hispanic, Peruvian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of Interest / Occupation</td>
<td>Art educator, and artist working in socially engaged art</td>
<td>ESL teacher at an immigrant-related non-profit organization. Teaches mostly adults from South America, Middle East, and Albania. Hobby is traveling and meeting people from all walks of life.</td>
<td>Professional photographer.</td>
<td>Works at an immigrant-related non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adelita Husni Bey’s The Council. As Adelita was commissioned by MoMA’s photography department to participate in their Being: New Photography 2018 exhibition (March 18-August 18, 2018), it was a given premise even before the workshops started that the final public presentation of the project would take the form of photographs. Eventually, a total of five life-size chromatic photographic prints were produced from the workshops and exhibited on the 3rd floor main galleries of MoMA for the exhibition. Other than the photographs, the exhibition audio-guide was produced from excerpts of recorded interviews with the CGMs facilitated by the museum staff. The audio-guide materials were available to the public on-site at the museum as well as on the museum’s website. Additional photographic images that were not displayed in the main galleries and transcripts of excerpts from the workshops were also published on the website. I considered these materials as a form of public presentation, as they were permanently posted on the museum’s public website for viewers who would not be able to attend the museum exhibition to gain access to the project. Although I only interviewed PAMs who physically came to see the New Photography exhibition at MoMA, people who accessed the exhibition through the website could have been considered as PAMs. However, I assume the experience would be quite different.

Sampling. While I was seeking PAMs who had seen the exhibition through reaching out to my acquaintances, the interviewees I recruited through a snowball effect all happened to have a photography background. MoMA’s New Photography exhibition was considered a prominent show that featured emerging photographers in the field. Thus, the show naturally drew an audience related to photography. The basic demographic information is outlined in the following table.

12 https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/49/748
Table 10. Background Information for Public Audience Members of *The Council*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation to the Event / Motivation of Visit</th>
<th>PAM 1 (Dylan)</th>
<th>PAM 2 (Stacy)</th>
<th>PAM 3 (Maya)</th>
<th>PAM 4 (Ivanna)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public visitor. As someone working in photography, always interested in major shows in the field.</td>
<td>Public visitor. As a BFA major in photography, was interested to see the emerging artists featured in the show.</td>
<td>Public visitor. Interested in photography.</td>
<td>Public visitor. As BFA major in photography, was willing to spend lengthy time to see the show.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age / Gender</td>
<td>30 yrs, Male</td>
<td>25 yrs, Female</td>
<td>43 yrs, Female</td>
<td>26 yrs, Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race / Ethnicity</td>
<td>White, American</td>
<td>Asian, Malaysian</td>
<td>White, Spanish</td>
<td>White, Russian-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major / Background of Interest / Occupation</td>
<td>BFA in Photography. Writes reviews on photography, creates own photography artwork.</td>
<td>MA in Arts Administration major. BFA in Photography.</td>
<td>Art Educator and artist. Taught photography at college level.</td>
<td>Art teacher, BFA in photography.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Macon Reed’s *A Pressing Conference***. As stated earlier, *A Pressing Conference* served as an overarching theme of the course *Art & Design Forum* (ARFD 400) at Montclair State University. The project was embedded in the design of the course content, such as the course assignments and group presentations, and its public presentation took place in the form of a programmed event. The Montclair State University version of *A Pressing Conference* was advertised across campus in the Arts & Design department two weeks prior to the event. The public visitors for *A Pressing Conference* were mostly faculty and students from the Arts & Design department who came to attend the event at Montclair Art Museum on November 28, 2018. The total length was one hour; the program was emceed by Macon and included four speakers (artists/cultural producers) who spoke for ten minutes at the sculptural installation (a replica of the White House press briefing podium) hand-crafted by the artist.

**Sampling**. I came to the event one-and-a-half hours prior to the start of the event. I talked with some visitors attending the event before it started. Among the four PAMs I
spoke with, two Montclair undergraduate female students (one Visual Art major, and one Art Education major) agreed to be interviewed. This was before the event. After the event, I was able to talk with one of the speakers who spoke on behalf of one of the CGM groups whose issue was focused on feminist gender. The speaker was a freshman Theater major at Montclair who was introduced to this project through her theater professor. I was very inspired by her performance and talked with her about my study. Through our talk, I discovered that her experience, albeit being a speaker for a CGM-student group, was closer to being a PAM (she had only met once with the CGM-student group representative and was told to read and perform the script given to her for the first time at the event). She agreed to share her experience with me as a PAM interviewee. The fourth PAM I interviewed was the curator who had commissioned Macon for the *Unleashing* exhibition at Teachers College (TC), where Macon created a mural on the second floor of TC. This PAM was not part of any of the special programming of *A Pressing Conference* that took place at Teachers College nor at Montclair University, but was able to come to see the event at the Montclair Art Museum that day. Considering this, I decided she would be able to provide a unique perspective. The basic demographic information of the four PAMs is outlined in Table 11.

**Informed Consent for Participants**

The Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on December 11, 2017. All participants for my study were presented, before their interview with me, the Informed Consent, which included the Participants’ Rights. Although I had explained the study while recruiting the participants, I formally explained again the intention of my study, the procedure of the interview, confidentiality, and how their data would be used for my study. The Informed Consent explained that the participant was allowed to withdraw from the study if they wanted. After the participants signed the Informed Consent, they were offered a copy as a record of the agreement.
Table 11. Background Information for Public Audience Members of A Pressing Conference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation to the Event / Motivation of Visit</th>
<th>PAM 1 (Jil)</th>
<th>PAM 2 (Liza)</th>
<th>PAM 3 (Beth)</th>
<th>PAM 4 (Defne)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montclair undergraduate student who was an acquaintance of a CGM.</td>
<td>Montclair undergraduate student encouraged to attend by the Art &amp; Design Program.</td>
<td>Montclair undergraduate student, One of the speakers of the event (Female Issue - Group 4)</td>
<td>Curator who had commissioned the artist at TC’s exhibition, but was not involved with any programming related to A Pressing Conference both in TC and Montclair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age / Gender</th>
<th>21 yrs, Female</th>
<th>23 yrs, Female</th>
<th>18 yrs, Female</th>
<th>41 yrs, Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>White American</th>
<th>White American</th>
<th>White American</th>
<th>Turkish, Viennese citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major/Background of Interest/Occupation</th>
<th>Fine Arts major. Junior.</th>
<th>Art Education major. Senior. Active in social justice-oriented student committees, in particular LGBTQ.</th>
<th>Theater major. Freshman. Acting, performance art.</th>
<th>Visual arts major MFA, but has been working as a curator the past ten years. She is a doctoral candidate in Cultural Studies from the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria. She migrated to NYC three years ago.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Usage of participants’ names.** In all three cases, to protect the identity and privacy of my participants, I use pseudonyms for the CGMs and the PAMs. On the other hand, the three artists who participated in my study requested that I use their professional names.

**Data Collection**

I collected data through: site-observations of the workshops (in Case 1 and Case 3) and public presentations in all three cases; individual interviews with the artists, core group members (CGMs), and public audience members (PAMs) in each case; and physical artifacts—on-line materials including writings and audio-visual documents relevant to the artists and the art projects. In the following table, I have outlined the data collection methods, along with their sources and dates of collection.
Table 12. Data Collection Methods, Sources, and Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>La Austral, S.V. de C.V.</th>
<th>The Council</th>
<th>A Pressing Conference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site-Observations of Workshops and Public Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop sessions: 3/1</td>
<td>I was not permitted to carry out in-person observations during the four workshops as they were exclusively targeted for the adolescent/young adult group. As a substitute, the artist provided audio recordings of the workshops, her notes, and presentation files used for the workshops. The museum staff provided me with in-process photographs of the workshops.</td>
<td><strong>TC Version</strong></td>
<td>“Speak Out” campaign: 10/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Receptions: 4/11, 4/24, 5/3, 5/10</td>
<td>Public Viewing: Observed how public visitors engaged with the photographs. 4/20, 5/9, 5/14, 8/1, 8/7</td>
<td><strong>Montclair Version</strong></td>
<td>Course sessions: 9/12, 9/19, 9/26, 10/3, 10/17, 10/31, 10/7, 10/14, 12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Office Hours: 4/14, 4/15, 4/20, 4/21, 4/22, 4/27, 4/28, 4/29, 5/5, 5/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The course was taught by Professor Livia Alexander, and artist Macon Reed skyped into two classes. Macon emceed the A Pressing Conference at Montclair Art Museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artist</strong></td>
<td><strong>Artist</strong></td>
<td><strong>Artist</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Preliminary: March 1, 2018</td>
<td>-Preliminary: April 13, 2018</td>
<td>-Preliminary: September 12; October 8, 2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Main: May 4, 2018</td>
<td>-Main: September 15, 2018</td>
<td>-Main: July, 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core Group Members</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed 5 ppl</td>
<td>Interviewed 10 ppl</td>
<td>Interviewed 6 ppl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM 3 (4/28, 5/10/2018)</td>
<td>CGM 3 (08/10/2018)</td>
<td>CGM 3 (12/01/2018)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM 5 (4/21/2018)</td>
<td>CGM 5 (08/05/2018)</td>
<td>CGM 5 (12/05/2018)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Audience Members:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed 4ppl</td>
<td>Interviewed 4ppl</td>
<td>Interviewed 4ppl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAM 2 (10/16/2018)</td>
<td>PAM 2 (10/11/18)</td>
<td>PAM 2 (12/01/2018)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAM 3 (10/18/2018)</td>
<td>PAM 3 (10/09/2018)</td>
<td>PAM 3 (12/03/2018)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>La Austral, S.V. de C.Y.</th>
<th>The Council</th>
<th>A Pressing Conference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Sources</strong></td>
<td>• Artist: Pablo Helguera</td>
<td>• Artist: Adelita Husni-Bey</td>
<td>• Artist: Macon Reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications written by the artist (books and catalogues), critical reviews, interviews, press release (ISCP, March 5, 2018), artist’s website, and email correspondences.</td>
<td>Artist’s gallery website, critical reviews, catalogues, press release, newspaper clips, videos of previous work and artist interviews, MoMA website, email correspondences.</td>
<td>Artist’s website, articles and interviews, videos of previous work, previous mural work, email correspondences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Core Group Members: Live performances and stories told during the office hours and public receptions observed and documented by the researcher in audio/video files, photographs, and field notes.</td>
<td>• Core Group Members: Audio guide, MoMA’s website materials based on recordings.</td>
<td>• Course Instructor (Faculty Member and Curator): Dr. Livia Alexander</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Core Group Members: Course participation and live performance during the event observed and documented by the researcher in written notes, audio files, and photographs.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/49/748">https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/49/748</a></td>
<td>Digital recordings, photos and field notes from course observations; course materials distributed during class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52">https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52</a></td>
<td>• Core Group Members:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/771">https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/771</a></td>
<td>Course participation and live performance during the event observed and documented by the researcher in written notes, audio files, and photographs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/772">https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/772</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/773">https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/773</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following sections, I focus my discussion of data collection mainly on two methods, observation and interviews, in the order of each case.

**Observation of Workshops and Public Engagement**

McMillan (2004) explains that “a distinctive characteristic of most qualitative research is that behavior is studied as it occurs naturally. There is no manipulation or control of behavior or setting” (p. 257). Although my level of observation differed according to my accessibility to each case (in particular, during the workshop phases), I was able to observe the cases in their natural settings. During site observations, as I was aware that my presence may have an impact on the participants, I was attentive to my presence and cautious about causing any interruption or discomfort among the CGMs. I kept field notes in different color-coded researcher journals pertinent to each case, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>La Austral, S.V. de C.V.</th>
<th>The Council</th>
<th>A Pressing Conference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10157272067022281">https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10157272067022281</a> (two CGMs sharing their experience about the project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs and audio files from the workshops provided by the artist and museum staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public Audience Members: Engagement with <em>La Austral: S.V. de C.V.</em></td>
<td>Recorded audio files and photographs of the event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Artifacts Writings and drawings by the CGMs during the workshops. Props created by the CGMs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public Audience Members: Engagement with <em>The Council.</em></td>
<td>On-site observations at the gallery.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public Audience Members: Engagement with <em>A Pressing Conference,</em> recorded audio files and photographs of the event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Scultpural installation hand-constructed by the artist.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
took photographs and videos only under consent and during public presentations of the projects.

For the first case, *La Austral*, and third case, *A Pressing Conference*, I was a participant observer\(^\text{14}\) (Fetterman, 1998; Kawulich, 2005), participating in the storytelling activities along with the CGMs. For my second case, I was not able to observe in person the private workshop sessions (although I did review the photo and audio documentation of the sessions), and I observed the engagement between the PAMs and the final artwork in the galleries. Below, I detail the observation methods for each case.

**Participant observation of *La Austral, S.V. de C.V.*** I was allowed to participate and observe one private workshop session with Pablo and the CGMs that took place at the project site, *El Museo de los Sures*, a storefront gallery in South Brooklyn, NY. During our email correspondence, Pablo disclosed the location of the project site only after I agreed to participate in the workshop. As it was a small group (Pablo, seven CGMs, the curator, and the program manager), he stated that it would be awkward to have a researcher sitting in the back while everyone was actively engaging in the activities. Therefore, as a participant observer, I engaged in the storytelling activities that took place in the two rooms of the gallery and performed three storytelling exercises on the day of my visit, which lasted two and a half hours. The CGMs had been working together since the summer of 2017, although the ten sessions were scattered throughout the eight months. Therefore, my stance was closer to an outsider who had just joined one of the last sessions of the workshop series. Pablo also invited me to come to the public receptions starting on April 11, 2018 rather than attend the dress rehearsals among the CGMs. Once the live performances were publicly presented, from April 11 to May 11,

\(^{14}\) According to ethnographer David Fetterman (1998), participant observation involves “combining participation in the lives of the people being studied with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data” (pp. 34-35).
2018, I was allowed to come as frequently as I wanted. Pablo appreciated my presence and frequent visits.

During the public engagement phase, which included weekday evening “public receptions” and weekend “public office hours,” I maintained the stance of participant observer. I attended all the four evening public receptions, attentively observing the live storytelling performances of the CGM-DREAMers and noting how Pablo facilitated receptions according to the different themes. The evening receptions were bustling with visitors, having most of the CGM-storytellers present. I took photos and videos to be used for data analysis.

The weekend public office hours, which happened during the day and had only one CGM-storyteller present, had fewer visitors. I observed how each CGM interacted and shared their stories with PAMs, and how they took charge of the entire gallery space. I took field notes in my research journal, and took photos and audio-recorded certain conversations. Most of the time, I tried not to interrupt the interactions between the CGM-storyteller and the PAMs.

Observation of The Council. As stated earlier, for this project, I was not able to observe the four workshops that took place at MoMA. Even if I had met Adelita, the artist, before the workshops for The Council, she would not have allowed me to observe them, as they were designed for a specific group only—former MoMA Teens Program attendees (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 13, 2018). Adelita was very strict about having the workshops uninterrupted and focused only on that specific group. Therefore, I substituted observations with audio recordings, artist’s notes, and PowerPoint slides from the workshops provided by the artist. The museum staff provided

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15 Although Adelita was very strict about focusing her production workshops only on the specific CGMs and would not allow others in the process, I still included her in my study. She has extensive experience creating her artistic work with a very strong pedagogical agenda globally for over a decade. Her works are often based on pedagogical workshops she facilitates with young people, and she represents them in the form of photographs or media installations.
me with photographs that documented the process of the workshops. As mentioned earlier, I also relied on the second-hand accounts provided by ten of the CGMs.

During the public view of the final photographs (representations from the workshops), I was able to observe public visitors viewing the displayed photographs in the third floor MoMA galleries.

In regard to observing Adelita and her interactions with participants, I was able to attend her other events held in other cultural institutions, which provided me with useful background information. Adelita was one of the facilitators of the all-day workshop program *Learn-in: Arts, Pedagogy and Reimagining Our Existence in Dark Times* at The 8th Floor gallery, New York, on March 9, 2019. I also attended her panel discussion on April 4, and artist talk with her project-participants from her new project *Chiron* on April 12, 2019, both at the New Museum.\(^{16}\) Although they were not directly tied to *The Council*, my participation in these events deepened my understanding of Adelita’s approaches to and philosophy regarding artmaking, related to my research questions. Furthermore, although these events were not part of her artmaking workshops, I was able to experience in person her facilitation of discussions, her probing as we engaged with the materials she brought in, and how she responded to the audience members.

**Participant observation of A Pressing Conference.** As my access for on-site observations in the private workshop sessions was limited in the previous cases, I made sure that my third case was a project that would allow me full access to the entire artistic production and public presentation process. I was able to observe the entire process of

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\(^{16}\)“Chiron” is the title of Adelita’s New Museum exhibition and new film, which features members of *UnLocal*, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal representation to undocumented immigrants in New York City. Adelita conducted workshops in the fall of 2018 with the UnLocal lawyers to address oppression, emotional depletion, and the psychological consequences of immigration enforcement. The film depicts the artist and the lawyers working through experimental exercises inspired by Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed*. “Chiron” refers to the Greek mythological figure Chiron, evoking the notion of the wounded healer (New Museum, 2019. n.p.).
Macon’s *A Pressing Conference*, which, as previously mentioned, took place in different forms at two different venues—Teachers College and Montclair State University.

**Teachers College version.** In conjunction with TC’s *A Pressing Conference*, an event publicity strategy called the *Speak Out* campaign was carried out by TC’s Office of Government Relations. I joined the Office of Government Relations in carrying out the campaign by going around the college, visiting faculty and administrative offices to share information about *A Pressing Conference* (distributed flyers) that would take place four days later in the first-floor lounge of the College.

In regard to the three-day set up of *A Pressing Conference*, I took part in the installation and de-installation of the sculptural platform and was on site from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. for the three days (October 8-10, 2018). I was a participant observer who engaged with the PAMs as a staff member from the Office of Government Relations, but also as a researcher.

As the turnaround time was short for people’s speeches on the podium during the event (30 seconds to a few minutes), the participants would leave after engaging with the piece. Therefore, unless I approached them introducing myself as a researcher and asking questions about their response to the piece, the PAMs did not know I was carrying out observation as a researcher. Most PAMs were occupied by looking at the installation and receiving instructions about the piece from other staff members. They would take time for themselves, debating whether they would say something or not at the podium, or preparing the words they would speak on the podium. As there were some time slots without enough staff on site, I would help explain the project to PAMs and take pictures and videos of PAMs on the podium as well. Thus, I was often perceived as a staff member on-site rather than a researcher. For my research, in order to use certain conversations with participants who either said something on the podium or preferred not to speak but still reacted to the piece, I introduced my study and exchanged contact information. Only with their consent, I digitally recorded our short conversations with my
iPhone. I also took observation field notes in my researcher journal during or after the event.

*Montclair State University version.* I observed Dr. Livia Alexander’s course every Wednesday evening from September to early December in nine class sessions and attended the event for *A Pressing Conference* held at Montclair Art Museum on November 28, 2018. During classes, I would sit in the back and observe Macon’s intervention in class over Skype during two class sessions, and note how the instructor facilitated the artist’s intention to have the students engage and research a pressing social issue and collaborate with a creative practitioner. I also observed how the students responded to and engaged with the content as the course unfolded. While I was sitting in class, I was in complete observation participation, “observing without becoming part of the process” (McMillan, 2004, p. 263), to be unobtrusive.

**Individual Interviews**

The conversations I carried out with the participants of my study were closely aligned to Kvale and Brinkmann’s (2009) definition of a “semi-structured life world interview”:

> A semi-structured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subject’s own perspectives. This kind of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees’ lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured—it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions. (p. 27)

The interviews were conducted in semi-structured form to allow space for probing and guiding questions. Probing questions were employed to gather more information to expand on responses to the questions. The interview process incorporated open-ended as well as focused questions according to the interviewee’s responses, the interview outline
pertaining to the type of participant, and the flow of conversation. Open-ended questions were asked when a more general description of an experience or opinion was needed. Focused questions were raised when more detailed explanation or a certain conclusion was sought. The interview setting was arranged according to both the participant’s and my mutual convenience.

The general order of conducting the interviews started with meeting the artist for a preliminary interview to find out whether the project would be fitting for my study. After I had finalized the selection of each case, I carried out interviews with the CGMs after observing the project. I intentionally carried out second interviews with the artists after interviewing the CGMs so that I could listen to the CGMs’ responses without preconceptions formed by hearing from the artists earlier. I was able to incorporate some data retrieved from the CGMs’ interviews during my interviews with the artists. I lastly interviewed the PAMs after the project concluded.

The interview questions for the artists were semi-structured, as each artist worked in different modes with different content in their projects. Therefore, the flow and order of the conversations differed across the three artists. However, I made sure to obtain content pertinent to my research questions. For the CGMs and PAMs, in contrast, I carried out the interviews closely following the interview protocol (Appendix E). The interview protocols for the CGMs and PAMs were carefully crafted and finalized after carrying out observations and impromptu conversations with the artist and CGMs during my first case, and were implemented throughout the three cases.

**Interviews with artists.** With each artist, I carried out a preliminary interview and a main interview, which were digitally recorded and transcribed. Impromptu conversations were either digitally recorded with the artist’s consent or recorded in my researcher journal. Prior to interviewing each artist in depth, as mentioned above, I had carried out site-observations and interviewed the majority of the CGMs. This allowed me to further probe about the project based on my site-observations and responses from the
CGMs. Before interviewing the artists, I reviewed materials collected from online and offline sources: critical reviews either written by the artist or critics, blog posts, videos, and artists’ websites.

The interview questions for the artists (Appendix D) were designed to illuminate their understanding of education and of art and to explore how these understandings were projected in the artwork. I asked them to describe their goals for the project, aims and pedagogical intent for the CGMs and PAMs, and any indications that their goals were met. I also asked about how their current art project was similar to or different from their previous works and tried to identify influences stemming from the artist’s personal background or prior art and education experiences that were reflected in the artist’s philosophy and work.

The interviews took place either at the project site (for Case 1) or at a mutually convenient venue in Brooklyn, New York (for Case 2 and Case 3).

**Interviews with core group members (CGMs).** Although each case varies according to the different ways the art projects were carried out, I conducted interviews with the CGMs who responded positively to my request of being interviewed.

For *La Austral*, as I had been on site multiple times, I was able to establish a good rapport with the CGMs. All five interviews took place in person at the project site, *El Museo de los Sures* in Brooklyn, which was not only convenient for both the CGMs and myself, but also allowed the liveliness of the project to permeate the conversations. The interviews lasted from 60 to 95 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Informal conversations with the CGMs were carried out throughout the public presentation phase (April-May, 2018) and were either digitally recorded or summarized as field notes in my researcher journal.

For *The Council*, after meeting with the artist for the preliminary interview and with Calder, Assistant Director of the MoMA’s Teens Program, I received the contact information for the 13 CGMs. As previously described, after sending out a group email to
them, I received responses from 10 out of 13 CGMs within one week. As I had not been able to observe the four workshops in person, I decided to interview all 10 CGMs who showed interest in sharing their experience with me. Nine interviews were carried out in-person at a mutually convenient venue near their work place or at MoMA, and one was conducted through Skype. The CGMs’ interviews provided me with a rich overview of what they did and were told to do, their overall experience, and what they perceived as learning. They presented me pictures from social media in relation to their experience, and filled me with detailed anecdotes and vivid explanations of the entire process. Although I had to take into account the subjectivity of their responses, which were based on memory, this allowed me to paint an overall picture with detailed sequences and activities, along with the recordings and materials that Adelita and the museum staff provided. Among the ten CGM-interviewees, I retrieved five interviews (CGM 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) that each presented a distinct voice and viewpoint, as there were several interviews that overlapped in content.

For *A Pressing Conference*, in particular the Montclair version, I was able to identify students who showed interest and actively engaged in the course content. As previously mentioned, the Montclair version of *A Pressing Conference* was based on the work carried out by four student groups, and each student group was comprised of about six people. I asked one or two people from each group whether they would be willing to share their experiences (interview) with me. This sampling is connected to what Stake (2005) refers to as “choosing participants from whom I felt I could learn the most” (p. 56). I approached eight students, and six (two males and four females) agreed to do an interview with me. I carried out interviews a week after the event (early December, 2018). I conducted three interviews at Montclair State University (CGM 3, 4, 5), and three over Skype (CGM 1, 2, 6).

As mentioned earlier, four of the six CGMs I interviewed were students who led the coordination of their group. They took the initiative in communicating with their
group members, organized meetings and initiated conversations in group chats, and acted as the spokesperson on behalf of their group in communicating with their designated speaker. Among the six CGM-interviewees, I retrieved five interviews (CGM 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) that provided me rich data pertinent to my research questions.

**Interviews with public audience members (PAMs).** As mentioned earlier, four PAMs were recruited and selected in each case to share their experiences, with particular regard to learning through their engagement with the respective art projects.

I asked the same set of questions (Appendix E) I had asked the CGMs. However, I modified certain parts, as the PAMs had not gone through the same private workshop sessions as the CGMs. I asked the PAMs about how they learned about the art project, then focused my questions on their engagement process with the project. I asked what they gained by engaging with the project, and specifically what they identified as learning. The interviews took place at mutually convenient venues or via telephone, and they lasted from 40 to 70 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded, then transcribed.

**Data Analysis**

Several rounds of coding—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Allen, 2017; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008)—were used in the data analysis. After each set of data within a case was coded and compared, a cross-case analysis was performed. In the following sections, I discuss the data analysis for each group of participants.

**Artists**

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of each artist’s artistic and pedagogical beliefs and goals as reflected in their art projects, the preliminary interview, in depth
interview, artist’s talks and artist-facilitated discussions were analyzed. I first read the transcribed data several times and listened repeatedly to the recordings, to identify topics for coding. I manually color-coded the transcripts according to these topics, and then created a table by laying out the emergent topics (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in a Microsoft Word file. I manually (cut and paste) added the quotations from the interviews relevant to the emic codes. I carried out the second round of coding considering the research questions and relevant data analyzed from the other data sources, such as my field notes, critical reviews on the artist, and published interviews in relation to the artist. This went through cycles that expanded, reduced, and limited codes to specific themes. In addition, triangulation and external check (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999) were carried out in the coding process with a peer reviewer who had also coded the collected data. By several debriefing and reflective discussion sessions with her (Creswell, 2013), I applied her feedback in my final writing of the study.

**CGMs**

The coding for the CGMs took less time in comparison to that for the artists, who had complex data from various sources that required multiple rounds of data coding. I relied mostly on the interview data and informal conversations collected through my multiple site visits. Emerging themes developed from the manual color-coding on printed transcripts; these themes were then were organized into tables. After receiving feedback from my peer-reviewer, I carried out an analysis across the five CGMs of each case. I extracted the general key concepts from the cross analysis.

**PAMs**

The data collected from the PAMs were tied only to the interviews. Emerging themes developed out of manual color-coding on printed transcripts, then entered into tables. After peer-review, I carried out analysis across the four PAMs of each case. I extracted the general key concepts from the cross analysis.
**Researcher’s Reflexivity**

Practicing reflexivity throughout this exploratory qualitative research process (Creswell, 2013; Pillow, 2003) was important. Butler-Kisber (2010) suggests that researchers should pay “attention to reflexivity and to exercise a great deal of sensitivity” in order “to create research texts that are thorough, honest, sensitive, and ultimately useful to others” (p. 69). In my writing and data presentation, I tried to be explicit about the context and situation of my data collection process as they factored in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, in Creswell, 2013). As mentioned, I kept at least three researcher journals by each case in different colors (also referred to as a “reflexive journal” by Lincoln and Guba, 2005) throughout the study. My observation field notes were recorded in the researcher journal, and visual images were all taken into account as I was carrying out data analysis and coding. In addition, recording my reflections as a researcher helped me become aware of the contextualities that played in the data collection and remain mindful of my biases and positionality.

**Limitations of the Methodology**

Although my multiple case study was not designed to reach generalizations in the results of the study, the design of the study itself implied limitations. For example, not only the limitations addressed below in selecting the cases, but the number of participants in my study and the depth of my engagement, retrieving data mostly relying on interviews in the case of CGMs and PAMs, and the data analysis all implied limitations. These processes and choices shaped the content of my findings and of the discussion. I acknowledge that my findings would probably have been different if these limitations did not exist.
Accessibility

In the process of securing the artists for my study, gaining accessibility to observe the production phase of the artwork (where interaction between the artist and the CGMs took place through pedagogical methods and formats during workshops) was challenging and limited. In particular, according to the artist’s agenda of working with a certain group of project-participants (CGMs), the level of accessibility differed. As mentioned earlier, I was not able to gain direct access to the workshops in my second case, whereas my third case allowed my presence, as it engaged a more open form of participation and was exhibited in different venues.

Diversity in Artist Participants

Securing the artists fitting my criteria was the most time-consuming and challenging part of my study. I wanted to have more diversity in the selected cases of the artists, such as different racial and ethnic backgrounds or projects that implemented non-Western educational philosophies and methods. However, I was only able to carry out my research with what I could afford in the given timeframe and setting, despite my effort to attend multiple exhibitions, community-based events, and festivals to directly meet and talk with diverse artists. Several potential artists did not have projects that were current or had projects taking place in different regions of the U.S.; hence, it was difficult for me to directly observe. In other cases, the artists were protective about the specific community of project-participants they were working with. Even though I was very interested in the work, I could not carry out my research in those sites. In one case, an artist responded to my email17 saying that she would not want to be observed as a “research subject” (although I did not say the word “subject” in my email) and questioned the reciprocity of her being part of my research project. The responses from artists varied, and after going

17 The email I disseminated to artists comprised my self-introduction, purpose of my study, basic structure, and the type of information needed from the artist to conduct my study. I requested to talk further about my study only if he or she was interested.
through multiple trial and error, I ended up with cases that had more visibility, which were cases that were commissioned by established cultural organizations and institutions. In terms of geography, as I had set out the criteria of my study for frequent site visits to the work, the three projects were limited to my reach—New York City and New Jersey.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained my rationale for the research design, and the type of participants for each case in regard to sampling and background information of the participants. I then explained the data sources, and data collection methods, including observation and individual interviews. I described the approach to data analysis and explained my reflections on the implementation of the study.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study based on the methodology that has been described in this chapter.
Chapter IV

FINDINGS: CASE 1—LA AUSTRAL, S.V. DE C.V.

Art projects tease out a higher value beyond a practical function through somehow telling the story in a way that lingers. (R. Lowe, cited in interview with Cohen-Cruz, 2019, p. 20)

Introduction

The findings pertinent to each case are respectively presented as individual chapters—Case 1. La Austral, S.V. de C.V. as Chapter IV; Case 2. The Council as Chapter V; and Case 3. A Pressing Conference as Chapter VI. This is based on the chronological order of my engagement, which reflects the evolution of my study. The findings present the analysis of data collected through site observations; individual interviews with the artists, core group members (CGMs), and public audience members (PAMs); and relevant materials pertaining to the artists (publications, reviews, previous bodies of work, etc.) and the art projects (press releases, artifacts, etc.). Within each chapter, the findings of each case are organized by the three perspectives that comprise each art project: the artist, core group members (CGMs), and public audience members (PAMs).

The artist section of each case pertains to two of my research questions that are related to the artist:

(1) What are the purposes or aims of these artists in implementing specific educational methods or strategies in their artwork?
(2) How do these artists understand concepts of education?

I first discuss the intention and purpose, artist-led activities, and scope of the project based on the description by the artist and my site observations. Then I present findings in tandem with the artist’s pedagogical philosophy and framework, understanding of concepts of education, and methods and strategies. As many of these findings were intertwined with one another and often overlapped, I organized these findings under the title *Artist’s Pedagogical Approaches and Attitudes* to encompass these tendencies. As each artist’s personal background and experiences are different and unique, artist-related findings were organized by salient themes that emerged in the data analysis process pertaining to each artist.

The *core group member* (CGM) section pertains to the research question:

(3) How do the CGMs describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?

I first provide an abridged overview of the CGMs’ responses in tables that outline their motivation and expectations of participating in the art projects. Then I elaborate on the findings that emerged in what they identified as learning while going through the workshops and public engagement phases of the projects. I also discuss their learning experience from being part of the art project in comparison to their previous formal learning experiences, and any changes they have noticed within themselves after being part of the art project.

The *public audience member* (PAM) section pertains to the research question:

(4) How do the PAMs describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?

I first discuss the PAMs’ motivation in coming to engage with the art project. Then I elaborate on the findings that emerged in relation to their engagement with the art projects, their overall experience, and what they identified as learning.
Artist: Pablo Helguera

In this section, I present my findings in relation to Pablo Helguera’s pedagogical framework, concrete methods, and approaches to teaching and learning. The findings are based on the data collected from my personal interactions, preliminary and in-depth interviews, site-observations, and analysis of written-form materials, such as publications, critical reviews, and websites.

I first present biographical information of the artist and his previous work relevant to La Austral as it provides a background in understanding the style and tendencies of the artist. The information is compiled from my interactions and interview with the artist and the artist’s gallery website. Then I discuss the intention and purpose of La Austral, the salient findings in relation to the artist’s pedagogical framework, methods, and strategies. From this point on, I refer to the artist by his first name, Pablo, by which all the CGMs and I called him throughout the project.

Personal Background of the Artist

Biographical information. Pablo Helguera was born in 1971 in Mexico City. He came to the U.S. to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Fine Arts. He started his career as an exhibiting artist when he relocated to New York to join the Education Department at the Guggenheim Museum. While Pablo maintains his museum educator career—he has been the Director of Adult and Academic Programs of the Education Department at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) since 2007—he actively works as an interdisciplinary artist. His work as a museum educator in international cultural institutions has often intersected with his artistic practice, as his work reflects on issues of interpretation, dialogue, and the role of contemporary culture in a global context. His work often interweaves a variety of topics ranging from history, pedagogy, sociolinguistics, ethnography, memory, and the absurd. Such topics are often presented in formats such as lectures, museum display strategies, musical and theatrical performances,
and writings, with an interplay of fiction and non-fiction (Kent Fine Art, 1 n.d.). Pablo’s writings include books, essays, and “artoons” (comic illustrated commentaries on contemporary art) that comment on the politics of the contemporary art world. In particular, his interest on the intersection of education and socially engaged art is projected in his often-cited publication, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (Helguera, 2011).

Pablo has also worked as the Pedagogical Curator of the 8th Mercosul Biennial in Porto Alegre, Brazil, which prioritizes school audiences and recognizes democratic access to visual art as a practice of citizenship and equity (Mercosul Biennial Foundation, n.d.). He has been granted the Creative Capital Award (2005); Guggenheim Fellowship (2008); the first International Award for Participatory Art (2011) of the region Emilia-Romagna, Italy; and A Blade of Grass Award (2017), New York. Pablo has exhibited or performed at the Museo de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; ICA Boston; RCA London; the 8th and 11th Havana Biennials, Havana; Performa 05, New York; Manifesta11, Zurich; MoMA P.S.1; IFA Galerie, Bonn; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum; MALBA Museum, Argentina; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; Solomon. R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and SITE Santa Fe Biennial, among many others. Museo Jumex in Mexico City conducted a mid-career retrospective of Pablo’s work, titled *Dramatis Personae* from 2017 to 2018 (International Studio & Curatorial Program, 2018; Kent Fine Arts, n.d.).

**Pedagogy-based art works prior to La Austral.** *The School of Panamerican Unrest* (2005) has been recognized as Pablo’s signature socially engaged public artwork to this day. It involved an intercontinental road trip along the length of the Pan-American Highway from Anchorage, Alaska, to Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, making 40 stops in between covering almost 20,000 miles. *The School of Panamerican Unrest* was a mobile platform—a “nomadic thinktank” in Pablo’s words—where Pablo conducted artist

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1https://www.kentfineart.net/pablo-helguera/
workshops, round-table discussions, and performances at traditional and non-traditional art venues. The topics and ideas were site-specific and unfolded in relation to each region’s socio-political history and culture. At each location, he collaborated with artists, curators, and audience members who created art manifestos and performed civic proclamations. For Pablo, the project sought to generate inter-cultural dialogue. This was “to forge connections between the different regions of the Americas through discussions, performances, film screenings, and short-term and long-term collaborations between organizations and individuals” (pablohelguera.net, n.d.). *The School of Panamerican Unrest* serves as an example of a pedagogy-based art project that engaged site-specific, collective knowledge-making with participants from its community. Dialogue-based gatherings and events functioned as knowledge exchange platforms in different cities and countries across North and South America.

In relation to *La Austral*, Pablo referred to two earlier works as its immediate reference in terms of the storytelling medium and the format of working with a specific group of project-participants (CGMs) as in *La Austral*. The two of his previous projects are *Librería Donceles* (ongoing since 2013) and *The Seven Bridges of Königsberg* (2008) (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

*Librería Donceles* is both a functioning Spanish second-hand bookstore and a participatory installation. The project started by bringing Pablo’s private collection of Spanish books to Kent Fine Art Gallery in Chelsea, New York in 2013. Since then, *Librería Donceles* has traveled to multiple locations across the U.S. and has grown to 25,000 volumes by donation. The project brings to light the diminishing bookstore culture in the face of digital platforms, and the vanishing availability of books in the

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2 http://pablohelguera.net/2006/06/the-school-of-panamerican-unrest/

3 See Chapter III on the artist Pablo Helguera section.

4 New York, Phoenix, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Alaska, etc.
Spanish language. The continuous demand of Librería Donceles by cultural institutions and its popularity affirm the importance of the project to connect to Spanish-speaking communities (Kent Fine Art, n.d.).

The earlier project, *The Seven Bridges of Königsberg*, took place in a small alternative gallery space called Forever & Today in Chinatown, New York City in 2008. The space reminded Pablo of the tarot card readers throughout the city, which prompted him to train a group of art school students to become card/palm readers for public visitors who came to the gallery space (Pablo Helguera, n.d.).

Both projects were important in laying groundwork for *La Austral*. Pablo stated, “In Librería Donceles, books were the main objects and instigators that facilitated experiences for the audience members who participated in the project; visitors purchased books, donated books, and partook in events centered on books.” In *La Austral*, by contrast, the project-participants (CGMs) themselves were the instigators and the experience-providers (by telling their stories) to the visitors who came to view *La Austral* in the gallery space (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

The format of a specific group of participants—the CGMs, working with an artist to carry out performances during a project’s public presentation phase—first appeared in Pablo’s *The Seven Bridges of Königsberg* (2008). Similarly, in *La Austral*, the CGMs, who are the DREAMer\(^5\)-storytellers, first worked with the artist throughout ten workshops and then performed their stories to the public audience members (PAMs) who came to view *La Austral* during its public presentation phase at the gallery.

**Artistic practice grounded in museum education.** The merging of museum-based education and artistic practice has been a salient characteristic throughout Pablo’s oeuvre, as well as in *La Austral*. In *La Austral*, Pablo carried out museum education strategies such as dialogue and inquiry-based activities, museum display methods in

\(^5\) Refers to the DACA/DREAM Act, explained in the later footnote 11.
transforming the gallery space with objects as conversation-starters, and structuring the
gallery space to facilitate knowledge exchange through storytelling.

As mentioned earlier, Pablo has been pursuing a dual career as an artist and
museum educator for over 20 years. In a published interview (Reed, 2015), Pablo talked
about the parallels between the two using the analogy of a bridge that connected his art
school and the museum:

I was at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, which happens to be
a school and a museum. It’s an institution connected by a bridge, between
the school and the museum. Immediately, I was exposed to a relationship
with art that was between presentation and making…. I would cross the
bridge all the time, between one place and the other. I would be in my dirty
painting clothes in the classroom, then I would get very preppy to go into the
other environment. I did not think anything about being in the education
department, but I just happened to gravitate there….

But the moment I started to realize that teaching is very much connected
to performing, then I started noticing points at which things started to
connect. When I graduated from school I was already doing performative
lectures⁶ and the like. (n.p.)

Pablo admitted that although it took him a while for his artistic work to connect
with (museum-based) education, he eventually realized that the best thing he could do
was “to bring what I’m learning from the environment of the institution [the art museum]
into my own work. And I started creating fictional museums, fictional artists, and those
fictional artists started having biographies and bodies of work and interpretive materials”
in Reed, 2015, n.p.).

He specifically spoke about the commonality between the work as a museum
educator and a socially engaged artist:

In the specific context of the museum, the reason why education
departments appear to be very welcoming and very appropriate for this kind
of stuff [socially engaged art practices] is because they are designed for
people.

⁶ See Chapter II’s “Educational turn in contemporary art” section.
Education is about people and about visitors and they are adjusted to the porosity of social relationships. Curatorial departments, historically, are about objects and connoisseurship. They are about understanding the object and how to exhibit it and how to maintain its narrative and things like that. (Helguera, cited in Reed, 2015, n.p.)

He further stated that the pedagogy and education promoted by museum education programs emphasize the embodiment of the process, the dialogue, the exchange, the intersubjective communication, and the human relationships, which are also closely connected to socially engaged art (Reed, 2015).

The product may or may not be necessary or important. But it cannot happen if this exchange does not take place. Art, traditionally, has not always been about the process. Ultimately in a museum when you look at a painting, the process of its making is interesting to know, but it is not essential to experiencing the work. What matters is that it’s there; that it happened. In socially engaged art, that is the opposite; what is important is the process, and the process is inextricable from the experience. (Helguera as cited in Reed, 2015, n.p.)

**Education for Socially Engaged Art publication.** Pablo’s widely cited publication, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (2011) has been used across the globe in art schools and art education programs. In my conversation with Pablo, he shared about writing the publication as “a response to artists who were exploiting education by superficially employing educational formats and interpreting education as simple indoctrination in the late 2000s” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). As someone creating work in diverse modes, Pablo spoke about writing as one of “the models” he uses in his creative practice. He stated, “I believe we can best critique by making models that respond to those criticisms instead of just simply criticizing.” He used Buckminster Fuller’s quote, “Instead of critiquing the current system, you have to make a new system that will render the previous system superfluous or irrelevant.” He continued: “What we need is people to actually try to come up with more proactive and affective tools that render those older previous projects … hopefully show how self-serving or how ineffective they are” (P. Helguera, personal
communication, May 4, 2018). Pablo continued sharing about the context of writing the publication:

[The publication] *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Rancière, 1987) was in vogue in the art world but was misinterpreted…. Education was interpreted to become simply indoctrination. Like, “Ohh, well let’s use education in a way in which we act colonial again, where I [the genius artist] am still a genius who has these incredible ideas and education will still simply be like a wonderful way in which all my ideas become communicated with like, the inferior people who can’t really understand or think as sophisticatedly as I can.”

I found that really disheartening, and I felt that those fundamental misunderstandings about what the realm of education is showed even more how important it is to be more serious about the education process in art making in the communication with the public. I felt that as an educator as well. I feel that museum education is always being dominated by 19th century models of like the experts holding forth in the gallery space giving their big speeches … it becomes more of a performative process but not really a learning process. So that was my main intention of writing, to show how it was so important for many artists that are interested in this practice to learn the tools of this emerging form, not in a way for me to tell them what to do, but to explain how these processes function. (P.Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

**Context and Pedagogical Intent of La Austral**

**Meaning of title.** According to the artist:

*La Austral, S.A. de C.V.* was developed out of an interest to create a cultural and social place. “Austral” refers to “south” in Spanish, but it’s also a name of a prominent Spanish book publisher, *Austral.* The second part of the title, *S.A. de C.V.* refers to “Sociedad anónima de capital variable,” or S.A. de C.V., which translates to “anonymous society of variable capital,” which is typically used to describe independent businesses in Mexico. (P. Helguera, personal communication, February 28, 2018)

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7 Austral is a publishing company since 1937, led by the publisher Espasa, with the publication of its first volume, *La Rebelión de las Masas*, by José Ortega y Gasset. It became the first pocket collection in the Spanish language. The company houses classics of universal literature, with a special focus on Spanish and Spanish-American authors. Austral Clásica is structured into five series (Narrative, Theatre, Poetry, Sciences, and Humanities) and covers literature from the Homeric age to pre-1927 authors. Retrieved from https://www.planeta.es/en/austral
Pablo stated that in the new context of *La Austral, S.V. de C.V.*, he intended to transcend the original legal and economic meaning of the words (ISCP press release, March 5, 2018). Moreover, the name of the gallery project site was called *El Museo de los Sures*. “Los Sures,” meaning “south” in Spanish, referred to the Southside of Williamsburg of Brooklyn, which is also the name of the community organization running the gallery space. Implying the project site and the immigrant storytellers, of whom the majority were from south of the U.S., *La Austral, S.A. de C.V.* functioned as a storytelling dispensary where cultural and social interactions among the CGMs and PAMs from the art community and the neighborhood of South Williamsburg took place (P. Helgura, personal communication, February 28, 2018).

**Topic: Current affairs.** Pablo was commissioned by Juliana Cope, curator from the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP), to carry out the community-based project at its affiliated off-site gallery space, *El Museo de los Sures* in Brooklyn, New York. The time Pablo started working on the project in October of 2016 was the end of the Trump and Clinton campaigns. Ever since Trump started campaigning for president, the subject of immigration drew much public attention. As a Mexican immigrant himself, Pablo wanted to create a work related to this political topic—according to Pablo, “in the course of developing the project and ever since the DACA/DREAM Act emerged as a

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8The formal name of the community organization is “Los Sures, Southside United HDFC.”

9International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) is a cultural organization in Brooklyn that hosts international artists and curator residents. *La Austral: S.V. de C.V.* was ISCP’s commissioned off-site project.

10*El Museo de los Sures* is a gallery space founded and operated by the community organization, Southside United HDFC—often called “Los Sures.” Art residency organizations such as ISCP and RU (Residence Unlimited) have rented the gallery space for off-site exhibitions.

11In 2012, President Obama issued the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order after the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act did not pass in Congress several times. The young people impacted by DACA and the DREAM Act are often referred to as “DREAMers.” DACA enabled certain people who came to the U.S. as children and met several key guidelines to request consideration for deferred action. It allowed non-U.S. citizens who
major societal issue, which in turn became the central subject for the project” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

**Artistic medium: Storytelling.** In aesthetic terms, storytelling, in particular “storytelling for adults,” is a medium Pablo has used in various settings in his artistic practice as well as in his practice as a museum educator. Although storytelling has often been used in media culture from Hollywood to memoirs, Pablo strongly believes that storytelling awakens a sense of empathy and shows that we feel and share similar experiences as humans. He stated:

Through this project, I wanted to break the clichés of what storytelling can be, which isn’t about storytelling hour in school where you just listen to a story recited by the classroom teacher, neither a confession-type of expression that can be self-indulgent. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Pablo carried out the workshops applying various approaches and ways of storytelling based on imagination, different perspectives, the interplay between fiction and non-fiction, and themes related to the paradox of life. He envisioned:

Interactive and reciprocal exchange of stories prompted and delivered by the DREAMers can evoke attentiveness to what is happening in this current political climate. Rather than using a political confrontational form or method, I thought it would be more meaningful for the DREAMers themselves to gain hands-on training of storytelling and sharing their own stories emerging from the process. I thought this would create a bond among the public audience members and raise awareness about what others are thinking in this time, particularly in a current time where political parties are really hurting the society. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

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qualify to remain in the country for two years, subject to renewal. Recipients were eligible for work authorization and other benefits, and were shielded from deportation.

However, President Trump ordered an end to DACA on September 5, 2017, which has left some of the 800,000 young adults brought to the U.S. as children (as of March, 2018) who would have qualified for the program eligible for deportation and without access to education and work visas (Anti-Defamation League [ADL], 2019).
Pedagogical intent: Provide tools, develop curiosity and passion.

Storytelling as a tool. Pablo’s pedagogical emphasis was to provide the DREAMers with storytelling technique tools so that they could use them to tailor and deliver their own personally meaningful stories.

The goal was to really give them like the tools. First of all, the storytelling techniques are the tools to tell stories, right? And then they were asked to learn a couple stories that they could use like a basis foundation for their stories [to be told at the opening night], one of them is *The Infinite Dream of PaoYu*, the other one is the *Seven Messengers*, and one more is titled *A Vision of Paradise*, which you probably have heard.

I also really like the relationship with [the word] *DREAMers*, which is interesting to me, maybe it’s my own thing. But I mean all these stories are paradoxical, you know? And I think that this idea of representing paradoxes is important to me. I think we want the viewer to walk away with a story, but also to think about reality in different ways. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Pablo intentionally avoided addressing politically confrontational content during the private workshop sessions. He believed that if the CGMs (DREAMer-storytellers) had the tools, they would be able to share the stories they wanted, whether political or personal. Pablo strongly believed that any political content had to come naturally from the participants themselves rather than Pablo himself explicitly addressing it during the workshops.

I did not want to show, to tell stories that were like explicitly political, because I feel that a lot of the projects we do, like the *Apprentice Club* [Pablo’s recent art project], that’s specifically addressing politics. The percent of confrontation or in this particular instance, it might not be productive. What I wanted was the visitors to really listen to stories from the DREAMers and think about the meaning of the stories, perhaps at a different level. But at the same time, the participants are able to tell whichever story they like and naturally, they are drawn from their own experience, and there is a lot of biographical material that has emerged from it. And they’ve been telling it like they told stories on the first day [of the workshops]. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

**Develop one’s own potential, curiosity, and passion—to communicate “a feeling for something.”** When I asked Pablo about the aims he had in mind for the CGMs, Pablo
shared his own experience. He wanted the CGMs to develop a curiosity and passion for a particular art medium, and to have the tools to research and present topics that mattered to them:

I think primarily it’s for them to realize their own potential and maybe plant the seed of curiosity for them about a particular medium like storytelling that they are capable of doing. In other words, participants can start a passion or love for storytelling that can continue further on.

That was what I did in Bologna in 2011, in a project called Ælia Media which was a radio station, like an alternative radio station that we started there working with local artists and participants. Again, none of us knew how to run a radio station, but there again, I relied on the participants as the source of knowledge, not of how to run a radio station but of how to describe their own city.... I encouraged them to research subjects that could matter for the city…. In this group of people, some of them still do radio, which has been really gratifying to me. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Pablo also emphasized, from his own experience, the role of himself as an art educator to communicate “a feeling for something” among the CGMs:

Maybe in the same way that you are an instructor or teacher of any class, you hope that your students will one day love the thing you are teaching, and that’s what I learned from my teachers. Some of the best professors that I had, the one thing they gave me that I treasure more than anything else was basically a kind of love for something. It’s not specific data, it’s not they downloaded any information in my brain, it’s that they communicated a feeling, and that is absolutely crucial; a feeling for something. So that’s my aim. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Project structure and duration: Private workshops and public engagement.

Pablo structured La Austral in two phases: private workshop sessions of training (in Pablo’s words) for DREAMers to develop storytelling techniques and to become a confident storyteller to the public; and the public engagement sessions where the DREAMers directly interacted with PAMs and presented their stories (see Chapter III’s Core Group Members section in Case 1. La Austral: S.V. de C.V.). The structure and duration are summarized in the table below:
Table 13. Structure and Duration of *La Austral*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Private Workshops</th>
<th>Public Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept 2017 – March 2018</td>
<td>April 10 – May 11, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Artist and CGMs</td>
<td>Artist, CGMs, PAMs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Activities | • Eight 2-hour workshops  
• Two field trips to *The Theater of the Oppressed, New York*  
• Final rehearsals  
• Transforming the gallery space into the setting for *La Austral*’s public engagement - painting the gallery walls from white to red and displaying objects of interest. | • Public receptions held during weekday evenings. Included stories told by CGMs held in front and back of the gallery space. Activities were facilitated by CGMs. Receptions were themed: “opening reception” (4/11), “birthday stories” (4/24), “journey” (5/3) and “farewell” (5/10).  
• Public office hours held over the weekends (12-5pm) where one CGM would be in charge for the day and facilitated stories with any visitors. |
| Location | El Museo de Los Sures | El Museo de Los Sures |

**Private workshops.** In July 2017, Juliana, ISCP commissioning curator of *La Austral*, recruited a group of DREAMers through an open call disseminated by email and social media to immigrant-related organizations. Nine young adults attended the first three orientation and workshop sessions, and seven participants continued throughout the ten workshop sessions (two hours each) that took place over an eight-month period from August 2017 to March 2018. According to Pablo, although the project was meant to be publicly presented in April 2017, he requested a year to work on this project, as the CGMs needed time to process and create a sense of community among one another. He emphasized the aspect of time in particular regard to *La Austral* in comparison to his previous works:

> Initially, when I was invited to do this project [in 2016], it was meant to happen really quickly, like in April of last year [in 2017]. And we started conversations, and I started to think about ideas. But it became clear that it was impossible to do it so quickly, and I basically proposed that we think about it as a project that will take a year, and that was really the best decision because I do think that it is really important to give time for the process to take place.
It is really difficult to do something like this at the tip of a hat. The thing we did for the Apprentice Club [Pablo’s recent art project] was an intense summer! But the outcome was just a single event, so it was way more manageable. But I just felt that for this kind of thing, we really needed to create a community to have a space for all of us to get to know one another, get comfortable with one another, and I think that’s why the time was really important to develop the different aspects of the project. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Under Pablo’s facilitation, the seven CGMs went through several performance-based exercises individually and in groups throughout the workshops. Many of the workshops were grounded in critical pedagogy, based on Augusto Boal’s *The Theater of the Oppressed* (1974/2002) using image theater techniques. The CGMs went through several exercises and game-like activities to enhance their skills in character building, improvisation, imagination, play between fiction and non-fiction, and enhancing dramatic effect and persuasiveness. The CGMs had two field trips to the Theater of the Oppressed NYC in March, 2018.

I wanted them to get a taste of what the Theater of the Oppressed is, and I do think it’s like a fantastic way to create self-determination. I really felt it was, not like I am reinventing the wheel. I felt that the best thing would be for them to try it and see what it is, and that was it. It was just part of the training, like, we are not doing Theater of the Oppressed here, we’re just simply taking it as a reference, to take what we can learn from it. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

**Public engagement.** Public storytelling by the DREAMers took place from the opening reception on April 11, 2018 until May 13, 2018. As described in Chapter III, the public engagement sessions took place in two ways: four weekday evening “public receptions” with respectively specific themes, and the “weekend public office hours” (six weekends), where one CGM would be in charge of the gallery and deliver stories for any visitor who dropped in.

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12 As described in Chapter II, Image theatre originated as a form of theatrical protest by Augusto Boal in the 1960s. The form increased in popularity within performance studies and broadened in use to become an exercise or game for students of performance. Actors do not use words or signs (i.e., nodding) but must instead use their hands to create an image out of another actor’s body to communicate an idea, an event, or an emotion (Boal, 1974/2002).
For the evening public receptions, Pablo curated the space to have the storytellers tell their stories simultaneously in both the front and back rooms of the gallery space, *El Museo de los Sures in Brooklyn*, NY. Pablo’s interest in the service industry prompted him to curate the gallery space to function as a “storytelling spa” or a “storytelling restaurant.” Pablo said, “Whoever you are and whatever time you have to engage with the project, the public visitor should be able to have something to leave with” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

To allow multiple entry points for the PAMs to engage with the project, Pablo intentionally curated the gallery space to have multiple DREAMer-storytellers (CGMs) share their stories simultaneously in different spots and in different styles. The gallery space was comprised of two rooms. In the front gallery room, DREAMer-storytellers relayed short stories (“appetizer-like stories,” in Pablo’s terms) in the front corner near the entrance. A different DREAMer-storyteller (CGM) sat at a desk and would facilitate an improvisational story game with the PAMs. For example, there were cards covering the desk sorted in three different colors that each represented a place, character, and time. PAMs would draw one card from each colored category to make a story incorporating all three cards. For example, a PAM would withdraw a card from the “place” category and the card would say “Fifth Avenue.” Then the PAM would have to incorporate “Fifth Avenue” as the place of his or her improvisational story to be told to the CGM sitting at the desk. In the rear gallery room, more elaborate stories were delivered by the CGMs, with comfortable sofas and a rug for PAMs to sit on. The rear gallery room was dark and lit with dim red lights where people could not see each other clearly. It was recommended that the PAMs have their eyes closed while listening to the stories. According to my observation, I noticed that more personal and autobiographical stories were shared by the CGMs, including a border-crossing or their first and last visit to their home countries. The stories were quite emotional, and the dark lights prompted a more focused level of attention and visual imagination.
**Displayed artifacts and setting.** Pablo wanted the gallery space to be inviting for the PAMs to feel comfortable while engaging with one another through stories. Thus, after the private workshop series was over and during the dress rehearsal phase in March 2018, Pablo and the CGMs transformed the entire gallery space. They painted the bare white walls in Bordeaux red. They also collected and displayed interesting and personally meaningful objects around the room to initiate conversations with visitors. These objects included old storybooks, antique objects like a 120-year-old Spanish Bible, old silverware, a hand-carved Chinese chess set, antique lamps, Pablo’s first collage drawing from childhood, and Juliana’s family rug that was handed down for generations and shipped from Vermont. The objects were effective conversation starters for many visitors, as they spent time talking with CGMs about the stories behind the objects during the evening receptions and public office hours.
Pablo’s Pedagogical Approaches and Attitudes Reflected in *La Austral*

This section describes Pablo’s work in relation to pedagogy and the convergence between his art practice and education. The findings in this section emerged from my interviews with the artist and from site observations, reviews of the artist’s work, and his publications. Moreover, my previous experiences taking a museum art education course session facilitated by Pablo during my master’s program in 2012, attending his artist’s
talk in 2015, and viewing his two-person exhibition (The 8th Floor gallery, 2018) laid a foundation for my understanding of Pablo’s oeuvre reflected in *La Austral*. The following is an outline of the themes that emerged in relation to Pablo’s pedagogical attitudes and approaches reflected in *La Austral*.

Table 14. Outline of Pablo’s Pedagogical Approaches and Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pablo Helguera’s Pedagogical Approaches and Attitudes in <em>La Austral</em></strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>o <strong>Facilitating an Experiential Space</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Provide experience through direct engagement with storytellers</td>
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<td>▪ Social engagement in art as learning</td>
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<td>▪ Promote different experience of reality: Balance between the poetics of storytelling and politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Artist as interconnector of knowledge</td>
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<td>o <strong>Methods &amp; Strategies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Multi-sensorial exercises in storytelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Museum display strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Multiple entry points for engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Creating different project formats/ models</td>
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**Facilitating an experiential space.** I intentionally use the word “facilitate” to reflect Pablo’s role in carrying out the private workshops and public presentations, and “experiential space” to emphasize Pablo’s intention of transforming the entire gallery into an immersive space for public visitors to have a unique experience through storytelling. Pablo viewed the social engagement experience between the DREAMer storytellers and public audience members as a way of learning and knowledge-making. I elaborate on this in the following section through the sub-themes that emerged.

**Provide experience through direct engagement with storytellers.** As stated earlier, through *La Austral*, Pablo wanted to provide the public visitors a unique experience by
having them directly engage with the DREAMer-storytellers (CGMs) in the El Museo de los Sures gallery space. Pablo shared about his interest in the service industry, connecting it to the role of the artist as someone who provides an experience to the public audience. This stemmed from his background as a museum educator who facilitated experiential learning with the museum public visitors through engagement with artworks. However, if the museum experience is usually mediated through object-based artworks, in *La Austral*, Pablo wanted the experience to be mediated by direct engagement through people. He referred to this as a “peer experience.”

I’ve been fascinated in recent years by the service industry and how we as artists can function in that world to provide experiences. So *I was thinking specifically about a project for peer experience and not just about objects.* I mean, we have objects here, but they are more like props. That stems directly from my background as an educator in museums. To me, objects or artworks are mainly springboards for conversation. That is where we produce the experience.

So, I wanted to focus on that experience, and that’s why we structured the place this way where the visitor comes in and they select from a menu of things they want to do. And we would provide that for them. Yeah, and that’s it. So in contrast to the bookstore [*Librería Donceles*, Pablo’s previous on-going project], we don’t have books here, but we have stories. So, it does have this *literary element, but in a much more direct experience type of way.* (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Pablo envisioned *La Austral* to function as a “storytelling spa” or a “storytelling restaurant” where the public visitors would be provided with a variety of stories they could choose from. People could drop by and engage with the storytellers situated in different spots telling different stories (of different lengths and levels of seriousness) either in the front or dark rear room. The gallery walls were also filled with a variety of objects to engage with, and included a display of Pablo’s recent series of collage work that had not been publicly presented before.

Let’s say the approach or strategy [of *La Austral*] was similar [to *The Seven Bridges of Königsberg*]; having this space open to the public where anybody could just walk in and have this reading done. In this case, it’s also, not exactly a reading, it’s a storytelling, let’s say, delivery. I like to describe it as a *storytelling spa* haha or a *storytelling restaurant.*
When we try to structure our repertoires, what’s important to me is that each participant would structure their own repertoires in whichever way they found it fitting. But the rules were that what they offer to the visitor would have to be varied, like they could choose to do again, they could choose to hear an appetizer size story, a very quick 2-minute story, or they could do a longer story in which case they go to the back room and hear this longer story or something else. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Pablo shared about his tendency to create an experiential space mediated through the direct engagement with people influenced by the Bauhaus exhibition at MoMA in 2009. He spoke about how the space embodied the Bauhaus spirit through facilitators/educators enacting the activities that would be carried out in the Bauhaus school during 1919. This previous experience served as an inspiration for La Austral.

The first project [from working at MoMA] that I feel of substantial relevance [to La Austral] was my experience during the Bauhaus exhibition that we had in 2009. We opened a space called the Bauhaus Lab. We were faced with, what do we do with an exhibition of this magnitude that really was about a school…. So what we decided to do was to create an open classroom that tried as much as possible to replicate or evoke the spirit of what it were like to be in Bauhaus in 1919. So if you were sitting in a classroom with Johannes Itten….

Yeah, so that was the beginning of imagining a space where individuals are engaged directly with facilitators and teachers, and that really has a lot to do what I do here [in La Austral]. It’s really a lot about the drop-in participant and the way in which you structure a space in this multifaceted way in which the participant can come in…. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

**Social engagement in art as learning.** In our conversation, Pablo clearly spoke about his interest in social processes of art, which he stated as his central interest as a museum educator/artist. He referred these social processes of art in terms of social dynamics when interacting with the public visitors in a museum. As an (museum)

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13Pablo’s interest in the social dynamics of the art world is well reflected and manifested in his overall artistic practice, that encompasses not only his social practice art projects and museum work but also his publications. In *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (2011), he includes a separate chapter on audience engagement along with other strategies and tactics of socially engaged art. His other publications, such as *The Pablo Helguera Manual of Contemporary Art Style* (2007), *Artoons* (2009), *Art Scenes: The Social Scripts of the Art World*
educator who tries to better understand his audience members, he emphasized the importance of observing the audience, which has served as a resource in creating La Austral.

I have always been attracted to the social processes of art. That has always been my central interest in my career. As an educator, I have to observe them because it is through that observation that you function as an educator and you realize that you have to pay attention to your audience and see how they respond. So, it all started with me observing those social dynamics. I still believe and I try to use what I’ve learned from all those observations to produce projects like this. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

As Pablo talked about the importance of an unmediated direct experience with people in an era where people are so dependent on social media, he stated that as a social practice artist, his aspiration of creating work like La Austral was about awakening a sensibility of the social experience among the audience members:

So I am on social media whatever it is what it is … but I feel that what I do tries to ameliorate the condition of being so connected and in a way I hope that what we do, what I do, and what we do in social practice is really to reawaken the sensibility of the social experience: how it’s multi-sensorial and really about conversation and really about experiences. So all that is really the central thing. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

For Pablo, learning is inextricable from the social experience, which is tied to informal learning and life-long learning. Pablo elaborated on the significance of informal learning, as he believes the most important learning of life occurs in informal sites outside school:

And we give ourselves as individuals this little period of time where we are in a structured environment [school] of learning, but everything else is also learning … some of the most important things we have learned, it doesn’t happen here [pointing to a diagram he drew of structured learning in school], it happens with our parents, it happens with our relatives or significant others, it happens with experiences you had on your own, like when traveling somewhere. And that is informal learning. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

(2012) among many others, depict and discuss the social dynamics and situations of today’s contemporary art world with astute humor.
Pablo’s interest in informal learning sites such as immersive environments was reflected in how he designed La Austral – where learning occurs from the social interactions with the storytellers and through multiple entry points.

And museums are a really important element of informal learning because, you know the third place? It’s not home, it’s not work…they are kind of like third places. Because they are an environment of leisure for the majority of people, you go there and enjoy it, and unless you went on a formal education tour, in general you go there out of your own accord but it can offer you really important possibilities for learning. And the potential of all those experiential learning experiences is what interests me. I am interested in immersive environments, I’m interested in how these spaces that are in a way parenthesis in our lives, and how art kind of can function and provide you with these insights. I think about that in art in general; in every artwork it gives you like a new insight of the world. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Promote different experience of reality: Balance between the poetics of storytelling and politics. In La Austral, storytelling was the main artistic medium in providing an experience to the visitors. As stated earlier in regard to Pablo’s intention of designing La Austral, he believes in “the power of storytelling as a powerful tool that enhances empathy among each other particularly in the current time when political polarities are hurting the society.”

Having this interesting space set up to invite people in to have these exchanges of stories…. Storytelling is a really powerful tool used all the time - in movies, in Hollywood, memoirs, and it is also a very powerful vehicle that awakens sympathy that shows you that we all are human and that we all feel and share similar experiences. It’s like once you have heard the stories by individuals about their plight or problems, you realize they are much more similar to you than you ever thought…. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Pablo’s personal interest was strongly reflected in the choice of the sample stories he suggested to the CGMs during the workshops. As an artist interested in the interplay between fiction and non-fiction and surrealism (Pablo Helguera,14 n.d.), he particularly

14http://pablohelguera.net/tag/fiction/
wanted the public visitors to think about reality in different ways through the stories presented in *La Austral*. He intentionally incorporated stories that poetically addressed the paradox of life.

I also really like the relationship with DREAMers, which is interesting to me, maybe it’s my own thing, it’s interesting to me. I mean all these stories are paradoxical you know? And I think that *this idea of representing paradoxes is important to me*.

“The Infinite dream of Pao Yu” is actually from a Chinese 19th century novel called the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which is why the room back there is red. It’s a story that was very liked by Borges. I first saw it in an anthology that he put together of short stories and it was a fascinating and really impactful story for me.

I think we want the viewer to walk away with a story, but also to think about reality in different ways. The second story, “The Vision of Paradise,” is from a Spanish writer from the 19th century…. When I was a child, I had a book, we had a book at home, and I would read those stories and they would really have a big impact on me. So when I think about stories, I often think about that story.

And the third story, “The Seven Messengers,” was by Dino Buzzati. He was a famous Italian writer whose work, almost in a Kafkan way, has an element of the uncanny and also the highly existential, somehow anguishing because he relates to the paradox of life. So I thought that those three stories were just really powerful stories that were really nice to learn. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

As mentioned earlier, even though he intentionally recruited DACA recipients/undocumented immigrants for *La Austral*, he intentionally did not bring up political content during the workshops or in the sample stories he shared with the CGMs. He strongly believed that the political content had to be initiated by the CGMs themselves and not through himself.

And I did not want to write to show, to tell stories that were like explicitly political, you know? Because I feel that a lot of the projects we do, like the *Apprentice Club* [Pablo’s previous project], that’s specifically addressing politics. *The percent of confrontation or in this particular instance, it might not be productive.*

*What I wanted was the visitors to really listen to stories from the DREAMers and think about the meaning of the stories, perhaps at a different level. But at the same time the participants [CGMs] are able to tell whichever story they like and naturally, that are drawn from their own experience, and there is a lot of biographical material that has emerged from*
it. And they’ve been telling it, like they told stories on the first day, and next we were going to hear amazing stories; Carlos is going to tell a story about his birthday; that was the day he immigrated to the US. It’s an incredible story. I hope he tells it. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Later in our conversation, he further elaborated on the struggle of balancing the poetics of storytelling and the political content of DACA.

Well, I confess that to me I struggled with the political dimension of this because I did not want to make this just exclusively about DACA, and even though we initially advertised and asked for DREAMers to participate in this series of sessions, I did not want it to be explicit. I was in a way a little bit insurgent of interpretation like, well how explicit should we make it, and I just really needed to trust the process. I felt very strongly that it needed to come out from them, that I couldn’t just come and say, let’s tell your DACA story! It felt to me like very, manipulative. I felt that if the process were to be successful, that they out of their own accord and desire and willingness will have to do it themselves, and I’m very happy to see that it did happen.

It was to me, a certain kind of gamble and kind of like a hypothesis I had. We’re creating this personal space for you to tell your stories, but I won’t tell you what personal story to tell, you tell whatever story you want to tell. And they chose to speak about stories that are about their own experience. And they, not always, but many times are about that.

I felt it was a very important rule that I should not break, because otherwise, I am basically telling them what to say which is completely counterproductive to the entire process. This has to feel like a process of creativity and freedom of self. I mean teaching is not just like giving or fixing things for people, it’s showing them how things work. Then they make the decision of how to change them. It’s basically helping them see issues so that they can make a decision of how to change them. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

**Collective knowledge-making and artmaking.** As stated earlier, *La Austral* was created as a structure of collaborating with a core group of participants—the DREAMers (CGMs)—through a series of workshops led by Pablo. Pablo emphasized the collectivity of the process in creating the content of the artwork:

I’ve done this [applying a model of working with a group of participants] with many other past projects. It is very helpful because it’s not like I am this expert that is teaching others to learn this technique, you know? I learn with them as well. It’s a very collective process. In a way, it’s closer to theater in the way you workshop a play, you workshop an idea, you know? An architecture of collectives. It’s not me directing them from the onset, I mean, yes, I am leading the process but I am not dictating what will
be the final outcome. So this project [La Austral] is the result of all those interests and in a way a summary of the past processes I have followed for the projects I have made in the last four years or so. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

For Pablo, critical pedagogy has been the foundational philosophy of his educational artistic practice. He takes on the role of teaching as a facilitator, rather than a teacher dispensing information to the learners in a top-down manner.

I’ve always tried to make efforts to really show great respect for the knowledge that the person has as part of the interaction. It really comes from critical pedagogy and formulating Paulo Freire’s intellectual knowledge of even the fact that if I am like, the artist, I just happen to be put in this role. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

As he said to me, “If you respect who they are, and let them be involved in the way they are, they exhilarate” (P. Helguera, personal communication, April 11, 2018). It was obvious, with his extensive experience as an adult art educator, that he had developed a way of engaging and utilizing people’s strengths and talents in a collective manner. Group work and role-playing have been one of his major ways of engaging adult participants that come from various walks of life. As he stated in the following, his artistic practice bridges education by creating platforms where people can participate and create meaning in a collective and collaborative way.

It’s not that I am superior to anyone else, it’s just that I have an expertise that is different from the expertise of others. But that expertise of others is really valuable in their own way. In fact, if there is something I can do as an artist, it is to just show how that experience can be shown in their work. The way that this is normally done is by creating platforms where people can speak back and fill the blanks and complete the piece with their own input.

Creating a platform where people can speak and fill in the blanks was Pablo’s role as the artist-educator. He specifically used the term “the interconnector of knowledge” in describing how as a socially engaged artist he creates his art projects by connecting the tacit knowledge of the participants.

That’s what the project [The School of Panamerican Unrest, Pablo’s previous art project] was about. It was to invite groups of people to articulate
for themselves and by themselves the realities of their town. So that people in El Salvador would actually say, well, these are the interests that we care about that they would articulate. So there were emitting a type of knowledge that is based on experience that one could have. But I was there some time offering structure that they had not considered before. It was meant to connect different kinds of knowledge. So, it was interesting and perhaps the most important part was how people from Vancouver shared thoughts that were also listened to by people in Nebraska or Chile or Argentina and how people would compare and contrast those different types of knowledge. I was playing the role of the interconnector of knowledge more than anything else.

**Methods and strategies.**

**Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed.** Pablo’s strong interest in performance art was projected throughout the workshop activities and the design of the overall project. He employed character role-playing and other image theater techniques based on Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed* (1974), as discussed in Chapter II. The core group members also attended two workshops facilitated by the Theater of the Oppressed NYC group in March, 2018.

**Museum display strategies.** As stated in his interview with Helen Reed (2015), Pablo has been using museum display strategies as a way to alter reality in an interior space. As previously discussed, for *La Austral*, he painted the bare white walls and brought in interesting objects, antiques, furniture, and his own collage artworks to the space. The white cube gallery was transformed into a warm and cozy living room setting. The displayed objects also functioned as a springboard to facilitate conversations with the viewers along with the storytellers in the space.

**Providing multiple entries for engagement.** Pablo curated the entire gallery space to have simultaneous activities in different areas of the space, along with interesting objects and artifacts displayed. He kept the structure open so that visitors could engage in any way they wanted.

It’s really a lot about the drop-in participant and the way in which you structure a space in this multifaceted way in which the participant can come in and they only have 2 seconds to talk to you, and you can still do
something for them; they have 2 minutes, 3 minutes, 4 minutes, if they want to spend all day here, we can also find a way to engage with that person. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Creating “project models” as strategy: Educational model—training core group.

In our conversation, Pablo often mentioned how La Austral was a “model” he had come up with after carrying out other projects. He shared about the collective learning process in this type of format, which he stated was similar to theater. The model was a curriculum with a collaborative learning phase with the artist and the core group members, and then a public engagement phase with the public audience members.

DACA as the main subject, and the storytelling medium … all these interests came together in this project, and we also had the luxury to work on it for a couple years which was very special. I also wanted to apply a model that I have been developing over the years which is to work with a group of participants, willing participants, in a process that is essentially educational, pedagogical like what I was telling you earlier about the Apprentice Club. (P. Helguera, personal communication, April 20, 2018)

Core Group Members’ Pedagogical Experience

For La Austral, there were a total of eight CGMs (including the participant who was assisting Pablo with communication, who was not an immigrant or DACA recipient) who started in August of 2017 and participated in the workshops, two field trips, dress rehearsals, and the public receptions until May of 2018. Four were DACA recipients (two females and two males all from South America) who were undocumented, and two (one female and one male both from Mexico) had been undocumented but attained U.S. citizenship after living in the U.S. for over 15 years. One member from Estonia was working as an intern at ISCP, but was willing to migrate to the U.S. Although all the members were willing to share their experiences with me, due to scheduling conflicts and time restrictions, I was able to interview five CGMs out of the seven (see Chapter III, Table 6 for the demographics of the CGMs).
The interview protocol (Appendix E) entailed multiple questions focused on what the participants viewed as learning in *La Austral* and how this learning compared to their previous learning experiences in school as well as in art experiences in other settings. As I interviewed them near the end of the nine-month project, they spoke about the influence the project had on them and what they noticed had changed within themselves after being a part of *La Austral* (August 2017-May 2018).

The findings from coded data in relation to what the CGMs perceived as learning are organized by salient themes along with other prominent themes that emerged in the data analysis process. I discuss them in the following section in regard to the CGMs’ motivations and expectations in joining the project, what they perceived as learning, and the changes they noticed within themselves.

**Motivations and Expectations for Project Participation**

Juliana Cope, curator for *La Austral*, disseminated an open call through social media and email to recruit DREAMers and immigrants in June and July, 2017. No prior storytelling or performance experience was required, and the registration for *La Austral* was free. However, participants were required to commit to all workshops. The seven DACA/immigrant CGMs who remained to the end of the project attended almost all the workshops and performed throughout the public engagement sessions that took place in April and May, 2018. Among the seven CGMs, three were art-related students (a college student in photography and film, a mid-career visual artist and educator, and a Master in Arts Management student working as an intern at ISCP), two were working in an immigration-related non-profit organization, one was an Uber driver who was pursuing his undergraduate degree in his early 30s, and one was a pre-medical student in college.

There were a number of different factors that motivated the CGMs to participate in the project, including: a feeling of connection to the project through shared experiences as undocumented immigrants and a sense of activism; the opportunity to meet new
people and do something fun through art; the opportunity to work with a renowned
Mexican artist (Pablo) or a connection with Pablo; and the chance to learn more about the
storytelling medium.

**Common experience of border-crossing, opportunity for activism.** Many of the
CGMs were drawn to the project through a sense of shared experience of crossing the
border and settling in New York City. The project was targeted for DREAMers to tell
their story; Pablo stated that, “as we developed the project, DACA and the DREAMers
became an important subject. It emerged as a central subject” (P. Helguera, personal
communication, May 4, 2018). Alyssa (CGM 3) was already involved in a nonprofit
involving DACA, so she “was very interested because [the project] was DACA-related.”
She was actively looking for ways to participate in and advocate for DACA-related
advocacy work. When she received the invitation for the event, she felt it was “a great
opportunity,” and even though she did not know the type of stories that would be shared,
she said, “I knew that I wanted to be part of the conversation.”

I looked at it [forwarded email from co-worker] and was very interested
because it was DACA-related. From the end of August to the beginning of
September, I was super involved in anything DACA-related, going to
non-profits looking for people willing to paint banners and finding ways to
advocate for DACA. I thought it was a great opportunity to do…. I didn’t
know what kind of stories we were going to be telling, but I knew that I
wanted to be part of the conversation. (Alyssa, personal communication,
April 28, 2018)

Camelia (CGM 5) shared that one of the reasons she was interested was because of “the
opportunity to be around with people who have the experience of migration” (Camelia,
personal communication, April 21, 2018). Carlos (CGM 1) shared, “I’m really involved
in the whole immigration aspect because I’m also a part of it. I found it really interesting
to be part of something that will help to create a consciousness about it or help in some
way” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018). Heliis (CGM 4) from Estonia,
although she was not a DREAMer, said she felt connected to the idea of immigration, as
she was confronting many difficulties in trying to find ways to sponsor her internship and migrate to New York City. Heliis said, “I really felt connected with the project because I myself am trying to establish myself here [in New York City], and the walls are just too high” (Heliis, personal communication, April 20, 2018).

The project was an extension of activism about DACA. Jose (CGM 2) shared that “this was a way for me to become an activist through storytelling. So I was immediately very interested.” Jose was someone who was fond of art as a powerful platform for advocacy and activism. Especially as an undocumented immigrant, he believed that art presented a platform for free expression and healing. He was particularly intrigued by the opportunity to advocate for DACA under the guidance of a renowned Mexican artist.

After traveling to Mexico through the U.S. Mexico Foundation’s Dreamers Without Borders, Jose thought that partaking in this project would be a great way to put the word out to halt the abolishment of DACA. Jose said, “I really want to continue sharing my story” and continue “getting the word out,” because for him “this was a form of being an activist.” He described how a woman had visited the gallery the day before and he shared his story as someone living undocumented and the specifics on DACA. The woman, according to Jose, was fascinated and moved by hearing his story about what DACA is. He reflected:

You’re telling people, and getting the word out or else people have no idea, like yesterday.

It’s very complex. And I feel as anyone undocumented you need to know these things. This is your life. I was very intrigued, and this is a way for me to become an activist through storytelling. So I was immediately very interested. (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

**Opportunity to socialize through art.** Several of the CGMs stated that they were attracted to the project because it would be a chance to meet new people and try something new. Alyssa said she was also interested in the artistic aspect of the project that she anticipated would be fun and different from her work: “I wanted to do something artistic, fun, and meet new people. That was my main thing that attracted me” (Alyssa,
personal communication, April 28, 2018). Alyssa’s co-worker Joel, who also had joined to meet new people and do something different from work, was excited about the project. “He was like me, too. He also felt an attraction to do something different from work, to meet people and do something creative because at work we don’t get to be that creative. Everything is kind of monotonous and the same every day” (Alyssa, personal communication, April 28, 2018).

Although Jose (pre-medical student interested in working with to help his community) was not pursuing an art career, he had several artist friends, whom he described as “depth-full people,” and said he would participate in art projects of those artist-friends. He had heard about the project through his artist-friend Camelia and decided to join.

**Artistic medium in storytelling and performance.** As many of the CGMs were interested in art, they were drawn to participate in the project because of the storytelling structure. Camelia shared, “I am really interested in oral storytelling, something I really want to develop in my work, especially in my community.” She also identified storytelling as an art in itself, saying that “practicing storytelling skills ... I think that is an endless learning opportunity, because you never finish learning how to story-tell, right” (Camelia, personal communication, April 21, 2018).

Heliis, from Estonia, wasn’t familiar with Pablo’s work in the beginning, but her interest in drama and theater—performing poetry and dance performance—propelled her to participate. She said, “Although I don’t consider myself a great storyteller, I was always interested in this field of performance, and that already drew me in” (Heliis, personal communication, April 20, 2018). She was afraid that she wouldn’t be allowed to participate, as she was not a DREAMer. However, Pablo allowed her to participate. Heliis was one of the most enthusiastic participants and came to every single session.

**Opportunity to learn from a renowned artist with similar artistic and cultural interests.** Since Pablo was a well-known and highly regarded Mexican artist, he was also
an attraction for participants to take part in the project. Camelia, a photography and film major at Brooklyn College, heard about the project through ISCP’s Facebook page. Although she was originally from El Salvador, she was intrigued that a renowned Mexican artist was hosting this series of workshops. She thought this would be a rare opportunity to receive guidance from an artist coming from a similar cultural background.

I saw the name was Pablo, but I didn’t know who he was. So I had to search him. I was like, oh cool, he is a Mexican artist, and he is really involved in community-based social sort of art. Oh, that sounds really interesting. It’s right where I’d like to have my art go in that direction. That’s why I gave it a try.

Also being under the guidance of a Mexican artist. We don’t get that a lot. It’s usually under American White people. How do I say this respectfully … but it is true. And also in Spanish, too. I’m really interested in those stories that we’ve all heard in Latin America. (Camelia, personal communication, April 21, 2018)

Moreover, as a member of the El Salvadorian diaspora living in New York, she was particularly interested because her artistic practice was focused on community narratives of migration through the art of oral storytelling. Since she was very intrigued, she shared the news with her friend from high school (Jose), who was undocumented like herself. “I invited Jose ‘cause he is one of my fellow undocumented friends. We met when I was 14, and he was 15, living in the same town, Westbury in Long Island, and went to the same school” (Camelia, personal communication, April 21, 2018).

Positive previous experience working with Pablo. Two CGMs had previously worked with Pablo on Librería Donceles, and had a very positive experience that motivated them to participate in La Austral. One, Carlos, was hesitant about joining in the beginning because he felt nervous about not having any experience in theater or performance. “There was a moment of me being like, should I? But I’m the kind of person who loves challenges and loves learning new things. Pablo has been so influential
in my life. Having trust in him, I gave it a try” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018).

**Cautious in joining the project.** Although Camelia and Jose were intrigued by the open call, at the same time they were hesitant. They were not sure whether the project would be something they were interested in because living as “undocumented” was different for them than the connotation of a “DREAMer.” Camelia shared, “When I saw the program as sort of advertised as for DREAMers, I was like, ‘Should I go?’ Yes, I’m kinda under it, but we don’t really identify ourselves as DREAMers. We identify ourselves as ‘undocumented.’” The difficulties and risks they and their parents had to face living without papers categorized them as a very specific minority, a life that they viewed a majority of people would have no idea about. Especially, Camelia shared, she did not want to be “a token DREAMer” or labeled as such through the project. However, she thought the project sounded like an opportunity to be around people who have had the similar experience of migration:

> We don’t really identify ourselves as DREAMers. We identify ourselves as “undocumented,” So I really didn’t want to be a token DREAMer. But, I really am interested in oral storytelling, something I really want to develop in my work, especially in my community. It sounded like an opportunity to be around people who have the experience of migration. So I decided to give it a try. (CGM 5 Camelia, personal communication, April 21, 2018)

Even though Camelia and Jose lived far away from El Museo de los Sures (where *La Austral* took place), they commuted by train and joined a majority of the workshops.

**Learning Described by the Core Group Members (CGMs)**

**Gained confidence through the process of overcoming challenges of performing publicly.** All the CGM interviewees responded that participation in the project increased their ability to perform storytelling with more confidence in front of a public audience. As stated earlier, the project was designed in two phases: (1) private training workshops led by Pablo, and (2) public engagement where the CGMs publicly
shared their stories. Although they had the choice not to participate in the public engagement sessions, all the CGMs did.

As previously described, the private phase of the project included ten two-hour workshops, field trips, and decorations for the space that prepared the CGMs for the public phase of the project. When I asked about the challenges of being part of the project, everyone brought up the improvisation exercises during the private workshop sessions led by Pablo as one of the major challenges. All of the CGMs I interviewed voiced that having to come up with a story on the spot in front of others was the most difficult part.

However, they shared that going through improvisation exercises equipped them to carry out the live performances in front of an audience while La Austral was open to the public. Jose shared that “public performance was not my forte and still is not, it’s just that by having this experience, it’s helped me be more comfortable and confident” (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018). Alyssa shared, “I think I learned how to be more of a performer” (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018).

Carlos described a moment that he was performing during the public exhibition phase: someone walked in when he was delivering a story, and he became distracted. However, he was able to improvise and go back to his story. He stated, “I realized the improvisation exercises we did during the workshops naturally led me to stay calm and do whatever I could in that moment” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018).

Telling stories despite nervousness in a public setting was a key skill that many of the CGMs gained. When Carlos told about how he got distracted in the public performance phase, he stated, “I noticed that being nervous blocks your ability to get the words out. The challenge was to overcome the nervousness by repeatedly doing it over and over, and now I don’t get too nervous.” He appreciated that “the nervousness could come, but not to have [it] hold you back … was the great experience I went through” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018).
The CGMs went through the process of making mistakes, feeling unprepared, becoming prepared, and trying again and again until they felt more comfortable. They had to overcome the phase of discomfort until they became comfortable in telling their own stories. Carlos shared, “The process of being uncomfortable itself is the process of learning and overcoming challenges.” In addition, he said that overall, he felt he was not prepared when people would come in for the public office hours during the weekends. He spoke about how embarrassed he was to be rambling when someone asked him what the project was about. “I wasn’t prepared to deliver the background of the project, and that was the first question [people asked] … and I was just babbling because I was just not mentally prepared … I was faced with a challenge or something that I wasn’t prepared for.” However, after that initial experience:

I made sure I was well-equipped and practiced to properly deliver the information about our project. Actually, by doing that it became clearer what I was doing and I felt much more confident and comfortable. I enjoy doing this now. (CGM 1 Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Heliis also shared similar experiences about the process of learning throughout the project: “When the workshops started, I did not feel that confident, but after the project started and doing it several times, I felt much more confident” (Heliis, personal communication, April 20, 2018).

**Performative storytelling techniques and imaginative approaches.** Pablo’s structuring of the project enabled the CGMs to feel comfortable and engaged. As the public engagement portion was embedded in the project, working with performative storytelling under Pablo’s facilitation also elicited prominent learning among the CGMs. Although each Core Group Member had a different take and emphasis on their learnings in relation to performative storytelling, they all addressed the unique strategies Pablo employed in storytelling. This approach was something the members had not experienced elsewhere before. They mentioned how it pushed them to think outside the box and allowed them to have different perspectives and viewpoints in their thinking. Pablo’s
imaginative approach to performative storytelling evoked a sense of playfulness where everyone could enjoy and have fun in the process. Several members mentioned how this made them leave after having a good laugh and wanting to return. One member said that even though she would be so tired after work, knowing that she would have a great time once she came, she would always participate regardless of the distance and fatigue so she could come and share her everyday troubles or mishaps with others.

Alyssa talked about the specific techniques she learned throughout the workshops and public storytelling. She recounted Pablo’s creative storytelling strategies that focused on spoken word performances. She stated how performing a story was different from reading the writing, and how paying attention to details and visually imagining these detailed elements in the mind made it easier for her to tell a more engaging story. As someone working at an immigration nonprofit organization and teaching immigrants, these activities were helpful for her, and she was willing to apply these strategies to her ESL students.

She shared more about Pablo’s storytelling exercise techniques below:

Pablo would make strips of paper to write things like, on 5-7 strips write a word for object, emotion, color, food, animal, a place, a time, a name, or a character, and then you scribble it up and place it in a category to create a story. It forces you to think outside the box a lot.

Or, we were given cards with images and you had to come up with something. They are strategies that force you to exercise your mind in telling a story. It could be personal, it could be imaginative. But it makes it easier to tell personal stories since they are already there, you’re just retelling it. You picture it in your head, then figure out how you want to finish it. (Alyssa, personal communication, April 21, 2018)

Through the storytelling exercises, Alyssa said she learned “there are no right or wrong answers, you just have to be confident in telling your story” (Alyssa, personal communication, April 21, 2018). She learned specific storytelling techniques like “not to rush, to take your time” and not to focus on the audience too much and wonder if they were bored, and to stand still so body movements do not distract from the overall story.
Alyssa said she would want to share these experiences with ESL students to help them tell their stories: “ESL students don’t have a problem with reading or writing, but the listening and talking, they can’t produce. By doing these activities, they can say whatever comes to mind to engage people in listening to their story” (Alyssa, personal communication, April 21, 2018).

You end up learning different strategies to engage people in conversations to be creative in the things you talk about. But coming up with a story involves all the details. Others would write it down, but I would write little notes like the name and what they are doing. But I saw others would try to write it down like a story and want to read it, but then it’s not a performance anymore. When you’re telling it, it’s different from writing it. In storytelling you can still follow even it if it’s not organized. So I see why Pablo made us refrain from reading it. But you have to remember it which is hard since you didn’t write it down! Unless we record it, we can’t have a record of it. Every time is always different and unexpected. (Alyssa, personal communication, April 21, 2018)

Heliis was also impressed and fascinated by how Pablo facilitated unique and creative ways of storytelling, and said that she would have never been able to come up with these ideas or approaches on her own. Experiencing these unique exercises made her think from a different viewpoint and allowed her to experience the joy and outcome of collaborating with others in the creative and production process.

I remember there was one workshop we did outside here, and he told us to prepare a fairy tale. Once everyone had gone up and told their fairytale, he paired us up and we had to merge our fairytale. That was one of the most interesting experiences I had. I was paired up with Gabriella and we had so much fun … like she was telling about a bear who got lost in the woods, and I was telling about Cinderella, and we ended up making this hilarious story, so that was amazing. Also, my stories, or one of the stories you heard on the opening was based on the first workshop where he told us to tell a story from the point of view of an animal, so I was really into that. I really like the way to put myself out of my own, then try to understand another experience, especially of an animal, you never know what they are thinking. (Heliis, personal communication, April 20, 2018)

Through the experience, Heliis expressed, “I’ve definitely become more collaborative by randomly being paired up with peers. The exercises have given me the ability to put
myself in a spot and communicate with other people, and that has made me realize that there are so many stories and viewpoints to tell from” (Heliis, personal communication, April 20, 2018).

Carlos said that “going through different approaches of storytelling and techniques was really what I got out of this. Every time we had a workshop, [Pablo] had a different game.” He shared one of the games:

Like, one time I remember me, Nora, Pablo, and Joel were here and we were just cutting sentences apart and we each made a story picking up ten sentences, so that was something incredible. We included the exact sentences in the stories we made. Going through various approaches and ways of storytelling, now I have more ideas of how you can do things and approach things in different ways. (Carlos, personal communication, April 20, 2018)

Alyssa shared that she learned about the ways different people could tell stories. She said some people liked to embellish and create long stories, but “I, on the other hand, like to make my stories short but with a punch line.” She received coaching from Nora (program manager), who gave her the confidence to use different methods and to find the storytelling technique that best fit her.

Jose tells a story in the dark room, he tells a personal story about leaving his country. As it’s very emotional for him, being in the dark room gives him comfort in knowing that people can’t see his face, and he’s just telling the story without feeling too self-conscious … but I do find the dark room a little disorienting … it’s more if I want to tell a scary story…. When I told the cockroach story to my co-workers [in the dark room] and talked about the slimy feeling, they jumped out of their chairs and were like, oh my gosh why would you tell that here and started imagining that there were cockroaches in the room. It’s a different effect. When I told it in this area [front gallery room], people could imagine it was something disgusting, but they didn’t shudder. They thought it was nasty, but not the same effect as in the dark room. (Alyssa, personal communication, April 28, 2018)

For Jose, even though he was quite disappointed because the project had not met his expectations in terms of eliciting more political content in relation to DACA, he still would travel from afar to participate. He said that “doing the workshops was the fun part. I was able to express myself.” He particularly shared, “Learning the storytelling
techniques were really good. They really helped us have the tools. That’s what I took from it.” He participated in the workshops because they provided the storytelling tools he needed, and he stated, “I always left with a good laugh, with wanting to come back” (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018).

For Carlos, Pablo felt more like a guide, and the techniques Pablo used were the tools that enabled him to became more comfortable with storytelling. He shared his experience:

Being in front of people and telling your story takes a lot of guts just to be in front of people and telling the story without forgetting or having that self-control. But as you do it more it becomes easier. At the beginning I was really nervous because I didn’t know what to tell and what the story was, but as the process went on, it became easier for me and also learning from Pablo in a different way than going to a school.

*Here you are a part of your own learning,* at least that’s how I felt; you are a part of your own learning, and *he’s like a guide to guide you through.* *You can do this and he helps you through that process with the methods.* (Carlos, personal communication, April 20, 2018)

**Social bond: Supportive peer-to-peer learning, safe space, and good laughter.** Although all the CGMs had different backgrounds, because they shared the commonality of crossing the border to come to the U.S. and they confronted the day-to-day difficulties of living without documentation or as an immigrant, they were able to share a sense of community. As the entire group was small in number, sharing each other’s stories about their journeys and life created a very intimate and tight personal bond. Although I did hear from CGMs about some misunderstandings and tension that occurred among certain group members, the social bonding and sense of community created a sense of respect and an attentiveness that allowed the members to listen to each other despite any tensions or disagreements they had. This eventually promoted constructive feedback and peer-to-peer learning. Also, several members addressed their willingness to continue their relationships even after the project was over.
Alyssa, shared, “For me, the most valuable part of this project was that I was part of a group that was open and willing to listen to [my] stories and accept them.”

*With this group, since we are all learning the strategies and doing something new, we are super attentive and focused on what that person is saying* because their stories are so interesting, and you don’t know what’s coming next. *You want to give good constructive feedback so they can improve their story.* That’s something I really liked because you’re not criticizing the person like, oh your story is boring, but more like suggesting to do something to make the story flow better.

*I liked that we are connected in that way and have our own journey stories, we’ve all moved around from one state to another or from one country to another so we share in that aspect of living in the U.S which is related to immigration and migration that comes in different shapes and forms, and in that sense we are relating to one another in a subtle way. Now that I think about it … we all talked about moving states and countries and how fixing legal status allowed people to go back. We are connected in that way, and since we’ve shared so many personal stories and we are a small group, so it’s an intimate thing with fun memories.* (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018)

Carlos initially had some difficulty during the creative process, but when he heard stories told by his peers he felt inspired and motivated:

*Sometimes I’m really slow or work at a really slow pace to create something. Maybe I have this idea for whatever story but then 100 more ideas appeared and I was like, which one and at some point I got really confused and couldn’t deliver and I’m so used to just being myself and not have the pressure to deliver at the moment.*

*When you think of plays and a character and a feeling … it was amazing sometimes the things that came out of our mouths, I was like, WOW! It was really empowering to hear and learn from one another’s stories. It really made the challenging aspects worth it.* (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Carlos especially shared that he intended to stay in contact with other CGMs because “I personally like them all, and we had a great experience together, so I wouldn’t just take this just as being a part of a project and move on with [my] life.” He said, “We achieved something deep that we might not even be aware of, it was special” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018).
“Getting into art,” “Being part of a legit art project.” Many of the CGMs stated that they felt that the project gave them the ability to learn and get involved in artmaking, and they felt more involved in what they viewed as a “real art project.”

Jose stated, “Art as a platform definitely helped me. I take a little from each and make them my own. Being an undocumented immigrant, going through a lot of stuff, using art as a platform to express myself.” Although he was disappointed that the project did not meet his expectations, he said that he learned to have better communication and would want to continue to do more in the future.

By being part of this project I definitely learned that I should voice my concerns—about what this project should do differently, and what my concerns are. I did have a lot of comments but I really didn’t say anything because if I said something, I thought it wouldn’t make any difference. Maybe I am up to do this. This was my first time performing, I’d love to do more....

He also said that the project not only introduced him to the art world, but also motivated him to become more of an artist in his own right.

Being an immigrant, having the dilemma of holding everything in. That’s why I have a lot of friends that are artists. Camelia introduced a lot of her artist friends. I have a lot of depth. You find a lot of people who are passionate about things and who feel a lot. My friend Jon here, Andy. They’re photographers who are visual artists.

But in order to become an artist I feel like I have to do something on my own, I have participated with them, but I haven’t done to show who I am, as a person in the arts. Do a one man show.... Put my work out by myself. I am determined to do that. *This project pushed that. Even though it really didn’t go in the way I expected, but it helped to network having Nora and Juliana’s support.* I can use them as resources to do future workshops. (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

Carlos, who had participated in Pablo’s previous project, said that for him, being part of *La Austral* felt like it was his real first time being a part of an art project because of the public engagement component.

But this was like really getting into the feeling of being in art and that stuff, this is like the first time ever.... The whole experience of being part of the project, for example, I am really good at telling stories to friends and
being open in public, especially family and relatives, but what I consider to be an art show, it was very different from telling a story with your family and friends then sharing your own personal stories to people you don’t know, it’s the first time you’ve seen them. And I think that is why I call it “really getting into the art world.” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Carlos also shared about the creative process and the work put into storytelling that added to the feeling of being part of a real art project. “It’s one thing to just tell a story as anyone would tell it, then the process of, yes you know the story but you can also tell it in many different ways, so that mental exercise and going through something you didn’t go through before….” He added, “But being engaged in this project taught me or helped me to … I don’t know how to even express … it taught me a different way of telling the stories. Something more … more organized, it taught me a lot of things, it was such a transformative experience for me.” Carlos described that the effort and time of making his stories more polished and doing it differently than plainly talking to someone was related to his perception of art, and that this project elicited that to happen.

**Learning in Comparison to School**

“Discovering the true meaning of learning through this project.” Many of the CGMs expressed how their experience of the process of learning was different in this project as compared to how they experienced learning in school.

Carlos, who immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico when he was 15, especially highlighted how the CGMs had autonomy in their learning process:

In school, you are seen as an empty bucket, and here you’re a part of it which is completely different than making you feel like an empty bucket, you become a subject as a part of your own process of learning. I think that is one of the wonderful things of participating in this project. (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Carlos particularly underscored Pablo’s facilitation, which helped him learn more about effective teaching and learning.

I also feel like Pablo, by not imposing his ideas or methods, he leaves a wide open space for the participants to be creative and I think it’s a great, even without imposing his own method, I think he has a method to help you
to find your own potential. And I think, at least for me, I care about education so much in general, and it’s such a wonderful experience to have someone who doesn’t leave you alone in the process of learning, but at the same time he does not impose anything on you. He guides you through and makes you make your own ways. That’s the wonderful thing I’ve learned here. (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Having been interested in education before participating in the project, Carlos further shared:

Education in the whole world has been left behind. I think this is the century of education, and many countries are doing it: Singapore, look at South Korea, or Finland, and the different ways of teaching. The same thing here. Let’s imagine that … when we’re kids there’s this sparkle and once you’re a teenager or an adult, once you light up that flame, once it’s on, that drives you. That naturally drives you to learn, and you discover what learning is, and once you learn that there’s no one that can tell you, well you can do this or you cannot learn that, you just believe in yourself. (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Carlos, said that he liked the U.S. education system “but not as much as this project.”

Through La Austral, he was able to identify and articulate what he viewed as the true form of learning and growth.

Similarly, Jose pointed out how performative storytelling was an embodied practice that would not necessarily happen in a school classroom. He also spoke about the passion of the artist and the self-driven participants that made it different from learning at school.

It’s definitely beneficial to have these workshops outside of a school setting, you’re working with a hands-on artist who is passionate about something.

Sitting down, not really learning how to use your body. Different outlets to your advantage. English class storytelling, wouldn’t make you come up in the front and make you tell a story. This is an open setting, but it’s definitely comfortable, because everyone is coming here because they’re passionate about something. I definitely recommend working outside school. You learn better. Because it’s freer, less rigid. No grade. (Jose, personal communication, April 20, 2018)

Alyssa described her experience of La Austral in terms of informal learning as she compared its structure to a more structured learning in formal settings, like in a school.
The primary difference she identified with school was the *subjectivity of the learning*. She shared that it was “completely different from school because in a formal setting there is a lot of scaffolding that leads to a particular type of learning with a particular curriculum”; however, with this *La Austral*, “there is a bit of scaffolding to lead to a bigger learning, but it’s more for smaller activities to tell a story in a certain way.” She differentiated the experiences with a formal learning environment where the opening activities would just be considered a “warm up” or an “ice breaker.” However, with *La Austral*, the experience was more subjective and dependent on the other participants.

In the learning, you learn from the feedback of people and based on that you see where to improve; “make it shorter or longer, that part was confusing, maybe elaborate on that.” You depend on the feedback from your teammates, whereas in a formal setting, yes there is feedback on a group project or feedback, but it mostly comes from your teacher, and a lot of times, without a project or research paper, your performance is based on your grades and tests. Based on those results you decide how to improve yourself. Here, there is no right or wrong…. *It’s much more subjective.* (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018)

For Alyssa, “this project was similar to school being given an assignment to come to the workshop prepared to share something, but even then, you could come up with something on the spot unless it was related to the given theme.” However, she stated the difference in terms of not being graded and being more about self-expression—she called it a “sharing group.”

The difference is that you’re not being graded or judged on your product or work, you’re just kind of here sharing things with a group of people who understand what you’re trying to do, because *we all have the common goal* of telling stories and tell them in a public space and become a performer. It’s kind of like, not a counseling group … maybe a safe space or I guess *therapeutic, but it’s an outlet to express yourself without being judged.* Or judging based on your experiences kind of thing. *It’s like a sharing group.* (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018)

Alyssa further described how *La Austral* was based on a similar interest of people gathering and doing something productive and fun, but was different from other social meetings such as Meetups. She considered this project as carrying responsibility that
required commitment, and therefore explained it in terms of a job. And the commitment level would determine how successful this project would be.

Heliis’s experience with La Austral and working as an intern at ISCP was very different from her previous learning experience in Estonia. She shared, “In Estonia, it was a very rigid teaching base, the education I went through was very uniformed. Everyone had to do the same thing having no choice reflected in the curriculum of what you would do.”

You know what I like about here [U.S.], this education really tries to engage you. The other day we had the Nurture Arts students at ISCP, and the teachers and facilitators have knowledge about what each student is good at. As soon as the artists talked about their practice, a teacher would go, how about you? I know you like to do this, maybe you should come here and ask a question or two and maybe ask what she’s using to do this. In my school [in Estonia], nobody would do something like that! It was really positively surprising! (Heliis, personal communication, April 28, 2018)

As shared earlier, Heliis was very engaged throughout the entire process of La Austral and was particularly enthusiastic about Pablo’s facilitation in introducing new ways and different perspectives in storytelling that she had not been exposed to before in her formal schooling.

**Influences After Going Through La Austral**

The CGMs experienced a variety of experiences and impacts from working on La Austral with Pablo, but most expressed a positive reflection on the experience. Carlos, Alyssa, and Heliis talked about the impact the project had on them in their daily behavior or at work.

Carlos shared: “I’ve been recently thinking about how to be more creative and how I can use these methods to help others.” He spoke about how the methods he learned in the project helped him in his own job (as an Uber driver): “In my daily life while I’m working and driving around other people, I can talk to my customers with more confidence and with more comfort, and they share about their own life stories. We have
constructive conversations which I think mutually helps each other.” Carlos felt the storytelling tools he learned could be used anywhere, and he noticed he was utilizing the skills learned “without even noticing, unconsciously.”

“... I think performing this story-telling project engaged a lot of things. I think it engages sociology, psychology, literature, history, and so on… Once you understand the method and the idea of it, you can go home or be with your friends and create something familiar to discuss things without feeling forced or feeling shamed about it. It can be used anywhere.” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Alyssa was also impacted by the project in her daily life. She recounted how the project prompted her to write a book, stating, “The project has made me more observant and to come up with stories from my own surroundings and happenings.” The project also enriched Alyssa’s life by enabling her to be more bold in approaching people, and better at the process of storytelling. She said, “This storytelling project has made me want to talk to people impromptu without being afraid of them rejecting the conversation” (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018).

Heliis addressed how she was able to understand people better. As mentioned earlier, she became fond of the collaborative process by working in pairs and exchanging ideas and concepts with other people. Also, she said she pays more attention to her use of language when communicating with other people.

“This project has definitely made me understand about people in general. Also, I started to pay more attention too, even when I’m drafting my tweets and doing social medial outreach, I’m trying to create this text that would be engaging, or a story itself. You want to read something that … the only thing that catches you is something that is engaging.” (Heliis, personal communication, April 28, 2018)

Public Audience Members’ (PAMs’) Pedagogical Experience

It was important for me to examine how the public audience responded to the DREAMer storytellers (CGMs) because Pablo envisioned La Austral to function as a
storytelling dispensary that could provide the public audience members a direct experience mediated by the DREAMer storytellers. Also, I was intrigued to see how the educational workshop experienced by the CGMs could be translated to the public audience members.

As discussed in Chapter III, I modified certain parts of the CGMs’ interview protocol to address the PAMs’ experience of La Austral. I asked the PAMs about what brought them to see the project and focused the questions on their engagement process. I asked if they thought they gained anything by engaging with the project and specifically what they identified as learning. As stated in Chapter III, the data collected from the public audience members were more limited than the data for the CGMs.

Motivation and Intention for Visitation

Through observing all four evening public receptions and eight public office hour sessions, I saw that the majority of the audience members were either from the contemporary art world or acquaintances of the storytellers. For the first public reception on the opening day (April 11, 2018), the gallery space was filled with visitors particularly from ISCP, as La Austral was an ISCP-commissioned off-site project. Pablo has also been a long-time studio member of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA), so many artists from EFA came to see the project. The last reception (May 10, 2018) was part of an off-site public program of the Open Engagement conference held in New York City.

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15. The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) was founded in 1998 on West 39th St. in Manhattan. It functions as an open-submission, juried membership program providing affordable private studio space, facilitating career development, and promotes public and critical exposure for its artists. The International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) used to be a program part of EFA until it became independent in 2006, moving to its current location in Brooklyn, NY. Therefore, as New York City-based artist residencies, EFA and ISCP have close ties with frequent exchanges. Retrieved from http://www.efanyc.org/

16. Open Engagement (OE) is an artist-led initiative that has been creating platforms for dialogue committed to the field of socially engaged art. Since 2007, OE has presented ten conferences in two countries and six cities, hosting over 1,800 presenters and over 7,000 attendees. In 2018, OE took place at the Queens Museum, NY, and multiple locations across New York City from May 11 to
York. At that reception I met several visitors who had traveled from other cities to attend the conference but dropped by to see Pablo’s new work. The two public receptions in between (April 24 and May 3, 2018) had fewer visitors in comparison to the first and last sessions, and most of these visitors were personal acquaintances of the artist or CGMs. Thus, the four public audience members I interviewed either came as an acquaintance of a CGM who was performing or came to see Pablo’s new work.

In terms of expectations, all four PAMs did not have a particular idea about the project, but visited out of curiosity. Lola (PAM 1) said she was intrigued by how storytelling would interplay in between the political and the aesthetic. Jade (PAM 3), who was a professional photographer, said she was drawn to attend the project by the images posted on Instagram. She said in contrast to Librería Donceles, which had yellow walls in the background, the images of La Austral had red walls portraying a very cozy and welcoming atmosphere, which intrigued her enough to come see the show. She said she had not been able to see any of Pablo’s recent works, even though they were old friends from Mexican artist circles. She knew that Pablo’s work was performative, but had no idea how it would play out in this specific work. The other two respondents, Alex (PAM 2) and Yessenia (PAM 4), both came as a CGM’s colleague or friend. Alex said she was interested in the storytelling component, as it brought up nostalgic memories from childhood growing up in Colombia and listening to stories told by her grandparents, who raised her. She thought it was quite unusual to find a storytelling art project at the time. Yessenia came solely to support her friend without knowing much about the project. She said she imagined the project related to storytelling activities with children, which was not the case.

Findings Pertinent to Learning

The PAMs engaged with the work by directly listening to stories delivered by the DREAMer storytellers/CGMs and participating in activities facilitated by the storytellers. For example, the PAMs either voluntarily shared a story or improvised a short story by drawing three cards from the deck and incorporating the cards in making up a story on the spot. All four participants directly engaged with the storytellers and the gallery space for at least one hour.

All of the PAMs immediately responded with ideas when I asked what they gained from engaging with the project. Jade’s and Yessenia’s responses were mostly focused on how they experienced the project, and self-reflections that were evoked by the project. Lola mostly talked about the project’s interesting and salient features, which included the open structure and multiple entry points of engagement in terms of what she had experienced from the work, rather than what she had learned. In terms of learning, three of the PAMs were unsure about what they learned from engaging with the work. One responded, “I’m not sure of what I learned, but it really made me think of….” Alex talked about how she realized the powerful effect of storytelling.

Lola and Alex were educators, and they both commented on the type of learning or the educational effect that La Austral elicited. They addressed the unique type of learning evoked by the project, including informal learning, sensorial learning, and situational learning. This was in complete contrast to the top-down and rigid learning Alex reported that she went through during her schooling in Colombia. She shared that not only would she use some of the strategies she experienced through La Austral in her own teaching with immigrant adults, but she highly recommended a project like La Austral to be implemented for children and for after-school programs.

Alex, Jade, and Yessenia spoke about how interactive the art project was in comparison to more traditional artworks that they were accustomed to. They were surprised at how a (performative) artwork could take form in such an engaging way. Jade,
a professional photographer, stated that she was more interested in socially engaged art projects of this sort because of the direct experience you could gain as an audience member. She particularly addressed the warm and comfortable ambience evoked by the project as very enjoyable, which she stated as something rare in other contemporary art projects, which might be taken as “too light” or “not rigorous enough” by art critics. Lola, an art educator and artist who works in a social practice manner, addressed how she was struck by the open structure in comparison to other socially engaged artworks that are more didactic or instructional. She said she was surprised by the indirectness of how the political content was addressed, but thought the social and political goals were better achieved through this type of open format and undirected interactions with the audience. She said it was a very unique experience that made her think about how an open structure format activates the audience, and she was very impressed by the multiple entry points facilitated through the setting of the space.

I elaborate in the following about the salient findings in regard to what the PAMs gained and learned in terms of their experience of the project.

“Feeling connected” through storytelling. *La Austral* evoked an emotional response that was visceral and sensorial. The PAM respondents either felt empathetic toward the CGM storytellers, or it made them self-reflective. In all of the responses by the PAMs, they described how they “felt a connection” that was formed through the stories directly told by the storyteller. This was the most salient response that emerged throughout the interviews with the four PAMs in terms of their experience with the work. Lola and Jade both mentioned how relatable the stories were, even though they knew nothing about the storyteller. They both experienced *La Austral* in two different formats—one-on-one engagement with a storyteller during the public office hours over the weekend, and group engagement during the evening public receptions. Although their responses to the two formats were different, they both shared about how they felt comfortable and relatable to the stories delivered by the storyteller.
She [storyteller] was very refreshing, really good. I really liked her. In the beginning she asked me, what do you want me to talk about? And I said okay, here is my question: Please tell me a moment in which you felt embarrassed and ridiculous. Then she told this story of hers about her crazy traveling story, going to the airport for her friend’s wedding in California, and then one thing after another, because she fell from the subway station stairs but she had to catch the plane…. *It made you feel comfortable, that type of conversation wasn’t so sophisticated but it was a real thing. For me, I like more real things. Even though I didn’t know this girl, I felt connected, and it was a good feeling.* (Jade, personal communication, September 30, 2018)

Alex also voiced that “feeling a connection” came as a surprise while experiencing *La Austral*. Even though it was several months since she had experienced the project, she said that it still vividly resonated with her and that it made her realize the impact of hearing stories directly from people. She stated that this also made her think of the responsibility of what we share with others, because you never know how it will affect people.

Even though I was disgusted by the cockroach story, the feeling of a connection to the story came as a surprise to me. There was this *intimate connection that I felt*. It could be because we were in the dark room, closing our eyes and really paying attention to the story. But the stories vividly resonated with me even afterwards. (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

Yessenia also shared that she felt a personal connection, which made her self-reflective on past experiences in her life. Experiencing *La Austral* stimulated her to be introspective, and to even start recording her past life experiences:

*I was able to gain a moment of inner personal reflection on my life*. I don’t think about my life in segments for storytelling, and I don’t think about my past very much. But engaging in this event made me go back a little and made me think of things that occurred in my life. This itself was an experience for myself, and I welcomed it very much.

This was like an *introspection*, which is actually very rare for me to happen. *It also made me want to think whether or not I want to record my past life experiences so that I don’t forget them* because I have the worst memory. I haven’t started to do this yet because I’m still trying to decide – I feel like personal reflection is a big thing to take on and I just want to be in a good place to do that. (Yessenia, personal communication, September 29, 2018)
In terms of connection, Alex, who spent her childhood in Colombia growing up with stories told by her family members, addressed the cultural connection she felt with the project. She shared that “the storytelling aspect … feels very much to me in relation to Latin America.” She experienced *La Austral* in close relation to the Colombian writer Márquez’s magical realism.17

You ask a Latina person and we give you a certain amount of details, more embellished and that’s something that Latin American cultures tend to do. You see for example, the Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are always sitting outside, and they like to talk about the neighbors, so maybe that’s why they know what’s going on, but when they sit there, the reminiscing about their country and family comes up and they bring back information about their childhood and its past to generations.

I was born in England, but I was brought up in Colombia and my dad is from Argentina. The Colombian side is more colorful and positive and I love Márquez (Gabriel García Márquez), I don’t know if you know him but he wrote the *One Hundred Year of Solitude*, one of the greatest writers of Latin America. He created something called “magical realism,”18 and he grew up listening to his grandparents like the Dominican’s here telling stories. Sometimes they tell you lies, and they are things that have been passed down from generations; like the story of the woman who had one leg … it [*La Austral*] kind of reminded me of that. (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

**The power of storytelling.** As an ESL teacher, Alex teaches immigrant adults who mostly are undocumented but work hard to make a living in the U.S. She often uses storytelling as a teaching method with her students to engage their previous life experiences in learning English. She said that the experience with *La Austral* refreshed

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17 Gabriel García Márquez (1972-2014) is a Colombia-born novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter and journalist. His fiction work introduced readers to magical realism, which combines more conventional storytelling with vivid fantasy. His novels *Cien años de soledad (One Hundred Years of Solitude)* and *El amor en los tiempos del cólera (Love in the Time of Cholera)* have drawn worldwide audiences, and he won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1982.

18 Magical realism emerged as a literary genre in the 20th century as a style of fiction that paints a realistic view of the modern world while also adding magical elements. The reader questions what is real that may open up avenues of reality not thought possible before reading the story. The realities being questioned can be societal, familial, mental, and emotional. Magical realism has been popular among Latin American authors as a way to express political subversion (Allman, 2018).
her skills in storytelling, as she was in the position of a listener rather than a teacher at her work. As mentioned above, she herself experienced how the stories resonated with her even after a couple of months. She was able to realize how stories are impactful and the unlimited responsibility that the storytellers carry, as she spoke in terms of “passing a torch.”

You learn about the story and they come with a message but also, you never know when you tell the story to someone how it might affect them. I think that anything you tell them … and I tell my students lots of things, there is unlimited responsibility because it travels and you pass something on like passing a torch. (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

As Alex was a fan of storytelling, she suggested that a project like *La Austral* should be available for children as well as all ages, particularly at this time when so many people are stuck on their mobile devices and computers.

I think it would be a great thing even for kids, not just adults. Children love storytelling and it would be great as an after-school program for all ages and all people because people at home, having someone to come and tell stories is a great thing that should be kept alive. I think a lot of people like stories. I have people come in and tell stories in class and they absolutely love it! Especially in this day and age when people are glued to their phones, iPads and computers, it’s great to have your own opportunity to tell your story. (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

**Sensorial learning, multiple entries.** As educators, Lola and Alex commented on how they thought this project was educational, describing the specific type of learning that was elicited. Lola explained that the type of “sensory learning … you get from being there and interacting with the bodies of people that were there, with the artifacts and colors,” as opposed to learning from a book or lecture, made a difference. She commented on the circulation of teaching and learning being non-linear.

*The circulation of teaching and learning doesn’t follow one direction but it comes through variance, through different directions and through different means or materials.* I think that it differs from other learning opportunities in the sense that it was framed as a sort of a theater. There was
a stage, it was dark, and the tone of the conversations and stories that we heard were somehow humorous.

It was visual, not a formal education space to have this surreal and humorous space where you can talk about serious stuff or say nonsensical things, which are also critical for our development.

I would go back to the same idea that I mentioned that as an artist or teacher, to be okay with the unexpected, with the possible drifts and differences that people may take from the work. In the sense of less thinking of the outcome or the point that I want to make as a teacher or artist and more about how do I want to say or engage people. Then you see how the outcome is initiated among the participants. (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

For Alex, who had discovered that she had dyslexia in her early years of teaching (which prompted her to find other ways for her students to engage with the content she was teaching) La Austral was a great example of allowing the learners to bring in their own life stories and become connected with learning through multiple entries for engagement.

I don’t explain things in one way, but in ten different ways so they [students] can feel more connected…. In my own process, I need visual, not just writing. If I read it and start to teach it like a story, then I understand it, and that’s why the storytelling is so great; then I have the picture in my head. I’ll remember the story but not reading a page; I’d have to read it 10 times before I understand it.

If I teach something from the book that is not real, they have no connection to it and they get bored. But if you tell them to talk about their childhood or their mother, then there is a lot of information and ideas that come up even if they aren’t sure how to put into words.

This project allowed multiple ways to engage with. The objects were interesting, it was visual, you could listen to the stories, it was very theatrical. (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

The critical role of the audience. Although not directly connected to learning, Lola commented on the open structure of this project and the critical role the participants played. She thought it was interesting to create a project that was very dependent on the audience members, and thought it was very different and unique in comparison to other socially engaged art projects. She commented that it was very “educational” in terms of letting the audience members decide what and how they would want to engage with the project. Like the CGMs, Lola was interested that the artist himself was “refusing to take a
guiding role; he was storytelling, but that doesn’t mean there was a clear guidance of what an experience should be.”

To me, what was interesting was that I learned two things through this project … to see how the artist is refusing to take a guiding role; he was a storyteller, but that doesn’t mean there was clear guidance of what an experience should be. It was open in that sense. What I learned is that the artist refuses to guide or offer guidelines so that the experience of the participants is somewhat political, socially or somewhat aligned with his own thinking; it may work also.

If you think of teaching and learning, what is important is the path of how you get there. So this work, I’m not saying this is the way, the efficient way, but he’s showing a way in which he puts a series of elements, maybe they were not the most accessible ones, like books collage and artifacts, but he created this environment, chose to frame it within the storytelling as a tool, but he’s not imposing that this is the way to get there. It’s like “I propose this with hope that this will eventually lead us to having a conversation about it….” (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

In terms of criticality, she said,

This could have evolved into something more critical if you wanted, but that depended on the space and people, time and possibility to speak up…. From my perspective, this work is education…. It is also interesting when I think of the current political environment which is very aggressive and confrontational, how do you go about it with another tool to fight it … do you have to be confrontational or would there be a more welcoming or sympathetic path that would be more effective in the end … it’s an interesting question.

Humor is a great tool. (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

**Welcoming atmosphere, set up of the space.** The comfortable ambience of the space was something that all the public visitors mentioned in the interviews with me. Some said it was a surreal space that could provide a different experience from the outside, and one said it felt like being at their aunt’s house. They spoke about how they could sit and engage with the storytellers and the objects all day in the space. The setting of the space was a definitive influence in the public audience members’ experience.
I liked the sofas that were comfortable and let you sit like you were at somebody’s house, like your aunt’s. The colors were very warm. I don’t know, but it felt like, once you entered the room, you were in somebody’s apartment. (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

It was a really cozy place, really relaxing. Even if Heliis wasn’t there, it was a place you wanted to hang out. It was interesting to see how Heliis told her stories there. (Yessenia, personal communication, September 29, 2018)

**Summary**

In this chapter, the findings pertinent to Case 1. *La Austral* were presented from the three perspectives of the artist, CGMs, and PAMs. The context and intent of *La Austral*, and how Pablo had facilitated an experiential space employing museum-display strategies and multiple entries for engagement, were explained. Based on critical pedagogy, Pablo played the role of facilitator, encouraging peer-to-peer learning and group work during the workshops. He led the workshops with structure for the CGMs to learn the tools of storytelling, but eventually wanted the storytellers to tell their own stories. CGMs voiced their challenges pertaining to performing their stories in front of a public audience. Even though this was a challenge, the salient learning from the CGMs was about how they “gained confidence” through repetitive practice and experience in overcoming this challenge. Imaginative approaches and techniques of storytelling and the social bonding were other learning aspects voiced by the CGMs. PAMs’ experiences related to the responses in tandem with the storytellers and the setting of the space of *La Austral*. They voiced the impact of hearing personal stories from the storytellers, which created an emotional connection and prompted self-reflection.

The next chapter presents the findings from Case 2. *The Council.*
Chapter V

FINDINGS: CASE 2—THE COUNCIL

It’s not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It’s a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals. (Fraser, 2005, p. 282)

Artist: Adelita Husni-Bey

This section presents my findings in relation to Adelita Husni-Bey’s pedagogical framework and concrete methods and approaches based on my personal engagement with the artist through preliminary and in-depth individual interviews; artist’s talks and workshops at cultural institutions that I attended; email correspondences; and analysis of written-form materials, such as publications, critical reviews, and websites. Following this profile of the artist, this chapter presents findings from the CGMs and PAMS involved in The Council project.

I first present biographical information of the artist and previous pedagogy-based work that is relevant to The Council, as it provides a background in understanding the style and tendencies of the artist. Pertinent to The Council, I discuss the intention and purpose of the work described by the artist. Then I present the salient findings that emerged from the data analysis in regard to the artist’s pedagogical framework, methods, and strategies used in her work. I refer to the artist by her first name Adelita, which she
preferred to be called by the core group members (CGMs) and myself based on her philosophy of critical pedagogy.¹

Background of the Artist

Biographical information. Adelita was born in Milan, Italy, in 1985, the child of a Libyan father and Italian mother. She received a BFA in Fine Arts from the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London, 2007, and an MA in Photography and Urban Cultures from Goldsmiths University, 2009. She continued her studies with the Advanced Course in Visual Art at the Fondazione Antonio Ratti in Como, Italy, under visiting professor Hans Haacke, 2010. She was accepted to the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2012-2013), and ever since has been residing in New York City (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

Adelita identifies herself as both an artist and a pedagogue. According to Adelita, she became interested in non-competitive models of pedagogy based on anarcho-collectivism² during her urban studies research at Goldsmiths University (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

¹ The following quote from Adelita reflects her philosophy on why she prefers to be called by her name rather than “teacher” when she carries out educational workshops:

All the things I studied like anarcho-collective theory believes in a certain mentality. It’s not easy to say or to make things horizontal. One of the barriers is calling someone a professor or a teacher. The way you engage with the people you are with…. I ask people to call me by my name, never call me teacher or professor or Miss or whatever. I call people by their names and I tell them I’ll probably forget haha, but I try to establish a familiar relationship even though I’m fully aware, and I even talk about this that someone of us are perceived to have more power in the room. Obviously … I invited them to come here and I provided for the space to be here, and that makes me a figure apart from them not in the group and I’m giving them some exercise to do that doesn’t apply to me, so there is definitely a relationship there that is not “equal terms,” but I think as long as it’s acknowledged and talked about, and I remember from The Council, we did have a brief discussion about this how we were going to work through the power dynamics and I wanted to make sure they were discussed. For me that’s one of the bigger takeaways from the theory that I studied, and that’s why I don’t like being called “teacher.” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

² Also known as collectivist anarchism, anarcho-collectivism advocates the abolition of both the state and private ownership of the means of production as it instead envisions the means of
personal communication, September 18, 2018). For Adelita, the artist’s role is “to create new situations and dynamics that go beyond performance to unequivocally reveal to all those involved the deep-rooted economic and social forces governing the balance of power in our contemporary era” (Nero, 2018). Adelita’s artworks are often process-based, comprised of pedagogy-based workshops and social simulations that employ role-playing of figures of a certain community or society in general. She has carried out workshops with people across different backgrounds such as activists, architects, jurists, school children, spoken word poets, actors, physical therapists, athletes, teachers, and students (Laveronica Arte Contemporanea, n.d.).

In her workshops, she, too, often incorporates image theater methods based on Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed* (1974) and dialogue-based activities as a way to facilitate collective learning and problem-solving. She often poses difficult questions regarding specific concepts or social issues for the group of participants to tackle together. The processes of these workshops often culminate in final representations, which are usually installations of photography and video/film. Adelita mostly presents her work in the framework of contemporary art but occasionally outside of the artworld as well. Besides exhibitions, her work is manifested in forms of publications, radio broadcasts, and archives (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018; New Museum, 2019).

Adelita represented Italy at the Venice Biennale of Art in 2017, and had a solo exhibition, *Congregation*, in Italy at Galleria Civica di Modena in 2018. Her solo presentation in New York took place at the New Museum in 2019, premiering her most recent work *Chiron*, which was produced with immigration lawyers to address oppression

**Pedagogy-based art works prior to The Council.** An early work in Adelita’s pedagogical experimentation is the film *Postcards from the Desert Island* (2011). The project took place in a self-run elementary public school in Paris, École Vitruve. The school was created in 1962 with the aim of experimenting with educational models based on cooperation and non-competitiveness. Inspired by the novel *Lord of the Flies* (1963) by William Golding, Adelita asked a group of children between seven and ten years old to imagine their school’s hall as a desert island and to relate themselves to this imaginative new place. The film documents how the group of children organized, related to problems, and imagined a life without institutions or control in the duration of three weeks. The negotiations carried out by the children highlight how they drew distinctions between public and private, and carried out decision-making processes based on voting (Kadist, n.d.).

Another work created with a group of young people is *After the Finish Line* (2015). *After the Finish Line* was a film developed in collaboration with a group of teenage

\(^3\) Adelita uses the term “emotional depletion” from feminist Sara Ahmed (2004) to refer to secondary trauma, which happens when the work you do to change the institution becomes overwhelming. She said, “It takes a toll on your person, on your body, somatically. It’s often associated with activism or social work” (A. Husni-Bey, artist’s talk, April 12, 2019).
athletes in Cupertino, California, who all experienced injury as a result of their respective sporting activities. As an attempt to de-individualize feelings of failure, Adelita and the athletes recorded and wrote about their experiences, and discussed the meaning and trappings of competition—in particular, where desires for success stem from. The film was part of Adelita’s first solo exhibition in the U.S., Movement Break, an exhibition premiering her research-based work during her residency at the Kadist Foundation in San Francisco, 2015. The exhibition highlighted the attempt to remediate our relationship to pain, the body, and a shared condition of oppression through a series of group physical therapy sessions examining the pressure to compete and succeed in the current capitalist society. The sessions aimed to create a thread between how our bodies “hurt” and how we are conditioned to treat them socially or politically. Adelita and physical therapist Caron Bush co-presented physical therapy sessions offered for free to the public in tandem with an individual consultation with the artist.

Adelita presented The Reading / La Seduta at the Italian Pavilion of the 2017 Venice Biennale along with two other Italian artists under the theme, “The Magic World (Il Mondo Magico).” The film was produced from workshops that Adelita organized in Manhattan (it is emphasized in the work that Manhattan was Lenape territory of the Native Americans) with a group of young adults selected through an open call via museum education departments around the city. The workshops consisted of meetings, discussions, and theatre exercises inspired by Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed. The

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4Kadist is an interdisciplinary contemporary arts organization dedicated to exhibiting the work of artists represented in its collection. It aims to support artists creating work in relation to pressing societal issues, placing contemporary art within the social discourse. Kadist hosts artists residencies and produces exhibitions, publications, and public events. The first location was opened in Paris in 2006 by Vincent Worms and Sandra Terdjman, and a San Francisco, California location was added in 2011 in the Mission District (Kadist, n.d.).

5Refers to anthropologist Ernesto de Martino’s (1948) publication under the same title, which described magic rituals as the tools through which individuals tried to find their own identity in uncertain historical and social contexts.
participants reflected on their own connections to the environment and to the exploitation of the earth, examining a series of complex questions related to ideas of extraction, threat, technology, use, value, and vulnerability. These themes appear in the video in the form of tarot cards designed by the artist herself during the recent indigenous protests against the construction of the Dakota oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Reservation. In the video of *The Reading / La Seduta*, the participants, who are seated around a table, draw inspiration from a tarot reading performed with Adelita’s tarot card deck to talk about their own spiritual, colonial, and technological relationships to the earth and land. The artist used the tarot reading as both a magical and a pedagogical tool: the young people—who in the video are seeing these cards for the first time—stand in stark contrast to an efficiency-based, capitalistic mindset that views the earth as a source of profit to be mined. They envision the earth as something closely intertwined with human life to be treasured and protected (Lusiardi, 2017, n.p.). The film cuts between the discussion around the table and scenes in which the participants perform a series of exercises inspired by themes adopted during the initial theater-based workshops.

**Context and Pedagogical Intent of *The Council***

**Interdepartmental collaboration, MoMA: Photography Department and Education Department (Teens program).** In the end of 2016, Lucy Gallun, associate curator of the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), contacted Adelita to produce a body of work for their group show *Being: New Photography 2018*. As several of Adelita’s works were created with groups of young people, Lucy proposed Adelita to collaborate with the MoMA Teens program. According to Adelita, she found them to be “more willing participants and who’ve already gotten some experience with a museum” who fit the age group she was thinking of “in terms of where their imagination might be at, the kind of language and kind of examples [she] was
thinking about using for that sort of age range” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

In the context of the interdepartmental collaboration between Lucy Gallun (from the Department of Photography) and Calder Zwicky (assistant director of Teen and Community Partnerships, Department of Education), Adelita suggested a framework to have the museum as the spatial setting for the workshop content:

I gave them [Lucy and Calder] three different options and suggested this one about using a museum as a canvas for the work I was thinking about. Thinking of it [the museum] as a space that could be used in the project was something that was of interest to me. So, in some ways the work was based on a sort of institutional critique of the museum using the museum resources as a basis to do that. The museum was like a willing participant in the project in terms … so I don’t know if that defeats the purpose of an institutional critique…. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018)

I was able to hear more from Calder Zwicky in a personal meeting. He shared how he had carried out the open call to the 60 Teens program alumni who had experience of being part of the Digital Advisory Board (DAB), the most advanced level of the Teens Program, and how the members who responded became the selected Core Group Members to participate in The Council:

Lucy knew that I ran a lot of programs with young people and [we thought] instead of us just going out and partnering with another organization, why don’t we get young people that already have a familiarity with MoMA who have already worked with us….

So I reached out to all five years [of our Digital Advisory Board along with alumni], it must have been probably 60 alumni. Some kids were out of town, some kids were too busy, some kids we aren’t in contact anymore because they don’t check their emails. Thirteen of them got back in touch and said they were available and they were interested in taking part, and that’s who ended up forming the core group. (C. Zwicky, personal communication, May 9, 2018)

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6See Chapter II, footnote 9.
As someone overseeing the Teens program at MoMA, Calder mediated the logistical needs for the artist and the core group members, while striving to keep room for Adelita to carry out her artistic vision of the project. The following illustrates the respective roles carried out by Calder and Adelita:

Then I worked with Adelita, my colleague Kaitlyn Stubbs, and Eugenia from the photography department. We figured out a schedule, we figured out a plan, we gave some ideas about how we thought it might work best as far as structure goes, and then basically, Adelita did everything. She had the idea of *The Council* and the event that was going to happen in the future, she came up with the weekly syllabus. We did the ordering food and getting the kids paid, and getting the metro cards, and reserving the classrooms.

But once the classes were running, it was really Adelita’s show. We didn’t want to push our ideas on her, we obviously didn’t want to get in the way. *It was more about creating space and connecting with an audience, and basically letting an artist do what she wanted to do.* (C. Zwicky, personal communication, May 9, 2018)

**Project structure and duration: Private workshops and public view of the photographic representations.**

*Structure.* As mentioned earlier, Adelita often works in two phases: first, workshops that are carried out with a specific group of people to collectively work on a certain theme; second, final representations (photographs or film) taken from the workshops to be publicly presented. In the case of *The Council*, workshops were facilitated by Adelita with 13 MoMA Teens program graduates, grappling with the overall workshop theme—to explore and decide the societal role of the institution, MoMA, after an apocalypse.

*Duration.* As mentioned in Chapter III, there was one introduction session for two hours in October 2017; four sessions of all-day workshops led by Adelita in December 2017; and a get-together and review session of the final photographs that emerged from the workshops in January 2018. The final photographs were on display as part of the *Being: New Photography 2018* exhibition at MoMA, from March 18 to August 19, 2018.
Pedagogical intention: Workshops to foster critical agency among the CGMs and final representations as “pedagogical tool” for PAMs. As mentioned above, The Council was carried out in two phases (private workshop phase and public presentation phase) with different pedagogical intentions. Thus, in this section, the artist’s pedagogical intention is also discussed in two phases—first, in terms of the CGMs, with whom Adelita worked during the private workshops; and second, PAMs who engaged with the final representations created by the artist and the CGMs that were on public view as part of the museum’s group exhibition Being: New Photography 2018.

Pedagogical workshops with the CGMs: To foster critical agency and social responsibility. In each project, Adelita works with an overarching theme, an inquiry she poses to the CGMs to collectively work throughout the series of the workshops. In The Council, the following question was posed to the CGMs to be worked through during the four workshop sessions:

The institution has lost its primary function: the archiving, collecting and displaying of artwork, as a result of the “event.” Whatever the event was, it has had a deep impact on the way the building will be used in the future: people have poured into the museum and are now using it for shelter, events and to plan a different kind of life. Imagine that you are part of a special council that has to advocate for their ideas to become part of the functions of the museum as the event unfolds.

Perhaps artifacts are not readily understood as valuable anymore; or perhaps there has been a violent shift in climate which has caused some to seek refuge more permanently in the air-conditioned spaces of the museum. Perhaps the staff has revolted and opened its doors 24/7. What we do know is that the museum is now totally free of charge and has expanded/ adjusted its operations. It is now open all day, everyday, and is now called simply “The Institution.”

Perhaps all of this happened at once. Perhaps it happened over time, but we are now at a crucial shift in The Institution’s future, where The Council-representatives from the 4 interest groups now involved in rethinking these functions are meeting for the first time to discuss their plans. As all floors above ground are now occupied, decision-making happens in the basement. (A. Husni-Bey, artist portfolio, 2018)
Adelita wanted the CGMs to critically think and approach the function of the institution they had been involved with for the past three years (each CGM had the experience with the Teens program for at least three years). The purpose of carrying out the workshops with this group of students was to collectively think through the challenges, to imagine themselves being in the shoes of the decision-makers on behalf of others with responsibility. The CGMs were expected to engage in this process thoughtfully and respectfully, even though it was a hypothetical situation. Adelita spoke about her intention of carrying out *The Council*:

Going away with a sense of what it means to have agency within a large institution and make some choices, even though it’s make-believe and an exercise, and everyone is fully aware of that, like how does it feel to be in charge of something that big with the prospect of being able to do whatever you want. What does that do to you? (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

For Adelita, the pedagogical intention of the work stems from the inquiry-based process of how the CGMs critically engage and think about the question. As she states, in *The Council*, she wanted to have the CGMs experience and think about the multiple aspects of responsibility of being a representative of *The Council* for a large institution.

I always want, the praxis I talked about earlier, which was producing a sort of addressing a question of urgency with a group of people that are invited to take part, or through a call-out, but who think through the problem with me in a critical lens. And that critical lens is sort of brought about by engaging in the pedagogical process….

There is a level of playfulness, but also seriousness, and I hope we dug down. Maybe it will come out in 10 years, but I hope that seriousness of what an institution does, what can we do to change that, what’s it going to look like when the environment changes as it is now changing, what’s it going to impact? And the class, race, gender dimensions, all of this … if we got through some of that, that’s cool, even if it’s not clear to some of them right now, if it becomes clear, that’s cool. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

As the workshops were based on inquiry-based processes of discussions and theater exercises, she also wanted the CGMs to respect and listen attentively to each other.
I feel the most responsible toward the people I’m working with. I am offering them the opportunity to think critically about something. So that’s one of the main things, but creating a safe space to do so, etc.

I feel like they should also be made aware that they are also responsible for the crux of it is how they live, but how they interact during the workshop as well. They have to choose how they treat other people here, and I would hope…. I always try to say, if we’re having a debate and someone is taking up a lot of space, I would even say before to be gentle to each other and listen to each other’s points. Try to hear each other out and figure out how you’re going to do that. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

**Final representations as pedagogical tool for the PAMs.** According to the artist, the pedagogical intention toward the public audience, who would only be viewing still photographs from the process-driven workshops, was similar. Adelita wanted the PAMs to also be able to engage with questions similar to those posed to the CGMs with critical thought.

To the public audience, I feel like the goal is always to transmit some of that pedagogical juice to the audience, but of course, in the case of The Council, it’s not a film, it doesn’t have the same narrative potential as film. What you end up with are beautiful massive posters of something that looks fun and playful. I hope if you sit down and read that long scroll – “…people in the museum are going to be eaten alive and the rich people on the 13th floor are going to profit….” If you read that and a teenager is holding this thing, hopefully you realize that yeah, they are playful and big, but if you read what they say, I think there is some militancy that comes through, but you have to give some time….

I feel like I would want them [the public audience] to go away with similar questions that I offered the participants in their reflections in less of a guided way. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

I think of it [the photographs] as a secondary pedagogical tool, and the work lives on in my eyes. The work itself has a life of its own, but to me it’s important that it retains the critical core that the workshop had or still speaks to those questions. (A. Husni-Bey, artist’s talk, April 12, 2019)

Adelita also spoke about working with young people and presenting their process-based work in venues that are mostly comprised of adult audience members, such as MoMA. She wanted the adult audience members to become reflective and feel responsibility by viewing the voices of the younger generation expressing how they envision the future.
I feel that it would be limiting for me to just speak to teenagers, and also impossible if you’re in an institution that will be engaging adults, or a place that is inhabited by adults lots of the time. The [adult] audience will interpret your work through their lens which is more experienced, older person….

Well art is supposedly about a universal experience, I guess, working with younger people who are imagining a future is hopefully for a pedagogical audience, makes them think about what it will be like for this young group who could potentially represent a larger group living in a world that they put together, that they are sort of complicit in having produced so far and will produce in the future. I guess it’s a question of responsibility, not simply mirroring what’s happening in the world. It’s also assuming that people will be made more conscious of their responsibility in the world’s systems, and that will be a motive for change or reflection. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018)

Although Adelita considers her final representations as a pedagogical tool for the audience members, she makes a distinction between presenting her work in a didactic way and in a pedagogical way. She considered pedagogy as “a means to open up understanding by putting the interpretation in the hands of the viewer”:

I like to make the distinction between what I feel is didactic and what is pedagogical. I am interested in the artwork giving a viewer the building blocks to produce an understanding, whereas didacticism attempts to moralize or direct toward a complete answer or set of closed answers. I think that more interesting works don’t do that. They produce questions and allow the complications of negotiating collective space. (A. Husni-Bey cited in Craycroft, 2013, p. 93)

In the case of The Council, however, Adelita was aware of the limitations of this process-based work represented in photographs as well as presented in a group exhibition context, which would greatly dilute the viewer’s critical response:

In film, it’s different because you add audio and get a different feeling…. But you’re within a show, so the percentage of people that even read the blurb try to get what the project is about is maybe 10%. So it’s different when you’re doing a solo show or a solo presentation. Obviously, we are in the framework of photography, which is about identity, so you are already being framed in the project slightly differently…. The photograph is really about that long process. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)
Adelita’s Pedagogical Approaches and Attitudes in *The Council*

I present my findings pertinent to the artist’s pedagogical approaches and attitudes based on the analysis of the data collected from my personal interactions with Adelita, preliminary and in-depth interviews, critical reviews, and my attending the artist’s talks at cultural institutions. The following is an outline of the emergent topics I found salient to Adelita’s pedagogical approach.

Table 15. Outline of Adelita Husni-Bey’s Pedagogical Approach and Attitudes

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**Understanding of education and pedagogy.** Adelita is an artist who deliberately calls her work “pedagogical,” as well as identifying herself as “artist and pedagogue” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018). Her interest in education
and pedagogy stems from her upbringing influenced by her mother, who instilled Adelita with a political awareness from an early age. In our conversation, she shared about how her high school was not conducive to critical learning and perpetuated class distinction, which raised an awareness of the education system. Since her late teens, she was involved in various political movements, particularly squatting and “the really free school movement” that occurred in the early 2000s in London. In a published interview between artist Anna Craycroft (2013) and Adelita, Adelita talked about how she discovered the influence of education that conditions us to behave in a normativity based on neoliberalism. In response, this has prompted Adelita to create critically engaging pedagogical experiences through her artistic practice:

I think everyone who’s interested in the social-political realm eventually hits upon this idea that we’re educated into a particular normativity. That this ideology, which is seen as neutral, is in fact a very neoliberal understanding of how we’re meant to be on the planet. I think once you hit that, it’s sort of inevitable that you start looking at how we’re educated into it. (p. 93)

Along those lines, in my preliminary and in-depth interviews with Adelita, she spoke in broader terms, however, about her aspiration on how she would want her work to function as a “tool” that could raise critical awareness about how we engage and exist in the world:

I am very fixated on this idea that educational practices are crucial to the formation of subjects and people from all sorts of different backgrounds. The earlier you get the tools to break that down, the earlier you can think through how you belong to the world; what the world owes you, what you owe the world, how you exist. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

Through her artwork, as stated earlier, she wants not only the CGMs but also the PAMs to critically engage with the question she poses by viewing the final representation of the work.

Hopefully, we create an object, film or photograph that reflects the critical thinking we’re doing and allows an audience to similarly engage with the question themselves with a bit of critical understanding … it’s not so
much who, but how, and not what, but how. So I think that’s the core question for me. I believe in the critical potential of pedagogical work. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

Definitions by the artist. When I asked Adelita about her understanding in regard to education and pedagogy, she made a distinct differentiation between the two. Although she stated that the terms would be used contextually, she held a more negative perspective toward education (than pedagogy) because of the conforming aspect to the neoliberal system embedded in the term. She elaborated on this with an anecdote from one of her workshops:

I’m a little more negative towards the definition of education. There was an interesting time I was working with French students from a public anarchist school in Paris and we did this exercise—we defined education. This girl said forming is like formatting or elevating someone on this pedestal instead of someone else. She was referring to this concept of knowledge and this very new, neoliberal thing where you are talked down to and formatted. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

To Adelita, in comparison to education, pedagogy is a more interesting construct that implies “an inquiry-based learning process.” By using an example from the art historian Alexander Alberro, she stated how pedagogy would be a way to analyze and deconstruct the education tied to the current system:

Pedagogy is much more interesting to me. I think about Alexander Alberro in art history. He gave me the definition I use mostly, which is, education works this way, I give you a few wooden blocks and I tell you, “this is how you build a house.” Pedagogy is, “I give you a few blocks of wood and I ask you, how would you build a house? What would you do with these wooden blocks, what is wood?”

I feel that is the main difference of the two, and I am much more attracted to the pedagogical, which is a process, but I make a big distinction. I don’t think pedagogy falls under education. My understanding is that I would want pedagogy to be prevalent over education, but that is not happening. There is a big focus on educating, which implies that people are ignorant, and I don’t think anybody is ignorant. I think we are definitely formatted into a system that is classist and racist, etc. The pedagogical is a way to analyze and deconstruct some of what education does. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)
Philosophy: Anarcho-collectivism and critical pedagogy. As described earlier, Adelita bases her work on theories and practices of anarcho-collectivism and critical pedagogy, which have molded both the pedagogical style and format of her artistic practice:

The core thing that remains throughout is that I am interested in radical education and anarchist pedagogies and collectivism. With the world we live in now, and through the lenses of critical education, topics and people I engage with vary. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

Adelita’s interest in these educational theories and models was prompted by her sociology-based graduate studies in the photography and urban studies program at Goldsmith University. She became particularly interested in the Ferrer School (Modern School) model established by anarchist educator Francesco Ferrer i Guàrdia.7 Within the curriculum of the Ferrer School, she was inspired by the sense of autonomy and critical thinking encouraged from a young age and by aspects of collective decision-making and project-based making. These elements are salient in Adelita’s pedagogy-based workshops. Moreover, her interest in critical thinking led her to the writings of Freire (1968) and Boal (1974), whose dialogue-based activities and TO methods8 such as image theater techniques and character role-playing are used in her workshops, as detailed in the following excerpt:

7Francesco Ferrer i Guàrdia (1859-1909), commonly known as Francisco Ferrer, was a Spanish educator from Catalonia and advocate of free thinking. Ferrer was the founder of the Escola Moderna (Modern School in English), a non-compulsory primary and secondary school. Ferrer’s pedagogical outlook—in large part—was inspired by the works of William Godwin and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, both of whom firmly rejected the idea of education brought about by means of compulsion (Long, 2019, n.p.).

Ferrer sought to create an alternative to the existing educational system controlled by the church. The pedagogy of his Escuela Moderna became popular throughout Spain and was duplicated soon after in the United States—first in New York City and then as part of the Ferrer Colony anarchist community in New Jersey. (A. Husni-bey cited in Craycroft, 2013, p. 93)

8Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed is discussed in Chapter II.
The Ferrer School was an anarchist school that set up an environment where you would question authority and be engaged in understanding the structures that befell upon you from a very early age … for example … “I know we have five dollars for today—can I go and buy two dollars of pens?” And you would reach consensus with the group, and then you’d go. It was very much based on a collective decision-making. At the same time, there was a kind of autonomy and the attempt at constructing critical thought from a really early age, which was fascinating to me because I’m interested in political consciousness. …

The Ferrer School had “integral education”—which is a concept that Kropotkin came up with in the 1850s—known today as “project-based education.” The idea was that you would never be in front of a blackboard. Instead, you would make things and learn through making. To create this integral model, the goal was to break down the class distinction between intellectual labor and manual labor. That was something I didn’t find elsewhere. I mean, project-based education happens in Steiner and Montessori schools too, but how it led to critical thinking was something that really struck me, and eventually led me to the writings of Boal and Freire, etc., later on. (A. Husni-Bey cited in Craycroft, 2013, p. 93)

In the following section, I discuss in more detail the distinctive ways in which these educational theories play out in Adelita’s work, particularly in The Council. During the data analysis, four themes emerged: inquiry-based approach to artmaking; collaborative production: between the artist and CGMs, and among the CGMs; fostering critical and creative agency with responsibility; and creating a safe space.

**Inquiry-based artmaking approach.** Based on my conversations with Adelita and observation of her work, I discovered that inquiry was at the heart of her work. Although research is implemented in several phases throughout her work, her artwork itself is about the process of collectively exploring an inquiry with a group of people. I viewed this collective inquiry-based artmaking as relating to a participatory art-based research approach that Adelita has been involved in since her graduate studies. She addressed her master’s thesis—the four-year project, *Clays Lane Live Archive*—as her first “collective process in the making,” which became a precursor to her current artworks that involve a collective making process with people. Clays Lane (1977-2007) was the second largest

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9 Information on the Clay Lanes Live Archive can be retrieved from this website: https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/e87e8c8c-4a9a-3674-9179-5005639ea04a
singles’ co-op residence in Europe and the largest in the UK to build close-knit communities as a way of helping vulnerable single people in East London. As the co-op building confronted demolition due to the 2012 London Olympics, Adelita decided to create a collective archive with former tenants to preserve their memories in relation to Clays Lane. The archive was created in various forms, including a very large quilt that Adelita made together with a female tenant (who cherished quilts). This quilt was a culmination of the tenant’s relationships to Clays Lane. She also worked with other tenants, writing blurbs in relation to their personal photograph collections, and created visual narratives in collages. Eventually, the archive grew into 16 boxes of “stuff” that Adelita and the previous tenants created together in a four-year period. It is now preserved at the Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives in London for public use. Adelita stated that “the former research of the project influenced her current working style with groups of people, which led to Postcards from the Desert Island, her first pedagogy-based project (discussed earlier), which was carried out with a group of students in an elementary school in Paris.

Developing this style of carrying out artistic methods in participatory research with communities eventually brought Adelita to address the following questions in her artistic practice: “How do you work with people, what does it mean to create different subjects [topics of inquiry] through education, how does education produce subjects [topics of inquiry] … and that’s when that started to be the focus” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

As stated earlier, Adelita’s artworks are often two phases: educational workshops carried out with a group of people exploring a broad (political) question posed by Adelita and a public presentation of the workshops in the form of a photograph or film. Through The Council, Adelita wanted to address the following guiding questions:

What could happen to institutions in times of crisis?
What defines a crisis?
What does a younger person today feel as an urgency or how do they project the present of the institution into the future? (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Based on these questions, and in collaboration with MoMA’s curator and educators, Adelita created the framework of the workshops as if she were a film director or script writer, setting out the basic structure and activities of the workshops with a broad theme and storyline. However, unlike making a film in which there is a fixed story and assigned roles played by each actor, the CGMs would produce the content, and Adelita would modify the exercises and activities according to the responses of the CGMs during the workshops.

In The Council, Adelita engaged the CGMs in exploring the overarching question (as detailed previously) about envisioning the societal function of the museum after an apocalypse. With Adelita’s facilitation, the CGMs grappled with this idea, first on an individual level, then in small groups (“small councils”), and finally in a plenary discussion session (“large council”) throughout four workshop sessions.

On the first workshop day, Adelita first introduced “the apocalyptic event” that caused the museum to lose its entire function. The museum was now called “The Institution.” The apocalyptic event entailed a market crash, class struggle, and climate change. Adelita asked the CGMs to imagine how the institution should function for the society amidst this crisis. As the CGMs brainstormed their individual ideas of re-designing the museum, Adelita took them on a walk to explore the architectural spaces of the museum, beginning from the basement and ending on the rooftop. Although the CGMs had taken classes about museum operation as part of the MoMA Teens curriculum, where they gained knowledge about the behind-the-scenes work of the museum, this was their first time exploring spaces that were off-limits to people outside of the operating staff. Adelita wanted them to think about the visible and invisible spaces and their underlining meanings, and to observe carefully how the architectural spaces were designed in tandem with labor and the function of the institution.
Keeping in mind the three social issues that resulted from the crisis (i.e., market crash, class struggle, and climate change), the CGMs individually brainstormed their plans “as a council member” by writing their rationale for their plan and drawing out their ideas on the distributed floor plan of the museum. After brainstorming on the floor map, they displayed their personal responses on the wall and engaged in a group discussion to hear from their peers about how they envisioned their respective institutions considering the consequences of the crisis. Following the discussion, Adelita explained the process for the CGMs to create and build a character of their own as a council member. As this was the first workshop day, she began with a creative writing exercise, asking the CGMs to individually write a short essay about how their own character would experience their proposed institution. This character-building exercise continued into the consecutive workshop days, each day developing the character in greater detail, and culminating in the CGMs acting/performing their own character during the plenary council discussion sessions on the fourth workshop day.

On the second workshop day, based on the individual essays and maps from the first day, Adelita requested the CGMs to form small groups (which became “small councils”) based on their individual proposals for the institution. Each small council worked on creating a narrative for their institution by combining their individual ideas. In their groups, CGMs wrote out and mapped their main concepts and plans for operating the institution on a large paper for everyone to see during their group presentations. After presenting their small council ideas and narratives, each group received feedback and discussed additional aspects to develop further. The 13 CGMs eventually established four small councils with the following four titles and accompanying themes:

- **Glass Dome**: The institution will become a place for healing through technology.
- **Mumma**\(^{10}\): The institution will be run by a morally superior AI.

\(^{10}\)In the CGMs’ words, *Mumma* refers to:
The Project: The institution will become a secret project to benefit the rich.
Public Garden: The institution will become a radical education center and garden. (A. Husni-Bey, artist’s portfolio, pp. 8, 9, 12, 13)

On that same second workshop day, after the presentations of the small councils, the CGMs were asked to come up with scenes (incorporating their bodies, props, and backdrops) that could visualize their conceptual narratives as a final photographic representation for the exhibition. As Adelita and her photography team would be shooting the photographs in a portrait style in their classroom, the CGMs were requested to create backdrops, clothing, and props that could best represent the ideas of their small councils. Throughout the process, Adelita introduced photographs of political movements that were carried out by groups such as the Black Panther movement and Feminists movements from the 1960s. The objective behind exploring the photographs was for the CGMs to learn about community-based political movements that had taken place in recent history. In addition, although the photographs were not shot in the style of studio portraits, Adelita intentionally carried out inquiry-based discussions by having the CGMs interpret the photographs, paying attention to such details as the setting, clothing, postures, and props. She wanted the CGMs to gain some inspiration for creating their own backdrops, clothing, and props for the final photoshoots on the fourth day of the workshops.

A.I. hosted in the service of The Home complex. Mumma runs the daily operations so she will tell you when to go to the farm, when to show up to lunch, when to wake up, when to go to sleep, etc. She is [an] omnipresent, all-knowing, ethical being for all intents and purposes is perfect. (CGM 1 Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

The guiding ideas behind Mumma was to eliminate the emotional parts to attachment, so that Mumma could be neutral like the voice of reason, laying out what is just and what is unjust. So that it would be taken care of by a computer rather than by humans, thereby destroying this hierarchical structure and creating a new one. (CGM 6 Ruth, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Adelita had explained in the first orientation session (in October, 2017), that the CGMs’ work during the workshops would be represented in the form of photographs and be exhibited as part of MoMA’s New Photography show.

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11 Adelita explained the first orientation session (in October, 2017), that the CGMs’ work during the workshops would be represented in the form of photographs and be exhibited as part of MoMA’s New Photography show.
The CGMs came up with their own list of materials they would need for their small council photoshoot that would be provided by the museum. A portion of studio time was allotted during the second day and third day of the workshops to create visualizations for their small councils. As a rehearsal of the small council photoshoot that would take place on the third workshop day, the CGMs also worked with materials from home in making their clothing and props and brought cosmetics for makeup that could help portray themselves in character.

Throughout this process, various themes and subjects emerged during the small group discussions. The main themes that emerged from the CGMs were labor rights and space curation based on the building’s architecture, which then led to themes such as sustainability.

It was almost too much to cover for *The Council*, I feel there was so much we could do. We could really focus on the architecture of the space or really focus on the labor rights, but because I wanted them to decide where the workshop was going to go, we came to the table with a very open thing like, here’s a map, then through drawing, debating, and discussing, the series evolved and things came out and one of the things was labor rights, another was how this complex [the institution] was going to sustain itself or where is the electricity going to be coming from. Then it was about sustainability….What does labor rights really mean, how does the architecture really impact labor rights…. Younger people bring it up, then move on, and it’s two really amazing problems we could spend days on…. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

With regard to Adelita’s inquiry-based artmaking approach, her goal in *The Council* was “to deal with MoMA or the institution from the point of view of destruction” in a “sort of hopefully not straightforward way.” She emphasized how the collective process of working alongside the CGMs during the workshops also (re)constructed the nature or definition of the question she had initially posed:12 “We are going through a

12 What could happen to institutions in times of crisis?
What defines a crisis?
What does a younger person today feel as an urgency or how do they project the present of the institution into the future? (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, August 8, 2018)
critical process of understanding that I’m engaged in too, where you are debating about the nature or definition of the question, or how the question is represented” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

As the workshops were a process of unpacking the overarching inquiry, the content of the workshops naturally unfolded according to the responses of the CGMs. They interpreted the question based on their own ideas from previous life experiences and perspectives, and Adelita would facilitate the workshops from their responses. The many ways in which the question could be interpreted and answered reflect the diverse range of topics this project could encompass. This also speaks to the collaborative aspect of the project, which is discussed in the next section.

**Collaborative production.** In *The Council*, Adelita created and facilitated the framework of the four workshop days, while the CGMs created the content for the final representation following her facilitation. Unlike Adelita’s other works, which are installation and film, the final representation of *The Council* was in the form of photographic images capturing scenes from the workshops, in particular the small and large councils formed by the CGMs. In this section, I discuss the collaborative process of how the photographs were produced and issues related to authorship in tandem with this collaborative process.

**Making the photographs.** The photoshoots for the creation of the final photographic representations for the MoMA exhibition took place on the fourth workshop day. On the third workshop day, Adelita had explained the schedule and the photoshoot process of the final day. She detailed the setting of the room, the lighting, and the two types of cameras that would be used for the photoshoot: the digital Hasselblad camera to take numerous photos of their process and the large format camera operated by Adelita’s photography crew to create large prints. The large format photographs were meant for the exhibition, whereas the smaller digital shots were for testing out the CGMs’ ideas and different poses and to archive the process.
Content for the photographs came from the small councils and the plenary council sessions (the plenary council was a combination of the four small councils). The plenary council discussion sessions (also referred to as “large councils”) consisted of four rounds of discussions that lasted four hours in total, with breaks and movement exercises in between. During these sessions, the CGMs performed the characters they had created since the first workshop day. For example, as part of the group’s script, one CGM played a wealthy person who did not feel guilty for killing the refugees living in the basement of the institution and using their bodies for medical experimentations. Another CGM’s character was an environmental activist who advocated to implement environment-friendly programming and infrastructure in the institution.

The four rounds of plenary discussions were structured in a similar fashion to Boal’s Forum Theater (see Chapter II “Augusto Boal’s TO” section), in which each discussion session focused on a certain prompt (scenario) that Adelita wrote based on the content that had emerged from the CGMs in the previous workshop days. Each discussion round prompted a decision to be made (a “motion” to be passed) by The Council members, which elicited a heated discussion. Just as the “joker” would facilitate the Forum Theater, the “presider” (played by a CGM) moderated each discussion of the plenary council session. Each CGM had to pick a certain role as a council member—presider (the moderator of the discussion), note-taker, new knowledge provider, Human Resources representative, Infrastructure representative, resident, etc.—and play the selected role while simultaneously embodying the character they had developed throughout the workshop days. The following is an example of an opening of a plenary council discussion round announced by the presider:

“Rolecall.”
Presider: “Council members, welcome to the first plenary session. After the market crisis, sea-level rise and heatwave, we have opened this building to the city. As you all know, people have been inhabiting, using, visiting the building for weeks now. We have two motions to pass today. The first motion is in regard to the name of our institution. Now that the Museum of
Modern Art has ceased to be, we must find a new name for this place. I invite you all to proceed individually to express a new name on paper. I will then read the suggestions. We will debate the suggestions. Then proceed to vote on a new name for the institution. I remind you that the new institution now hosts a holistic healing center called the Glass Dome. It is also a home for a self-sustaining commune. It hosts a library, archives, and growing operation. Art is being produced in the building with people booking in coming for shelter. Those operations are currently being funded partially through the luxury apartments on the top floors and the profits made by the Glass Dome. Operations are also happening in the basement, although these aren’t entirely clear to the whole council. The institution is now currently run by an AI called “Mumma.” You have five minutes to propose your motion individually. After five minutes, we will proceed to debate your motions.”

(written by A. Husni-Bey for The Council plenary discussion, December, 2017)

During these plenary sessions, CGMs would get into heated discussions, sometimes move to different ends of the table to express their stance of agreement or disagreement, and raise their hands during voting. While the CGMs were engaging in a heated discussion, or during moments of surging energy, Adelita would shout out “freeze,” signaling that they be still in their poses to be photographed. Adelita would also coach them: “Whatever you’re feeling, go ahead and triple that, make the movement bigger.” After a three, two, one countdown the camera would blink to take the picture. Once the photographs were taken, the CGMs would continue their debates and discussions.

After a single plenary discussion round (40-50 minutes), all the cameras would be turned off, and Adelita would direct the CGMs to take a break. She would carry out movement exercises, such as telling the CGMs to become bears and to crawl around and interact with each other by making sounds but no words, or to go outside to catch fresh air so that they could get out of their characters for a while. However, once they were back on set, they would have to re-embody their respective characters and play their council member role.
Figure 2. From the series *The Council*, 2018, “The institution will be run by a morally superior AI,” C-print mounted on dibond, 142 x 177cm

Figure 3. From the series *The Council*, 2018, “A secret project to benefit the rich,” C-print mounted on dibond, 142 x 177cm

Figure 4. From the series *The Council*, 2018, “The institution will become a place for healing through technology,” C-print mounted on dibond, 142 x 177cm

Figure 5. From the series *The Council*, 2018, “The institution will become a radical education center and garden,” C-print mounted on dibond, 142 x 177cm
Issues with authorship. In response to issues with authorship, Adelita created contracts for consent by the CGMs; this has become a critical part of her work and was a pedagogical act for the CGMs. For *The Council*, Adelita first met with the thirteen CGMs in October 2017, prior to the four workshop days. She introduced herself and talked about her previous projects for the CGMs to gain an understanding of her work. She explained the basic structure of the workshops, the time commitment, the responsibilities, and the contract to be signed if they were to participate. Adelita made it clear that they had the option either to be part of both the four-day workshops and the photoshoots on the final day or just part of the workshops and not part of the photoshoots if they did not want to be on public view. She projected the contract on the screen and walked through it line by line, outlining the CGM’s responsibilities, rights, and compensation\textsuperscript{13} if the artwork were to be sold. Adelita emphasized transparency as a significant pedagogical part of the

\textsuperscript{13}Adelita’s contract notified the CGMs that if the work were to be sold, they would receive 33.3\% of the share.
project. In our conversation, she specifically spoke about the CGMs’ labor rights and compensation as part of the contract:

To me it’s really important. If the pedagogical act is essentially also teaching about your labor rights, you’re engaged in a project so it’s really non-educational not to pay people for their work. They’re hopefully going to be paid for their work in the future at all times, so all of that is a really important part of the work. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018)

Adelita further elaborated on the issues related to authorship and labor rights. She spoke about the parts the CGMs had authorship over as “their interactions, and they have authorship over their responses.” And then for herself, “authorship of the work, the video/photographs, the editing and making sense of the images, and that is something that I do, so to some degree it’s a different question.” Moreover, she said, “there are some parts as a pedagogical aspect, and the production work with questions of rights around that.” She expressed how these several aspects are intertwined in a project, making it difficult to quantify:

It’s interesting how complex the authorship thing is and how they feel how they were in charge of many aspects…. Yes, I made it happen, but they were very much producing a lot of content, and the percentages of that or where it stops, there are so many levels in how it’s shared differently. It’s not super possible to quantify, but we live in that world, so I have to give a percentage … the truth is, it’s impossible to quantify how that dynamic functions. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

Adelita shared about her then-current work on creating a “co-authorship contract” by working in collaboration with a group of doctoral students researching video and law based in Italy. It specifies the roles that Adelita, as the artist, carries out. She stated, “Decision-making, framework is something I devise, representation is something I propose, and I develop the aesthetics to some degree or at least have a notion or idea of how I think something should look and have conversations around that.” As said earlier, the authorship is complex because the content is produced by the participants (for pedagogical reasons), and there are not many fine artists working in this fashion.
It was salient in Adelita’s work of merging the two—pedagogy-based content and the politics of representation tied to the contemporary art world and art market, which made this particular work unique but also complex. Although the workshops were a pedagogical process, the process of the workshops was transmitted into an object-based representation (a body of photographs) that could be commodified in the art market. Thus, *The Council* was a merging of learning as a process that doesn’t have a tangible form, and a tangible object that encapsulates the experiential process that can be commoditized. Adelita spoke about working with the tension between the two as she continues to make work in the contemporary art world:

It’s hard to have an understanding of all the different aspects, like the pedagogical aspect; why are you engaging in pedagogy, why are you doing a workshop and not another thing, what is it about the workshop that’s special and how it will enhance your project idea or thing … your relationship, but that other side of how to respond to the art market once you have a thing is also crucial if you want to bridge those two worlds. There’s not a lot of discourse around it at all. I find it really lonely. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

For Adelita, as addressed earlier in regard to the pedagogical intent, although the CGMs go through an educational process through the workshops, she also considers the final representation (in the form of a commodifiable object) as a pedagogical tool for the public audience members in a unique way. She shared about *The Council* bringing the CGMs’ parents, families, and friends to the museum to engage with the work and how her other projects brought in a new audience to the museum or gallery as she worked with CGMs who were teen athletes, physical therapists, lawyers, etc., adding, “It helps expand what people think art is if they are outside the discourse in some ways. I think it’s important in some ways too” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

*Fostering critical and creative agency with responsibility.* As Adelita grounds herself in critical pedagogy and emphasizes critical thinking throughout her practice, her
purpose of carrying out the workshops with the CGMs was to promote critical agency on multiple levels. As stated earlier in relation to her inquiry-based approach, Adelita wanted the CGMs to come up with their own solidified themes (the four titles/themes of the small councils introduced earlier) as a group, have them come up with their own ideas and ways to create their visualizations for the photoshoot (props, clothing, backdrops, makeup, poses, etc.), and decide the content and theater activities they wanted to further during the workshops. Per Adelita’s facilitation style, she would often give options for the CGMs to choose. Providing her participants with choice is something that Adelita values, as the following quote indicates:

There are lots of times where I ask, do you want to try this theater exercise that we did when we were doing the reading…. Not any of that is really structured, or the conversations we’re having when being filmed are performance; the ways in which the workshop is held. Those are also not scripted and can go in lots of different ways, and there’s like 4 hours of footage. I feel like there isn’t a lot of scripting….

We could really focus on the architecture of the space or really focus on the labor rights, but I wanted them to decide where the workshop was going to go…. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

In terms of intervening, Adelita would not intervene unless the CGMs first presented their own ideas. For example, on the day of the photoshoot, she asked the small councils to come up with their own poses that would best express the character and tone they wanted to evoke. The CGMs would arrange their poses and props in a certain way. Adelita would then question them about their particular poses and prop layouts. As they responded to Adelita’s questions, they would adjust their poses, rearrange props and signs with texts, or exaggerate certain expressions that could better help the viewer perceive their conceptual ideas. Thus, the final photographs were an end result of a dynamic, messy, and constantly unfolding process of the CGMs’ shifting of poses and arrangement of props. It was as if they were creating a composition using their own bodies and props that could best convey the narratives of their respective small councils.
According to the CGMs, Adelita intervened the most during the photoshoot in order to support them in front of the camera. Lynn (CGM 3) commented on Adelita’s facilitation approach—how Adelita would first let them work on their own and intervene afterwards to strengthen their thoughts:

Adelita had a really hands-free role, and she sort of asked the questions and let us do our thing, then checked in. She wouldn’t give us criticism or what to do, but just told us to further it, whatever we had. Like we were doing props or costumes and she would make sure that every detail was accounted for, like even details that we didn’t think were important, like she felt that the details were the only telling factor in the photographs which is totally true, because looking at the photographs, you wouldn’t be able to guess. Even small things that wouldn’t show up, she wanted. There was supposed to be a reason for every prop, stance and every look in your face, every emotion….

She wanted to see what we were coming up with, then she gave most of her input then. I feel like she didn’t want to do that during the workshops because she didn’t want to limit us in any way, but when she finally figured out our ideas and we solidified what we wanted to present in the final projects, she was able to be like, okay, how can we make this better? What topics can we discuss? What does this mean and what haven’t you discussed that we can bring to the surface? (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

In addition, Adelita wanted the CGMs to take responsibility for what it means to take part in an art project to be presented in final images that will live on among the public. As addressed earlier in regard to the contract signing, she had the CGMs choose whether they would only be part of the workshops or part of both the workshops and the photo shooting. This was a deliberate choice to be made by the CGMs, as Adelita wanted to instill them with a sense of responsibility in the choices they make:

Creating a safe space. Beyond the responsibility of taking ownership, in our conversation, Adelita frequently spoke about the responsibility of her role as the artist-

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14 As mentioned earlier in relation to the contract signing, Adelita had explained about their commitment and rights through the contract during their first meeting in October, 2017 to the CGMs. The CGMs did not have to make the decision right away, but she wanted them to have control over their choice.
pedagogue to create a “safe space” for the CGMs. She specifically addressed the balance in her pedagogical approach about allowing enough space for self-expression but also providing proper guidance in creating a sound educational environment:

There is a balance between a pedagogical practice, there has to be a lot of self-expression, there has to be some guidance and analysis about what that does individually and collectively, and at the same time you need guidance because the pedagogical frameworks we’re used to are very guided, so it takes a lot of care to make that space.

Especially if you are doing an intense brief workshop, the guidance needs to be all-encompassing, but the general feeling and truth is that there is so much space for everyone to interpret or play within the boundaries or limitations of what you’re setting up. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018)

To promote a sense of responsibility and respect toward one another in creating a safe space, Adelita promoted bonding and a sense of empathy among the CGMs by incorporating theater activities such as dependency exercises, character-building, and role-playing activities (see next section). In the plenary council discussion sessions, which served as a culmination of the sessions carried out during the earlier workshop days, Adelita felt a need to be attentive in facilitation, so that the CGMs would not feel over-burdened or pressured in the process:

It can easily be dramatic! If you are able to maintain the safe space, like, whatever happens as long as it’s not true violence, then it’s fine because then you can talk about it and have the capacity to process. Hopefully, there’s that, even within the time constraints. But I feel like you have to be so careful. People develop really strong feelings around these things and you want to give them space to voice that, but also you are responsible for the group and for the person themselves not to get hurt because you gave them too much responsibility or pressure. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

“Care” is an aspect that Adelita often spoke about in creating a safe space; she saw care as an emotional aspect that the CGMs could feel without words. As Adelita was also incorporating sensorial engagement along with discussions, I found the emotional care an important element in her pedagogical approach in creating a safe space.
Pedagogical methods.

Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed: Character role-playing and exercises using the body. As mentioned, Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed is a method that Adelita often uses throughout her workshops, and that she used particularly in The Council. She used Image Theater techniques, voice reading and manipulation exercises, and dependency exercises through body movement. The purpose of these activities was to loosen up the body and overcome self-consciousness, also to create a sense of trust and unity among the CGMs.

Character-building and role-playing. This was a method Adelita applied throughout the group work. From the first day of the workshops, she asked each CGM to develop a character of their own, and to embody that character as they played the role of a council member in the plenary discussions. Adelita explained her purpose for using this strategy:

We are also really thinking about how each individual character is going to respond to these scenarios, so a lot of me stressed the idea to come up with individual characters and names for them, which was on the one hand to enhance the theatrics of it for them.

When you build a character pedagogically, it could be you but it’s an avatar, so it’s easier to move that other person around and experience things than yourself, so you can work with that avatar a lot better; trauma therapy too, you write about someone else going through a similar experience, not you. That’s one complicity, negotiation, etc. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

The CGMs reflected upon their process of embodying role-playing. Marco (CGM 2) said, “You have to leave everything that you identify yourself as, and you identify yourself as this character that you’re trying to portray.” He said that his helped him “get a whole new look of how other people may feel, how other people may act, how other people see the world” (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018). Jesse (CGM 5) spoke in detail of her process in regard to character-building and how it added a sense of flexibility and adaptability that made herself overcome shyness with public speaking:
From early on, she [Adelita] wanted us to think about what an institution is and who builds it... Then she introduced that we would be characters. Whatever kinds of beliefs our groups would represent didn’t have to be ours or realistic. It’s a fictional event. Lots of people played with the idea of how fictional the story could be, we exchanged ideas of what the event would be since that was defined by her, then talked to her to get on the same page about the context and scenario…

The way I dealt with it [playing a certain role during the plenary group discussion] was that it was the only round or simulation and I had to make it count and go for it. Everyone was doing the same and I wasn’t shy, but I am more of a shy person, but being in character is like armor in a way, so I got over my shyness. Plus, we were all such good friends at that point, so I didn’t have any stage fright of being in character. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

On the other hand, CGMs commented on how “real” it felt embodying the characters, that the discussions would get intense and they would get into heated debates and arguments:

But while we were playing these roles during the large group discussion, we had an intense debate and got angry and started yelling and arguing. It was a heated moment, but I think it shows how everything felt so real and natural. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

We would have to calm down during the group session in the Founders room. Some disagreements would arise but everyone had an understanding that it wasn’t personal. (CGM 4 Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

When we started role-playing and having discussions because everyone was so in character, we would get in arguments about concepts that weren’t even intact. So I think on the shooting day, when we were reenacting it, everyone sort of like…

When we were in the Founders room having that big discussion, it almost felt real in that moment because we were in the zone and in costume. We had so many situational debates that people started getting out of character, intense and snappy, so we couldn’t tell if we were in character or not. I think the weight of the topics got to be too much, it wasn’t real, but then whatever you said was your stance if you were in that position you would take, so it got really heavy. It’s like role-playing and becoming the role. (CGM 3 Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

As someone who has frequently implemented these strategies with groups of young people for the past ten years, Adelita well understood the dynamics of these debates. As
shared earlier, creating a safe space was essential for this method to be effective. She also reflected on the character-building in the case of *The Council*:

The intricacy of each character was interesting. There was so much more to the character that what you would think from looking at the photo, to the way they, why they made choices and so on. I wish we went deeper into why and how they constructed this character and what it meant to them. There is some that fell through the cracks, for sure. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

*Exercises using the body.* Although the workshops had a strong focus on inquiry-based discussion through language, Adelita also wanted the CGMs to experience the effects through movement and using the body. She stated, “Physical stuff is surprising how much it helps the energy. Imagine if it was pure verbal and just talking, if the whole project was based on that, if there were no moments to feel each other’s energy, touch each other.” Adelita incorporated a variety of exercises from the first day, such as exploring the basement on barefoot and manipulating voices while reading and talking out loud in the galleries. During the plenary debate sessions on the last day, she incorporated movement exercises during breaks to freshen up and increase the energy toward one another. Jesse stated, “Thinking about how awkward we were getting into our first theater exercise, we became so comfortable becoming bears crawling all over and sniffing at each other in between the plenary sessions [on the last day].” Jesse also mentioned the “dependency exercise” as an aha moment; “I felt we were really bonding when we were leaning against one another. Damn it felt great!”

Adelita purposefully incorporated the dependency exercise in which each person would have to entirely entrust their body to others as a way to increase a sense of holding each other accountable. She spoke about the rationale and effect of this exercise:

It’s so fascinating that touching someone in a culture that really avoids touch is so therapeutic. And the exercise in question is one that really requires you to let go and everyone carries them through. There’s something so poetic about that as a message. It’s about non-verbal trust, bodily trust and how it translates into different types of trust. Something so crazy can happen in 5 minutes and change perceptions of each other. You sit down and talk to
people about their responsibility in this project, but that exercise probably helps the group more than sitting down and saying your individually responsible, your responses are important. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018)

Lynn also particularly commented on this activity as the most memorable thing she had never experienced before.

I remember when the people carried me on my back and the trust building activities. We had to throw ourselves in and lend our body parts to people. It was the most memorable because I didn’t know any of them and just giving them your body, just throwing it … it was unforgettable. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

**Reflective practice.** As someone committed to critical pedagogy and creating artwork based on inquiry, it was natural for Adelita to take reflection seriously and to engage her students through reflection as well. This tendency was reflected throughout our conversations.

There are definitely ways in which every project makes me question about my practice or think about the complicities. They are never clean things I walk out of thinking, I am so happy this happened. Rather it’s always, “the critical part where I should have or could have done…” to tease out specific questions and work on them with a lot more strength. But time-wise and energy-wise it was impossible. How can I conserve energy to get to those points with clear questions in mind developed through the conversations?

I am trying to become a better pedagogue through the work. It’s not so much about the result, because I don’t have a ton of control over that…. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018).

Adelita shared about instilling reflective thinking among the CGMs as an important part of her workshops. In the beginning of the workshops, she asked each CGM to write and submit a goal about something they would want to achieve through the project. On the last day of the workshops after the plenary discussion sessions, they revisited these goals as a group. They randomly picked the from the submitted papers (that had the goals written on them) and read the goals out loud. The CGMs freely discussed them as they reflected upon their experience from the first day. These are a few examples of the goals they wrote on the first day: “I intend to grow as an artist and thinker with my peers”; “I’d
like to have some clarity because right now I have no idea”; “Make new friends and connect with my youth.”

In response, several CGMs shared that they did not like collaborating with others in school, but that *The Council* project provided a positive collaboration experience, particularly because of the “great” group dynamics. Another CGM spoke about how she did not have high hopes in terms of becoming an artist through this project, but experiencing artmaking through theater had allowed her to gain a sense of artistic achievement.

I didn’t think I’d grow as an artist, but I definitely did. Just thinking about how theater influences artmaking a lot more than I anticipated. Mostly because I found them as very different mediums but how it can translate from one space to the other and how it’s so tangible in the way our relationships have formed. So I’d say, yeah, I grew as an artist and I was pleasantly surprised by that. (CGM 6 Ruth, personal communication, August 9, 2018)

In terms of the sense of uncertainty in the beginning of the workshops, CGMs responded that they approached it with a sense of “experimenting.” Kiera spoke about the project in analogy to an inductive approach. She said, “Within the given basic guidelines, it was like a process about getting the information and then you make the conclusion, rather than making the conclusion and finding the information within what you’re doing.” Kiera spoke about navigating the uncertain process as “having a lot of faith and trusting that it’s gonna work out. Trusting your peers a lot too” (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018).

In terms of assessment in regard to the educational process, Adelita spoke about what she puts emphasis on—“How did this shape you? What did it make you think about? How did it develop your sense of self?”—and that was one of the reasons she has the CGMs submit a goal in the beginning and carries out a reflection session in the end. In *The Council*, she reflected that even though she had planned two hours for reflection, it didn’t go the way she planned due to the museum crew asking the CGMs to record
interviews for the audio guide. Adelita shared about the brief timeline of the project that ended without the depth she had intended:

I always carry out feedback sessions in the end…. The limitation I could see [in The Council] was because of brief and intense it was, we could have developed more tools to speak about what we were doing politically. We lacked on the depth and capacity of what we were doing. Some of it is because my guidance wasn’t maybe adequate or sufficient…. I think time has a lot to do with it…. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2019)

However, she said, “the part I’m more hopeful about is planting something in MoMA or in the meeting and that’s growing.” Although the educational impact would be hard to tell in the current moment, Adelita expressed her hopes, as in the following quote:

There is a level of playfulness, but also seriousness, and I hope we dug down. Maybe it will come out in 10 years, but I hope that seriousness of what an institution does, what can we do to change that, what’s it going to look like when the environment changes as it is now changing, what’s it going to impact? And the class, race, gender dimensions, all of this … if we got through some of that, that’s great, even if it’s not clear to some of them right now, if it becomes clear, that’s great. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2019)

Core Group Members’ Pedagogical Experience

As stated in Chapter III, I was able to interview ten CGMs among the 13 who participated in The Council. As there were a lot of overlapping in their responses, I selected five (age 18-23 years) among the ten according to particular perspectives they projected in relation to The Council. I made sure that at least one person was from each of the four small council groups. The interview protocol (Appendix E) entailed multiple questions eliciting what they perceived as learning by participating in The Council. They also shared their thoughts in comparison to their learning experiences in school and art experiences in other settings. The findings are organized by themes that emerged in the data analysis process.
Purpose of Participation and Expectations

**Purpose/motivation for participation.** It was clear when I talked with the ten CGMs that they had a special attachment and fondness toward the MoMA Teens program and significant trust in Calder, the assistant director of teens and community partnerships. Many of them would express that MoMA Teens was their “second family” or “extended family” and that they would gladly skip school to come to MoMA. Although Adelita was an artist coming from the outside and they were unsure about the project, they had an established trust that it would be something worthwhile to be part of as it was offered through the MoMA Teens program mediated by Calder, as indicated here:

> Even before opening the email, I saw Calder and I was in! Anytime there’s a Calder email, it’s like Christmas! It’s always good news, so I was already losing my mind, it was in the museum and a crazy opportunity! I jumped in so fast! (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

On this foundation of trust in the MoMA Teens programming, the opportunity to do something fun with their peers was also a motivation for participation.

> What made me want to participate was that I already knew everyone that was participating from either interviewing or taking a class with before, so maybe only one or two people were new. I would get to be with my friends and do something cool, so why not?! (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

**Expectations for the art project/artist.** In terms of expectations for the art project and working with an internationally renowned artist, most CGMs responded that they had no expectation. As Joe said, “You never have an idea where it’s going at MoMA Teens, but it’s always been great!” (CGM 1 Joe, personal communication, August 2, 2018). It seemed they were already conditioned through the MoMA Teens programs that going with the flow was the norm.

> I didn’t really have any true expectations because with MoMA Teens, you never know what’s going to happen! I didn’t think I would have as much control as I did [in *The Council*] in terms of being able to do whatever you want in a way. MoMA Teens has always had endless possibilities, but being an outside person with Adelita coming in, I thought it was going to change things, but Adelita definitely supported the MoMA Teens’ way. There is no
such thing as a ridiculous idea or far out example. Whatever you wanted was welcomed. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

To be completely honest, nothing, I had no expectations. They said it was this photography thing, so I was thinking, okay, are we going to be in a picture or are we taking pictures? And at first, I was just like, okay we’re going to do it as it unravels. So I really had no expectations as to what it was going to be. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Marco and Lynn specifically shared their first impressions of Adelita and her artwork at the time they agreed to participate after receiving the open call email from Calder. Marco told how he felt meeting Adelita at the introduction session:

My first impression of Adelita was a mix of intimidating but also very welcoming. Here is this person who has done it before, involved in photography, but we don’t know her as a person and what expectations she has of us. It’s almost like meeting a celebrity. You don’t know what you should say or how you should act, and it’s like, okay, it gets you nervous. But at the same time, she was very welcoming and explained herself to the best of her ability. She was open in conversation. I pulled her to the side after our meeting, and I had a good conversation with her. It was entertaining. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Lynn shared that she felt confused when she researched Adelita’s artwork prior to the introduction session:

I had no expectations. I was really confused at first because I did look up Adelita’s work, and without context if you look at her work, I think it’s very confusing. It’s not particularly aesthetically interesting, and conceptually it’s really hard to get. It’s really hard to tell from her website, so I had no expectations. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

**Learning Outcomes Described by the CGMs**

The responses among the CGMs were quite cohesive and consistent throughout my conversations. Most of their learning was pertinent to what they felt and learned through the highly collaborative nature of the work they carried out in their small and large groups. All CGMs I interviewed voiced a very positive response about being part of *The Council* experience.
The following are descriptions about their experiences that frequently came up in my conversations with the CGMs: “gained confidence,” “had much more creative agency/control than anticipated,” “safe space,” “freedom of thought and expression,” “liberating,” “judgment-free zone,” “we had to calm down,” “intense,” “fun,” “gained friends,” “confusing in the beginning,” “we achieved something bigger than ourselves,” “never had done anything like this before,” “we are the MoMA Teens…” Many of these words were brought up in almost every conversation I had with a CGM, which I elaborate on in the following sections.

As mentioned in Chapter III, the CGMs who took part in *The Council* had been MoMA Teens attendees for at least three years. This implied that they had stayed with the museum because of their fondness for the programming and trust in figures like Calder. They all had experience with the most senior level program—Digital Advisory Board (DAB) —in which they took on leadership roles in running the Teens program for other teens across the country through social media online platforms. In the interviews, even though my questions were focused on *The Council* experience, it was evident that they perceived *The Council* as part of their overall MoMA Teens experience, as many spoke about how the MoMA Teens program has been socially, emotionally, and experientially supportive to their growth and influential to their career paths. Many of them shared how MoMA was a haven for them in comparison to school, and how they would work around their school schedules to come to MoMA. It was salient that, although Adelita was not from the MoMA Teens program, rather someone who had a critical perspective toward the museum, all the CGMs perceived that working with Adelita aligned with the values and positive experience from their previous MoMA Teens programs. Many CGMs felt that *The Council*, in one CGM’s words, “was a culmination of the MoMA Teens experience.” *The Council* experience amplified their identity as being MoMA Teens and created a strong sense of camaraderie.
From the perspective of Adelita, she shared in our conversation that because *The Council* CGMs were all very pro-MoMA, it was difficult to facilitate a more critical perspective toward the museum, even though they were highly engaged and motivated. She voiced that it could have been more interesting if there were less MoMA-engaged CGMs in *The Council*.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the salient learning outcomes described by the CGMs.

**Gained confidence.** I perceived positive responses from the CGMs stemming from not only the facilitation carried out by Adelita, but also the experience of being featured in a body of work publicly displayed in the main galleries of MoMA, a major world-class cultural institution. Although their responses to publicity differed according to each person, it was definitely a “big deal” to them. Some CGMs described this experience as the best thing that had happened in their entire life. This event was definitely empowering, as the majority of them stated they had gained much confidence and self-esteem. It made me wonder how their experience would have been different if they were not featured in the MoMA exhibition, although as stated above, for some the workshops themselves felt like the culmination of the positive MoMA Teens programming.

*The change I’ve experienced is the confidence I gained from it* [The Council]. Personally, I’m really hard on myself and insecure and small all the time. But, I’m letting myself be proud of this which is rare for me to do. This is a big deal so it’s dumb to put it down in my head! I’ve been in this museum for so long and now I’m in it!

It also makes me set a high expectation for myself since it’s such a scary thought that my peak would be at age 20 when I haven’t really even started! I joke around that I’ve peaked to my mom, but it’s also a real fear! This is so early on and I got a taste of being in a major museum which makes me want more! I don’t know if that makes me crazy, but thinking about my career as an artist, I want a lot, which feels weird to say, but I feel like I have to do more now. Not that I have to do more, but I feel pushed with this big gold star in my resume with credits that I can’t let this be my biggest moment. I have to be in the MoMA again with myself as the presenter, which is a good and bad side effect. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)
I’ve gained confidence by being part of this [The Council]. I helped make this, and I’m a part of it and on the walls! Even though they switched out my picture, I’m so proud to be part of that. The whole program itself is so experimental, so the fact we did all that in a short amount of time made me confident in my ability to do things and it inspired me, that if I try I can do anything sort of attitude… the photography, so many talented people [peers]. Lots of inspiration and motivation. It gave me lots of confidence and a lot of memories. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Kiera, who had described her purpose for participating in the project in terms of doing something fun with her peers, talked about how she unexpectedly gained self-confidence by being on the walls of MoMA at age 17 and as a person of color:

*Self-confidence.* It wasn’t something that I was necessarily looking to gain. I just wanted a good time, which I always have at MoMA, not for promotional reasons, but I would skip school to go to MoMA. I gained self confidence in that I was 17 years old, a person of color in one of the most known, respected, established institutions, not even just museums, but in the world! (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

Kiera’s following account explains how adolescents can be sensitive to judgment and how it affects self-confidence. She spoke about her lack of confidence and her insecurities in school. She talked about gaining acknowledgement from an outlet she really cared for—MoMA Teens—and how The Council boosted her confidence and even self-value:

In terms of self-confidence at my [high] school, I didn’t need it from there, but as a teenager going through things, boys, college, and you constantly feel watched and judged immediately…. I ended up applying to 19 colleges and everyone was like whyyyy. It had a sense of me lacking self-confidence and self-awareness, so I didn’t know how far my capabilities would go and where I stood as an applicant. I didn’t play sports, so I didn’t have any tangible things to show my power or strength or abilities….

My parents always wanted me to have a better life than they did … but to say that at 17 years old I was in the MoMA and did it with my friends, that gave me confidence!

I was a nervous wreck waiting to hear back from colleges. You think, this doesn’t determine how smart I am … but it does. But *this project made me feel like, ‘if this school doesn’t take me, it’s their loss.’* It wasn’t a sense of ego … and it’s a fine line between ego and self-confidence, but it gave me a confidence boost that I don’t need to take anything for less, I have great capabilities and abilities, and if I want to do something, put my mind to it.
We used to joke about being in the MoMA, like, imagining we were on the walls. But it came true! (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

Response to publicity. In my data analysis, as the publicity part was a prominent aspect in tandem with the CGMs’ gaining confidence, it was necessary to examine their reactions and influences pertinent to this aspect.

Many of the CGMs did not realize about the publicity aspect of the project until the opening reception, where they were surrounded by renowned artists and their art school professors.

The opening reception, we had this opening party for press, and some people in the walls doing photography of people there as guests… it was beyond the opposite of humbling. I felt cocky in a way. I was stopped by someone asking if it was me, and I was like, yes! It was me!... it’s hard to feel humble when you’re up on the walls like that…. Although my parents could not come to see the show due to work I showed them pictures. My mom cried and my dad showed all his co-workers and my uncles. Family members would get shocked. It felt nice. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Particularly Marco, who was suffering from colitis and had to miss school frequently because of his sickness, shared an incident of how being featured in the MoMA program changed the negative response of one of his teachers toward him.

They [MoMA] gave us five free guest passes,… and I loved handing them out to teachers because it’s like, haha, I did this! Ms. Smith was someone who had supported me. She was so proud and happy when I gave her a ticket…, I also tried inviting one of the teachers that hated me. She didn’t even say anything bad or good. She looked shocked! That teacher thought I was lying about my health issues, even though I brought in notices. I have all sorts of colitis, which is an IBD, an inflammatory bowel disease. There is no known cure or reason why it happens, just stress. Being at MoMA, it never really affected me, but in the morning for school, I would feel so sick and dread it [school]. But MoMA was a happy place where I never felt sick. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Kiera shared that being featured in the media after the opening was even more confidence boosting:

Self-confidence was really boosted by being in MoMA. Being surrounded by prominent people in the art world too during the opening. And I would go to MoMA and 3-4 people would recognize me.
Afterwards, the amount of attention that it got from *Wall Street Journal* to *Vogue* in Italy, it was just like wow, I’ve never even been to Italy. I think the work was featured in two other magazines in Italy too. So the aftermath was even more confidence-boosting. It really showed me, hey I might not be an all-star athlete going to a Big 10 school but I have something to bring to the table and to show for it. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

Jesse, who was entering her junior year as a fine arts major in Parsons School of Design, projected great excitement among the CGMs I had talked to. In an earlier quote, she shared how she usually looks down on herself and lacks self-confidence, but in the quote the below she was very vocal about how *The Council* experience was the “biggest deal of her life so far.”

These pieces were going to be in the galleries of THE MoMA during this long summer exhibition is crazy to think about!…Two of my professors saw it at the opening too and were very surprised! They wouldn’t expect to run into a student of theirs at an art opening, especially in this piece, so that was a strange new thing. Even when it gets brought up by my friends, they kind of brag on my behalf so I feel weird like … it’s no big deal, but it’s the biggest deal of my life so far! My friends and my mom do all the bragging for me. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

Lynn, who was also entering her junior year in Fine Arts (at the School of Visual Arts), in contrast to Jesse, did not bring this idea of pride up until I asked about it toward the end of our conversation. She had quite a different reaction from the rest of the CGMs I talked with. She expressed a feeling of “awkwardness.” In comparison to what Marco’s perspective that it was “hard to feel humble,” Lynn stated, “It was a very humbling experience.”

My friends that I sort of knew would send photos of it to me and people would write about it and I was like…. The public reception was the most VIP thing I’ve ever done … I don’t know, it’s not that I wasn’t happy and excited, but *it felt more uncomfortable and awkward than happy and excited.* I am immortalized forever, but it’s weird that I should be excited to be in the MoMA, *but it’s really just the idea of me in there, not that it was my idea*…it hasn’t changed my life and I haven’t gotten any crazy life opportunities because of it…I got to speak on a panel, but that was it. It was cool, but….

It feels surreal, but I don’t think about it … all I did was give up some of my Saturdays and got into a fight with someone about a fake AI [small group council theme] … I feel more humbled by it. *I’m not in the MoMA because*
of crazy credentials, I’m there because of chance and luck and where I grew up. I worked, but how hard did I really work for it? It was handed to me, so I felt very weird about that, humbled and grateful. In sum, I felt awkward because I didn’t really work for it. It’s not a bad thing that it just came to me, but it’s hard discussing that. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Collaboration: Among the peers and with the artist. The collaborative aspect was something the CGMs had not experienced to this extent before. Many commented about the positive learning experience of working together and how they were able to achieve something greater than themselves.

Marco talked about the teamwork being self-directed and not forced in comparison to group work at his high school, where it often felt imposed:

I learned about cooperation and teamwork. They threw us in with what we had to do and make, and the screaming in the hallway or reading together was a warmup before the group work that was different than school. In [school] group papers, one person always does more work, someone isn’t interested, and you can’t switch groups. Here, we partnered up by deciding on something together and it wasn’t as forced as school. If you don’t do it at school, there is a consequence to it. [But in The Council,] it was okay and there was no immediate consequence, it was easy going and friendly. I think the environment was very well put that everything felt natural and not forced at all. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Jesse talked about how she did not like to compromise and work with her peers in college. However, in MoMA Teens, it was a given that the environment would be different. She stated how she was able to gain a better understanding about what a positive collaborative environment could be and also how building a community itself can be an art practice.

I gained a better understanding of what a collaborative environment is like. In school and in my own art practice, I don’t work with anyone. I am very much on my own … sometimes I would get a group project in school and hated working in groups! I don’t like compromising my ideas! I like to do it my way! But this was so different since we had amazing chemistry even though I didn’t know most of them…I learned how to work in a group environment and learned about building a community as an art practice. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)
Joe mentioned the democratic quality of the collaboration that was promoted through *The Council* as a very rare and unique experience where everyone’s voice was heard and valued, something he thought would not be possible:

I think collaborating with so many people in a creative project was what I learned, and how their opinions really matter and the scenarios that let them stay how they are, then debating was great. Art school is not like that and in the end the decision is still yours, but here *the ideas are shared. I don’t know what other opportunities in life would bring this kind of cooperation where everyone’s voice is so intense and valued.* Even in a theater production, everyone has their own job, setting, lights, acting and it’s so specific. But here, everyone was talking and all these ideas somehow fit into the work. *I didn’t know that would be possible.* (Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Lynn addressed several significant aspects of the collaborative teamwork of *The Council,* including collective decision-making and playing certain roles in character:

I gained friends, but I think I got a real sort of understanding … close to understanding of what it means to make decisions for other people and make the tough calls. I sort of learned what it means to be the bad guy in a real high stakes decision. We weren’t discussing current events, but it felt parallel to current events. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Lynn also mentioned collaboration in terms of being a CGM making *The Council* together with a supportive artist:

I think that our role was supported by Adelita’s role, which was good because I thought I was just going to be a subject and photographed, but I feel connected to the work that I did. I produced the work with Adelita and I think others feel that way too, so it was good. I didn’t feel used. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

She also mentioned that the large group work allowed her not to be judgmental or to be occupied with preconceptions because that could really hinder the experience. She realized the importance of being open-minded:

Definitely working with a large group of people … I really learned how to work with people and not have expectations, that was really good for me to not limit myself to judge. It’s really easy to judge.

I also learned to be open-minded about it. Even though I went in trying to keep an open mind, I had these preconceived notions about who Adelita was [after seeing her work on her website], like, this is going to be corny, but
it wasn’t! And I think others were thinking that too. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Kiera elaborated on the push-and-pull of compromising when working in groups. She also noted how collaboration and role-playing in character promoted reflective learning related to her own morals and beliefs:

_The learning aspect came from me feeling comfortable in my own skin, feeling free and learning how to express myself clearly. Learning how to compromise too! You might want something different and you can’t have both! Learning how to open your mind to other crazy ideas like Yared’s!_

There were scenarios in the Founders room scene that we had to vote on. One of the scenarios had something to do with death, and you had to reflect on your morals, which creates an idea of your actual morals versus your character’s, religions’ and parent’s morals. You might be okay with something in real life, but does it reflect in your character?...Learning that and about the climate of America today brought the conversation away from politics and more towards what you believe in and value. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

_**Creative agency.** In terms of expectations and outcomes, a salient response was that of surprise, as many CGMs experienced much more creative agency than what they had anticipated._

It was very different from what ended up happening. Even though Calder stressed in the email that we would be involved, I thought we would be posing for her pictures, but I didn’t know it was so performance-based. It was cool, but I thought we’d be following her instructions and be more like an aide, but it ended up being the complete opposite and [we had to] create everything. That was the project. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

They connected creative agency to “freedom (of expression)” and “liberating,” and shared how Adelita was hands-off and would only step in to provide references or support when needed. Several commented on her pedagogical facilitation style of allowing them to take ownership in forming their councils and ideas with an open mind rather than restricting their “nonsensical” ideas. Lynn and Kiera comment on this below:

_Those who practice a hands-off approach give critique superficially and ask questions without any true understanding of your work or where it’s coming from; they have no understanding of the context. But Adelita wanted to have every understanding of it so it wasn’t a discussion but her asking a_
question and we answered through debate with one another. I think, in comparison, Adelita’s approach was a better way for me to have discussion with other people since it was open-ended; she didn’t have answers for anything and it was all about us, so that was an effective way of talking to people and understanding where other groups were coming from. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

What I liked about Adelita and what was different from traditional art was that she served as a facilitator without proposing her ideas. She didn’t say we couldn’t and that it wasn’t what she had in mind, but instead tried to make our ideas come true. She gave suggestions to better your idea and brought in prompts. Working with the other participants wasn’t difficult because I had known everybody to an extent, so it was about hearing each other and not because someone had more power, but you could be excited and everyone was throwing out ideas so we had to calm down sometimes. There weren’t any headbutting or anything. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

Social bonding: New friends, peer-to-peer learning, and MoMA Teens

Making new friends was the most memorable aspect of the project to this group of young adults. As shared in previous quotes by CGMs, the theater exercises promoted trust and bonding, which eventually created a safe space where CGMs could put their ideas out on the table without feeling judged. Several CGMs stated that the relational aspects formed throughout the workshops enabled a more productive experience of the plenary sessions as they played different roles as council members in their character. As Kiera stated, “The plenary discussions would have been very different if we did not have that established trust toward each other.” Moreover, even though each CGM a had a strong sense of identity as a MoMA Teen, it became intensified through the workshops and being featured together in a body of work on the walls of MoMA. The CGMs shared a strong sense of comradeship, which continued even after the project ended (they continuously shared their updates in a phone app chatroom).

The most memorable parts were the fun activities we did, and getting together as a group and forming the group. Even though we were all MoMA Teens, we didn’t actually know each other so making that friendship was the greatest. Then seeing the work at the end was rewarding since it was a lot of hard work. Also, learning a little bit about, or letting us enter Adelita’s creative world was really rewarding. I don’t think we ever worked with an
artist in this way, it was substantial, and really part of her bigger body of work that she’ll show around, which I hope she is proud of as well. (Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

On the last day of the workshops at the very end, we all shared how grateful we were for the new friends and this experience that we never thought we would have. It was really sweet and we all became close friends at the end. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

Lynn described the workshop activities that promoted bonding as fun and memorable:

I remember me, Jesse, and Beyonca were in the sub-basement and nobody even knew that existed and it was like a set built for us…. When we got to have a break and eat was really fun out of character and taking a break, getting to know each other. Doing each other’s makeup … and we had all our props and costumes, so it all came together. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Marco particularly mentioned the exhilarating experience of working with talented peers, which inspired him as well.

Being around so many talented people was one of the most memorable parts of this project. They were so friendly and everyone was super bright, well-spoken and did things on their own time. The ideas that everyone brought to the table were good. Being around so many inspiring people inspired me too. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Kiera shared how she cherished the genuine conversations with her peers in person that were not mediated through the mobile device or technology. She mentioned being able to have intimate conversations like a family:

I’ve always loved to just talk to people after a long day, and some of us would walk to the train together and just talk. It would be an intimate conversation and we wouldn’t be on our phones, and it felt like family. I love being intimate with people without phones, being involved and having a genuine conversation. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

Expansion of knowledge and understanding about art. As the CGMs were part of creating an artwork, several commented on how the experience had provided new insight in understanding the artistic mediums and the possibility of what art can be.
The project prompted Marco to gain an appreciation of photography, as he was able to experience the behind-the-scenes buildup to the final presentation. “It made me appreciate the work behind it. When you see the picture, you think anyone could grab a camera and do it, but to make the story behind it is a lot of work” (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018). The project allowed Jesse to deepen her knowledge and experience about performance art, a medium she had been working on. “The timing was great for me to practice and learn from her [Adelita’s] exercises. They helped me think about the role of the body and communication” (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018).

Lynn shared how this project prompted her to reconsider what art was, particularly in terms of working with people and creating the work centered on people:

I think I am now reevaluating a lot of what I consider art. I guess the impact it mainly had on me is understanding and learning more about people. I’m more interested in learning about the people in the art rather than the art itself. I’ve found it more interesting than object-based art which is funny because my own personal art is object-based…. Really understanding the boundaries of art, because in the most traditional sense of artmaking, we didn’t actually make the sets, we didn’t make anything, but somehow we made a concept from scratch, and I think that was interesting. We learned how to make something fictional and conceptual without having to use our physical labor to produce it, we weren’t taking any photos, we weren’t building sets, but I still felt like I was an artist and part of something bigger than I was. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Joe shared about the entire experience as the artwork:

The artwork was the whole experience. We had so many discussions that aren’t going to be heard in the actual photographs, but in my view, by looking at the photographs it’s going to bring back the memory of the certain decisions and the ways we made the decisions, how we represented ourselves, and how we came up with this whole process. The whole thing was so process-based. (Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

In line with Joe’s statement referring to the artwork as “the experience of going through the process from the perspective as a CGM,” Kiera felt the post-process with the audience to be part of the artwork as well.
The beauty of it is that it’s always going to be a process. That whoever looks at the work is also gonna be thinking what this is, questioning what our point is. The process is not only the before but also the after. So whoever sees it, experiences it, who gets to live it, will get to be part of the artwork as well.

We had a lived experience with the work. The people who will be seeing it can think, “How the heck did these kids get here?” Hopefully they can backtrack the process and hopefully arrive to a similar place and understand how we got there. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

**Learning from The Council in Comparison to School**

When I posed the question to the CGMs to share their experience with The Council in comparison to other learning experiences, they had a lot to say vis-à-vis their previous school experiences—either high school or college. Their responses highlighted the aspects of a non-graded afterschool art program with devoted artist-educators, funded at a prestigious cultural institution in New York City. Another common response was that the CGMs often combined their experiences with The Council and the MoMA Teens programming. This reflected how they perceived The Council as part of the MoMA Teens program, not only because The Council was offered through MoMA Teens, but also in relation to how Adelita facilitated the workshops aligned with the Teens program’s pedagogical approach. Several CGMs addressed Adelita’s open-mindedness and respectfulness toward their ideas, and how she carefully choreographed interventions to push them to the next level. The emergent themes are organized in the following sections.

**Democratic learning environment: Creative agency, genuine trust, and care by the artist-teacher.** Lynn talked about Adelita’s pedagogical approach in terms of how she respected each individual’s and group’s idea, and supported them to go a step further. Lynn compared this approach to the clear hierarchy she experienced in PK-12 public schools and a private art institution. As a current art school student, she talked about having liberty within a given prompt by her professor, whereas in The Council, her group
came up with their own prompt based on Adelita’s prompt, and then Adelita would scaffold another prompt from there.

I felt like Adelita really respected us as individuals and we weren’t seen as lesser. I didn’t feel like she was just barking orders at us or patronizing us or limiting us in what we were saying. Especially when you go into public school PreK to 12 or even a private art institution now, there is a clear hierarchy—I am a student you are a teacher, and whatever the teacher says goes so I just have to figure it out within the boundaries of the teacher’s prompt. Now, I go to art school and you’re given a prompt and you have to follow the prompt but you have creative liberty within your prompt.

[In The Council] We had a prompt, but at the same time we came up with the prompt with her, we created the context, like AI and ethics, we came up with that, then Adelita gave us a prompt, she didn’t create the concepts or ideas for us. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Marco described his experience of The Council in light of the MoMA Teens program. He commented on how he felt genuinely cared for by Adelita and the educators at MoMA and how the learning environment was like an “equal playground” in comparison to high school, where he felt classified by grades or popularity. He particularly talked about how the learning content would be the focus at school, whereas the well-being of the student was the focus in MoMA Teens.

School is not that welcoming and some teachers can be nice, but the people there don’t work well, whereas in MoMA everyone has the same creative drive. Everyone is thriving for something artistic. But in school, someone might be too lazy or think you aren’t smart enough. You never feel like less of a person in MoMA. From grades to popularity, school has factors to put you in a lower class/social class, whereas in MoMA, it’s an equal playing ground. It’s mostly the environment. The teachers at MoMA don’t feel like teachers or bosses, but friends. Teachers in school will always feel like teachers because it’s always about school work, not asking about your day etc. (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

In a similar sense, Kiera talked about how there was mutual learning regardless of one’s status as a teacher or student:

In this project, I experienced that I am not an empty glass getting filled by a pitcher called the teacher. There was learning for both the teacher and the student, which is true in life. Even the highest person in a company can
learn something from an intern. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

Jesse shared her positive experience of having creative control in The Council and throughout her MoMA Teens programming, and how accessible the artist-educators were for communication. She talked about the rigidity and formality in high school that would prevent her from reaching out comfortably to her teachers.

The amount of creative control we got in this project was not something I got in high school. But in college I have control over my assignments—the work that I make. In high school it’s not like that at all! There isn’t a lot of communication with your teachers and more about following rules. It’s your job to follow the rules and do things as expected. But with this project, MoMA Teen programming in general, allows so much communication between the educator and everyone else in the classroom, so I’m never scared to go to Calder or Kaitlyn or any of the teachers I had in my different roles at MoMA. At school I hesitated because it’s formal... but because of the trust here, they feel like your friends, so you can express yourself in a way that would not be welcome in a formal school setting. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

A sense of belonging: Feeling validated, safe non-judgmental zone, encouraging spirit. In a similar vein, responses by the CGMs focused on how they felt validated and safe being in a non-judgmental space that was based on mutual trust and a sense of community. This was supported by the bond among like-minded peers who shared a similar interest in art, in comparison to the school environment where they would have to study subjects they had less interest in and found less commonality with their peers.

Lynn shared how MoMA Teens, which was optional and not required like school, was the only place where her voice and the work she did felt validated:

I think I skipped a lot of classes in high school. I got my schedule rearranged so I could go to MoMA Teens after school…. I felt like I didn’t connect with a lot of people at my school, and I was never really engaged or challenged in any way. School is hard, like I can’t do math or science, but it wasn’t enough to challenge myself or think for myself.

When I was in MoMA Teens, that was the one thing that I felt people cared about what I had to say. When you’re 14-15, no one really cares what you have to say, so I felt heard and important [at MoMA Teens]. I was
running the Facebook at the time, Instagram wasn’t really a thing. I was creating content and it felt like I was doing something rather than nothing. *Going to high school, you have to do it, but I didn’t have to do this and I felt compelled to.* (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Lynn also shared about how it felt to revisit the MoMA Teens after being away for three years attending art school. She compared the “encouraging” atmosphere of MoMA Teens to art school, which was felt more judgmental and fixed:

> When Adelita’s project started, it was 3 years after I had left MoMA Teens programs. Honestly, when I got the email, I had kind of forgotten about MoMA teens because I was so focused on my [college] life.

> When I came for this project, I didn’t recognize the renovated classrooms or the people, but I still felt comfortable. *I realized I really missed the encouraging spirit. In college everybody is mean, judgy and pretentious, and I really missed pressure-free art conversations.* My opinions were allowed to be changed. In college, once you say something, people will bring it up 3 weeks later in the class like, didn’t you say this? I was allowed to evolve while growing and no one was mean or judgy; I felt very safe here. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Kiera also spoke about how she, too, felt not judged in *The Council*, and how she pitched to the MoMA board of trustees members an idea about the importance of learning in a non-test and non-grading environment that would allow self-driven learning through artistic experiences:

> The most enjoyable aspect [of *The Council*] was the freedom of thought and expression. The freedom to be your most pure self without fear of judgment in a judgment-free zone.…

> I remember speaking [as a panel to the MoMA’s board of trustees after *The Council*] about how it was important to learn in a setting *where you’re not being graded, taught to test, or have to take a test in the end. Everybody learns something different in the experience.* I learned about my self-confidence. Maybe someone else learned that they are really good at expressing themselves and didn’t talk much before that. That education is not something you can put a price on. I don’t think any school or book can teach that. It can guide you, but to learn it all on your own is a different story. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

**Experiential learning and sensorial learning.** Joe emphasized the experiential making quality of *The Council* compared to other areas of studies in school and how
artmaking particularly incorporates intuition. He also talked about the systematic routine of pursuing a graduate degree, and how a project like *The Council* was a culmination of various elements that promoted a very rich learning experience.

I treat this as an artist project as I do as an artistic person. It’s in the same line of the work I do making exhibitions elsewhere and making my own writing. In school you are focused on learning [in terms of absorbing information], but this was about *making with what we have. It’s so heavily based on experience.* In comparison to other studies… It’s much more collaborative and intuitive…. There is freedom in this where you aren’t limited by information but *more regurgitating information that is inside already.* (CGM 1 Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Kiera spoke about the activities from *The Council* that promoted learning utilizing various sensorial modalities.

There were exercises we did while it was snowing, we went upstairs and there were tall glass walls peering into the garden. We would take 30 seconds to look, study it, then close eyes and describe the whole scene with your eyes closed. What you might have seen could be different like others didn’t notice the construction worker. Everyone noticed the snow falling, but others might describe it as a delicate white blanket and others as slush….We also walked on barefoot in the basement exploring the architectural spaces, and manipulated our voices reading in the hallways. We did all these crazy group activities of holding each other without touching the ground. There were a lot of activities I had not experienced before. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

**Influences after *The Council***

My last question to the CGMs was if they had noticed any change or difference after being part of *The Council.* They shared their realizations related to their career paths and the influence the project had in their personal artistic practices.

**Career influence.** For Marco, going through *The Council* was influential in deciding his career path. After experiencing the joy of art in a non-competitive atmosphere during *The Council*, Marco had decided not to pursue an art school path:

For a while, I was hesitant about whether or not I wanted to be an artist. This project *taught me that you can do whatever you want, just work on it*…. I was influenced by Adelita, the photographers, and all my peers because
you could tell they all cared. No one was dreading being there. Seeing all
that energy and all the minds put together was very influential and inspiring
and made me want to pursue art more, but not as a career.

I have a plan to go for business marketing in college because I don’t
want to go to an art school where they tell me what is wrong and right and
get graded.

Through this project, it confirmed that I wouldn’t have been happy
attending a specialized art school. Like although I didn’t go to art school in
middle and high school, but I did this. I thought it was very cool. (Marco,
personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Joe, who had graduated from college and was working with an internationally
renowned artist, responded that the project made him “understand the possibility of
blurring the lines of what it means to be an art historian and making work with an artist in
this [collaborative] way.”

I love making work with an artist, and this has furthered that. It’s not so
black and white as art school makes it seem. Sometimes people in art history
are like, time to go for your MA in art history, or others MFA etc., but there
is more than walking that line. This helped, and it felt good to put something
out there and share it. (Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

**Influence on personal art practice.** Both of the fine arts majors, Jesse and Lynn,
were influenced in their own artmaking after The Council. Jesse had mentioned earlier
how, by involving several theater-based activities, the project had expanded her
knowledge of performance art. She shared her experience of creating a piece for her final
project in college:

I ended up doing one of my finals last semester on a performance that
had to be done by my class, which was of course inspired by this! I never
would have done otherwise, so it’s like being a director in real time!...

The project got me thinking about involving people, so it opened me up
to the idea of experimenting…. Performance art is so focused on the
performer and the time of the performance, the duration … but once it’s
activated by the audience, it changes what performance art was generally
thought of. (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018)

Lynn wrapped up our conversation by sharing how she felt about the project
serving as a culmination but also as a closure of her MoMA Teens experience. As an
adult, she feels grateful about the great experiences she had at MoMA Teens, but strongly feels the necessity to move forward:

I’m still really lucky to be getting an education [at SVA in an art school]. I think I grew out … I’m very spoiled by MoMA Teens, I got fed, I got Metrocards, I got words of encouragement, Calder would buy us some supplies and we could do whatever we wanted, and now I have to follow rules, get my own supplies and on top of that I have to work…. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

Public Audience Members’ Pedagogical Experience

To recap, the public presentation of The Council was in the form of a body of photographs exhibited in the context of the MoMA exhibition Being: New Photography 2018. Although the CGMs gave public tours and had their brief interviews and narrations from the workshop sessions uploaded in an audio guide and on MoMA’s website, there was seldom direct engagement between the CGMs and the public audience.

The four PAMs I interviewed had seen the exhibition, including the body of photographs of The Council in process.

Motivation and Intention for Viewing The Council

As previously mentioned, all four PAMs had majored in or worked with photography as an artistic medium. They came to see the exhibition expecting that it would reflect current trends and would contain significant photographic work (New Photography is an ongoing series of exhibitions at MoMA). Dylan (PAM 1), writes reviews on photography exhibitions and it was his first time seeing Adelita’s work. Other PAMs were also not familiar with Adelita’s work and came to see the show expecting to see new work in the field:

I didn’t go to see the show specifically for Adelita’s piece, I went because of my interest in MoMA’s photography show, and because I knew it would have young emerging artists who I should be keeping up with. It’s one of the more contemporary shows, that’s why I was interested. Then I
discovered her work there and that was the first time viewing her work. (PAM 2 Stacy, personal communication, October 11, 2018)

I studied photography before, and I generally try to see the New Photography shows at MoMA as I’m doing other things and a bit distant from the photography world now. I saw that the show was closing soon so I made time to come see it. I think it’s kind of a representation of what’s happening in the world of photography these days. I did no research about the show before coming. I was like, “this is the show happening, just check it out.” (PAM 4 Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

In terms of the amount of time engaging with The Council, three PAMs spent three to five minutes with the piece and only one of them read the wall texts. Ivanna spent 15-20 minutes with the work and was the only one who listened to the audio guide as well as reading all the wall texts. She said she was determined to spend time with the New Photography show on that day and ended up spending two hours viewing the entire exhibition.

Findings Pertinent to the Learning Experience

I present my findings starting with the PAMs’ initial impressions, what they gained or learned from their engagement with the work, limitations they saw with the work, and any impact or influence they had from engaging with the work.

Initial impressions and interpretation of The Council—In the context of the group show. What was characteristic in their responses was that all four PAMs engaged with The Council in relation to the other works in the group show. Ivanna skimmed through the entire show first, and then went back to see the piece. Ivanna and Stacy shared their initial response to the work:

The set is there, you can see the stands holding up the backdrop, it’s very clearly staged and not trying to pretend it’s finished looking. And yet there are these young people and all these texts. They’re trying to engage with all these different ideas and politics. But I wasn’t really sure what was going on about how it was made, or what the main point of the piece was. I was like ok, let’s come back to the piece. I wanted to understand the scope of the entire show first, and then spend time at certain pieces. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)
It stood out from the rest where it seemed to not be technically inclined. I could tell it was shot in a studio, they had fabric for props, it was a straightforward digital photography shot and whatever was happening in that content was what mattered...What also stood out, not to sound negative, but it did remind me of a college photography class where it was more about gathering your resources, having immediate friends come over and participate in this project, not so much going out of the studio as a documentary work....

I just felt that it was clearly political in the sense that the signs, the writing mimics a protest, some symbols in here remind me of the UN, the raising of hands, it’s like there’s a vote happening, and when I saw the young people in it I also thought the photographer was young. I was expecting a young emerging photographer and that these were the artist’s friends. (Stacy, personal communication, October 11, 2018)

Dylan talked about how distinctive the process-based concept of the work made it stand out from the rest of the work in the show. Maya (PAM 3) also talked about how the large scale and colorfulness of The Council photos made them stand out in contrast to the other work. Stacy responded that it was the only work that featured a group of people—a community of young people—in the entire show.

Within that show it was probably the most interesting-to-the-eye piece for me. I didn’t listen to the audio guide or read anything on the wall.... It was playing more with the photographic event rather than the photographic language. They had to pose in front of the camera and how they wanted to be represented.

It was also catchy. The way how the people were posing, the artifact, the clothing they were in. You could grasp the spontaneity in the way how everything was set up. It was interesting. You wouldn’t expect to find a very large photograph in that type of graphic content.

Part of the photo was also about the negotiation. There is this tacit agreement between the people and the photographer. It had this fresh quality that I didn’t find in other works. (Maya, personal communication, August 9, 2018)

Ivanna, after going through the entire show, came back to the piece and shared how she read the work in comparison to classical painting in Western art history:

I listened to the audio guide. It was the first time to use the MoMA audio guide for the photography show. I wanted to have a little more background information.

The aesthetics of the photography was really interesting because it’s unlike what I’ve seen before. It incorporated text, it incorporated drapery, plants, and decorative items, all these elements that were used in classical
painting. So it’s using all these art history conventions but in a very contemporary way. I thought that was a very interesting tension. Also how the texts (written by the CGMs) were incorporated was interesting. It was clear there was so much more to this work than just the photographs. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

**Gains from engaging with The Council.** When I asked them what they gained from engaging with the work, two PAMs described what they found unique about Adelita’s work, whereas Stacy responded: “Can I say that I don’t know, I don’t think so? Compared to the tunnel photos [Carmen Winant’s *My Birth*], those had a visceral reaction, and this [*The Council*] didn’t.” Ivanna elaborated on her takeaway from *The Council* in regard to the expanded role of the artist going beyond a creator and playing the role as a curator and educator.

My main takeaway was that art has now expanded beyond the artist just as the creator, as the artist as someone who engages with the public, and as someone who educates, which what I feel like is new. Even with the performance by the artist [Rirkrit Tiravanija] where the gallery was used for a dinner -- art about community and togetherness…. This is different, this is new, it feels like it’s a step above.

*She is creating this community*, because she brings this group of people who didn’t really know each other but have this one thing in common which was being part of the MoMA program. So she is making this community really close to each other by having them go through the workshops and intense discussions by way of participating by way of discussing … their way of looking at institutions is transformed and their way of thinking is transformed. I mean a lot of artworks that are just artworks themselves can make you think about a lot of things. But here, it was more about the experience. Which to me was really interesting. Art as community builder… and bringing it one step further to artist as educator. The work provided an experience [to the participants] that will ever change their view of the institution and about art. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

**Learning from engaging with The Council.** When I asked them what they learned from engaging with the work, three PAMs stated they were unsure how to respond. Except for Ivanna, who had spent a longer time with the work and put in deliberate effort to understand the piece, it was difficult for the other three PAMs to come up with something that they had learned.
I’m not sure that the nature of my engagement with the project was substantial enough for me to have learned much from it. In terms of basic information, I learned that the young people were part of the Digital Advisory Board in MoMA, which I thought was cool, and I’m sure if I were a part of the workshops my experience with the work would be completely different. (Dylan, personal communication, October 12, 2018)

I really liked the aesthetics of the work and how fresh it was in comparison to the other pieces. But in terms of learning, I don’t think I can say that I learned from engaging with the work. It was more of how I interpreted and engaged with the work itself.

Only through sight you can engage with this piece. I did not go through the process with the artist when this work was tended to be participant-driven. (Maya, personal communication, October 9, 2018)

Not [learned] in the context of what they were trying to say. I guess, what the signs are saying within the text in the photograph, I already know of, so it’s just reinforcing political themes that are happening and the discourse that’s already prevalent in the news.

I would add that one of the things I felt it was trying to say was that politicians today are like kids, that’s a comparison I thought that I got. Or why wouldn’t kids be better politicians. (Stacy, personal communication, October 11, 2018)

Ivanna shared several things when I asked what she learned from engaging with The Council. First, continuing her response from what she gained, she elaborated on how the work made her think of how art has expanded and merged with education:

I was so surprised when I saw her work because it bridges education and art. That aspect wasn’t clear at all when I first glimpsed at her work. Only after I started spending time reading the wall texts and listening to the audio guide that it was clear that the role of the artist in this work was that she was a teacher slash curator than a creator. The people who were creating were the participants. She was more like setting up for them to create. She did set up the parameters but she didn’t control what happened afterwards.

I was curious to know more about the process. How the teenagers were involved, what type of questions they were discussing, what actually happened, the scenario she created … more related to the actual process that took place.

I learned that art has expanded beyond the relational works like Rirkrit Tiravanija and toward the educational. The artist is now playing the role as an educator. Expanded my understanding what art is, which is a pretty big thing to do, pretty impressive. *I learned about what art can do and what art can be.*... It definitely built on the relational aesthetics [referring to Rikrit Tiravanija’s work], which I learned about in art history class…. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)
Second, Ivanna spoke about how *The Council* prompted a new way to engage with teens. Having prior experience working at museums in New York City, Ivanna shared how this work was unlike other teens programming that she was aware of:

> It also made me think about museums engaging teens. There are a lot of teens programs out there—having them engage as interns, with the public, and they have their own Teens Night and Teens Summit…. But this is obviously a very different take on that because they are directly working with the artist and eventually critiquing the institution. I thought it was an interesting way for museums to engage with the teens. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

And third, on a personal level, Ivanna shared the conceptual engagement that the work reinforced, as it was a highly conceptual and process-based piece:

> It was different from my engagement with other artworks like painting or drawing where I would look really closely looking into the layers and styles of rendering, more technical stuff. But with this, I thought about the technique working with a group of people and completely changing about what we know what art to be. It was less about the making of the physical work but more about the ideas and the process embedded in the work. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

**Limitations of photography capturing a process-based work.** The four PAMs interpreted the body of photographs of *The Council* as documentation of a process with a group of young people engaged in a political matter. They all commented on the style of the photographs as very straightforward rather than using a lot of photographic technique and touched upon the aesthetics of the work. However, everyone talked about the difficulty in having a substantial understanding of what the work was really about.

> I looked at the images and read the wall text too, but I didn’t get much from the photos. I would have wanted to be part of the workshops with Adelita. That would be the best way to interact with it…. I don’t think the photos were the best way as the end result. (Dylan, personal communication, October 12, 2018)

> It showed that they were talking about subjects, that these young people were tackling what concerned them and what they care about such as AI, homelessness, mental health, etc. They were trying to create some kind of political or social act which I think also brought attention to the viewer. That was what I got from looking at the photographs, but other than that it was
Ivanna had a more concrete sense of the content by investing the time to pay close attention engaging with the images, reading the wall texts, and listening to the audio-guide. However, she responded that the photographs did not do the duty of conveying the entire process and experience, which was the core of the work. She said,

"Obviously the photographs were created in collaboration with the team who participated, but it didn’t fully convey all the ideas they discussed or the experience they had during the whole process when that was what the artwork was really about. I feel the photographs were just a document shown to the public later, the public who were not part of that process." (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

Ivanna further suggested ways that could have better conveyed the core process of the work to the viewer:

"I feel like if the MoMA is trying to suggest new photography, with this work, which is less about photography and more about the actual event, I think they could have done a better job in displaying the work to convey the experience. Maybe they could have included the installation that the teenagers created and the stuff they wrote about, the artifacts they created. Because with this work there was so much thought, discussion and critique that went into what they thought about the institution, the museum. It would have been really interesting to read all that stuff in real. It would make it easier to engage with the process of it. It would have been interesting to embed the video and audio parts of the discussion onto the walls too. It would have been interesting to see the staged process. So why not invite the viewer into that process…. It would also be more educational to the viewers too." (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

Ivanna firmly stated, “I don’t think the way of how it was displayed does anything to educate the public at all.”

In addition, Dylan commented on how the project took the point of departure from MoMA being destroyed as an interesting concept that would allow these young people to become involved to redesign its role in society. It was clear, however, that the images were not able to convey the criticality toward MoMA that the artist might have wanted to instill in the participants:
The concept of taking the point of the departure that MoMA has been destroyed and now they’re creating something in its place. So I guess that’s an intellectual thing or as a concept sort of a daring thing? But that’s not what strikes through the work or at least it’s not what struck me about the work that MoMA is allowing this hypothetical narrative for it to be destroyed to exist under their blessing, right? That was just the narrative given to this project. (Dylan, personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Stacy also stated how she wished the institutional critique element of the work to come through:

I didn’t think that it [The Council] had something to do with MoMA, I thought it was just a commentary. I do wish that the artist’s idea of critiquing MoMA would come through. It would have made a much more interesting and compelling concept. (Stacy, personal communication, October 11, 2018)

**Influence from The Council.** When I asked the PAMs if they noticed any influence from engaging with the work, there was a similar response as to when I asked them if they had learned anything from engaging with the work. Dylan, Stacy, and Maya all responded that they did not notice any change within themselves or any influence from viewing the work. Again, only Ivanna, who had invested the time and effort in engaging with the work, responded about the influence, specifically in her teaching:

I haven’t made any changes in how I create art or interact with art or when I’m looking at art. But when I’m teaching, I sometimes think about that work and the ways how I can engage my students more and involve my students more in the active making as opposed to kind of… not like telling them how to make stuff because that’s not something I do. But how I can kind of create more freedom and create more opportunities for the students to make choices for the students to make their voices and opinions heard through their work. It’s like “oh yeah she [Adelita] made this thing, How can I make my teaching more open.” (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018)

Although Stacy stated that the work didn’t have an impact on her, she shared how it must have been impactful on the participants who worked with Adelita.

I would think that being students being involved in this work that you would feel very valuable, then by having your portrait show up in MoMA, you would feel like you contributed to a piece that is now in the archives of the New Photography show and remember it in terms of how much you enjoyed making art in the future, so more of a cumulative experience. I’m
guessing it didn’t just take one day. I think it would be a cumulative learning experience, not immediate … and I’m guessing in school they don’t get to do this at all. . . .

The experience of being part of this work would have made them more inclined to make art themselves or realize how many different ways you could participate in a work like this. . . . I had years of theater experiences and that’s what I thought I would go into in the beginning. It reminds me of a very theater-based class where the process of talking out a concept is the most important and it seems like this guy Marco in the transcript [posted on the website] was able to play a character or identity as someone else, and I feel like that is a therapeutic theatrical experience. I wish I were a part of this, it seems very fun. (Stacy, personal communication, October 11, 2018)

In sum, The Council was such a process-based body of work that it was difficult to comprehend only through the photographic images. The work required time and effort to digest, as reflected in the responses of the four PAMs I interviewed. As Ivanna shared, she put in the time and effort in reading the lengthy wall texts and listened to the audio guide. Only then was she able to gain a sense of what the work was about. However, by not being a participant who had gone through the workshops with the artist, it would never be enough to fully comprehend, as it was such an experiential work required for participation, as Maya had stated.

Many commented on the large scale of the prints and eye-catching aesthetics of the piece, also featuring a group of young people engaged in a political process. The interpretations of the four PAMs, who had a photography background, seemed relevant to Adelita’s aim in creating the work. In particular, the creative agency that Ivanna addressed in her response regarding the impact of the work in her teaching, was aligned with Adelita’s pedagogical approach and what the CGMs shared as one of their biggest learning outcomes from being part of The Council. However, as all of the PAMs mentioned, there were limitations in regard to the display of the work in the context of MoMA’s New Photography exhibition, although the body of work was an important addition to the show, presenting a process-based production of photography.
Summary

*The Council* was a process-based artwork comprised of a series of private workshops with a group of CGMs and a body of photographs that were created from the workshops. During the workshops, Adelita wanted the CGMs to re-envision the role of the museum to function as a societal institution after a major crisis that accompanied a market crash, class struggle, and climate change. The CGMs worked individually and then in groups, proposing a plan for how the museum building would function considering the social issues proposed by Adelita. During this process, the CGMs engaged in theater exercises and discussion sessions. On the last day, as they continued their activities, Adelita and her crew took photographs of their performances that would be displayed in the *New Photography 2018* exhibition at MoMA.

In terms of the CGMs’ learning experience, they all commented about gaining confidence, which was closely related to the publicity aspect of being part of a prominent exhibition at MoMA. To the CGMs, the collaborative group work was an extremely engaging experience, a very positive experience in comparison to the group work they had experienced at school. CGMs cherished the social bonding and relational aspects of the workshops, which were projected in the final plenary discussion sessions and reflected in the final photographs.

The PAMs commented on the limitation of experiencing this process-based work only through the means of photographs and in the context of a group exhibition. Only one PAM, who had invested the time and effort to understand the work, was able to have a substantial learning experience.

In Chapter VI, I present the findings from my third case, *A Pressing Conference* by artist Macon Reed.
Chapter VI

FINDINGS: CASE 3—A PRESSING CONFERENCE

Art is thus in itself connected with the concept of citizenship and should therefore, being a source of knowledge, convictions and values about ourselves and the world, be a part of every citizen’s education. (Dobbs, 1998, p. 9)

Artist: Macon Reed

In this section, I present my findings in relation to Macon Reed’s pedagogical framework and approaches based on my personal engagement with the artist through individual interviews; observations on her facilitation in class and at the APC at Montclair State University; and analysis of critical reviews and websites. Following this profile of the artist, this chapter presents findings from the CGMs and PAMS involved in A Pressing Conference (APC).

I first present biographical information on the artist and previous pedagogy-based work relevant to APC. Then I discuss the intention and purpose of APC as described by the artist. The salient findings that emerged from the data analysis in regard to the artist’s pedagogical framework, methods, and strategies used in her work are discussed. As with the other cases, I address the artist by her first name, Macon, which is how all the project participants addressed her throughout the project.
Background of the Artist

Biographical information. Macon was born in Virginia in 1981. She received a BFA in Sculpture from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2007, and then pursued a master’s degree in radio documentary at the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies in 2010, which she states as a significant part of her education where she learned how to interview people (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). Macon returned to the arts by earning an MFA at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2013, actively presenting her work in the contemporary art world ever since.

Macon creates work in diverse forms from object-based artworks of hand-crafted sculptures, photographs, video, and murals, to immersive environments curating programming and participatory events. Her colorful and playful immersive installations function as platforms for people to talk, mingle, and create as they share challenges within their community, especially within evolving queer and feminist frameworks.

Her work has been exhibited in New York City at BRIC Media Arts, PULSE NYC Special Projects, ABC No Rio, The Kitchen, A.I.R Gallery, and at Chicago Cultural Center, Mana Contemporary, Roots & Culture, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, ICA Baltimore, Athens Museum of Queer Arts in Greece, and La Patinoire Royale Gallery in Brussels, Belgium. She has held artist residencies at Abrons Arts Center, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and a visiting professorship at Amherst College. She is a current Starr Fellow at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (2019-2020) and past Research Fellow at Eyebeam Center for Art+Technology (2016-2017).

Pedagogy-based artworks prior to A Pressing Conference. In Camp Out (2012), “camp” was used as an artistic medium and social justice platform where a small group of female young adults (age 18-23 years) attended and contributed to a summer camp at August Farm in Washington. Macon stated that it was a “participatory project experimenting with building intentional community without the demands of indefinite sustainability or limits of institutional traditions and educational programming” (Reed,
2017, n.p.). After attending a radio documentary program and coming back to art for an MFA, Macon would create art projects by engaging people. “I tried to make some things and have people come perform with my sculptures. So I was still engaging with people and somehow started this summer camp. That was an education-oriented project and some amazing objects came out of that work” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

By intentionally engaging the term “camp” and its ideological quandaries regarding utopia, escapism, community, sentimentality, nostalgia, and activism, the project aimed to promote immediate experiences at camp and the translation of what is learned when participants return home. The project was designed to last for a week, which allowed the participants to “open up and grow faster” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). Camp Out was structured so that the agenda, practice, and culture could be defined organically by the participating campers. The only requirement of the campers was to teach a workshop on a subject of their interest. Workshops included tours of local farms that donated the food, self-defense, screaming, list-writing, creative writing for activism, and queer magic for self-care. Macon described how the participatory programming allowed new ideas to emerge, for example, “a list-writing workshop” that she did not have expectations about until she did it. “We were all sharing parts of ourselves that I was pretty amazed by. One of the camper’s mom was diagnosed with lung cancer, so she wrote all the things she wanted to do before she passed away. So it was an open model” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

In the same year, Macon also created Sensory Room, which was a collaborative project designing and fabricating a room for children with special needs at Martha Washington Elementary School in West Philadelphia. Special education teacher Hope MacDowell requested the project through the Neighborhood Time Exchange
Program\(^1\) while Reed was an artist-in-residence at the program. Macon aimed to design the *Sensory Room* to promote self-care, resilience, and recovery to engage students with special needs (behavioral, developmental, emotional) in learning activities. Macon created an environment where the students could thoughtfully engage in groups in carpeted areas to play and have discussions, and areas where students could spend individual quiet time according to their needs. She also curated specific toys that would be fitting to the students’ learning and aesthetically fitting to the design of the space (Reed, 2017).

*Physical Education* (2014) was a solo exhibition and installation at Mana Contemporary in Chicago. Macon transformed the entire gallery into a colorful “queered” physical education gymnasium. She created an environment with her signature colorful palette that depicted the floor design of gyms and with objects to raise the idea of physical education as a site of learning about social norms and hierarchies, relationships to competition, team socialization, bullying, and the body (Reed, 2017, n.p.). She also brought in adolescent gymnasts from the community to the gallery space and facilitated sessions with them to create the film *Gymnasts*. *Gymnasts* was also presented in the *Unleashing* exhibition (2018) at Teachers College with Macon’s newly created mural painting, *Physical Education: Mind, Body, Ghost!*\(^2\) (2018) on the second floor of the Zankel Building at Teachers College. In *Gymnasts*, each female gymnast completes a series of accent gestures that remain after removing the actual gymnastic stunts from their routines. Macon incorporated a combination of the athletes’ high femme appearance,

\(^1\)Neighborhood Time Exchange was a collaborative endeavor of Philadelphia Mural Arts, People Emergency Center, Broken City Lab, and The City of Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy (Reed, 2017).

\(^2\) *Physical Education: Minds, Bodies, Ghosts* (2018) offers a “queered” physical education classroom and asks us to conjure what these spaces can and do really teach us about our bodies and one another. It comments on pedagogy’s relationship to queer and feminist spirit and body (Unleashing, 2018, n.p.)
fierce individualist athletic prowess, and affects of teamwork. Macon states this as “queering” or subtle disruption found in the contrast between gymnasts’ bodies, which are masculine in form—such as their narrow hips, broad shoulders, highly developed musculature—and their feminine presentation in their makeup, outfit, and accessories (Reed, 2017, n.p.).

When I asked Macon about her previous projects related to education, she immediately spoke about the *Eulogy for the Dyke Bar* (2015), a project about tracing history and paying homage to the disappearing social space dedicated to mainly homosexual females, as one of her most transformative projects:

I use art to teach myself about things. I learned so much through the *Dyke Bar* project. I struggled with the fact that I didn’t have spaces I could go to. There were all these stereotypes of why they didn’t exist and I needed to know why that was. I needed healing and those things were hurting me with the misogyny I carried with me.

I went to the archives and read about the history of fights in queer communities and almost like my lineage, I also got to meet all these older dykes in their 70-80s which inform me of my community and myself. I was able to have endless conversations about it and those issues and stereotypes. I learned it is more of a socio-economic disparity than anything. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

*Eulogy for the Dyke Bar* was created in 2015, while Macon was artist-in-residence at Brooklyn’s Wayfarers Gallery. The project was prompted by the following questions: Why are these spaces closing? How do cultural and socio-economic factors, such as assimilation or gentrification, contribute to this phenomenon? Are the same factors impacting spaces for gay men? What role have physical spaces such as dyke bars played in the past, and how has that changed over time? How do we learn from these spaces and move forward in creating new ones that are safe and affirming for all female and feminine-spectrum communities while embracing expansive notions of gender and sexuality across generations? (Reed, 2017, n.p.).

Macon completely transformed every corner of the Wayfarers gallery with her signature hand-crafted colorful props, such as bottles and a full bar, pool table, neon
signs, and hand-painted ‘70s-era wood paneling. She activated the space by curating a fully-functional bar with programming. As she wanted the project to reflect nuanced experiences in and around dyke bars, she organized “performance-based events to celebrate these spaces that may soon exist only in our shared stories” (Reed, 2017, n.p.). During events, dyke bartenders served drinks in collaboration with the New York City-based storytelling collective Queer Memoir, which hosts storytelling events for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender nonconforming communities. In regard to programming, Macon addressed the reciprocity in creating an immersive environment activated through audience engagement:

It’s so important that people are there, talking and engaging. All the sculpture is just an excuse to get people in the room to have those conversations. It’s not just me as an artist using them, but it’s a mutually benefitting experience of them sharing skills. It’s reciprocal. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Macon also shared about the impact of the project in terms of gaining a sense of belonging and finding a community she had needed:

A bunch of people from the NYC Dyke March started a Dyke takeover based on my project. It’s just their thing, but my project about the lack of queer spaces was related…. It was really rewarding due to the emotional resonance. The project created a community I personally needed. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

This sense of belonging and building community was significant to Macon in relation to constructing identity—discovering and creating meaning about who we are in relationships with others.

**Context and Pedagogical Intent of A Pressing Conference.**

**Background to creating A Pressing Conference (APC).** Macon shared about creating APC as an immediate response to Donald Trump getting elected.

Everyone I knew was panicking and really worried, and for a minute I wanted to drop out of art and be involved with social change to make the world somehow better. I started contemplating what else I could do. But as
an artist, these are the networks and tools I have, so stick with where you are and use your skills.

I thought what about what issue I could respond to, and the truth was that the new cycle of terrible things were happening so fast, that if I could do something about DACA, or the Paris Climate Accord, or earlier things around immigration, it felt like by the time I created a project, the issue would have moved on to the next ten terrible things. I also wasn’t sure about my position as a white U.S. citizen. What was appropriate for my voice to comment on? (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

As stated above, Macon was confused about how to respond to the continuously changing current affairs under Trump’s administration and also in regard to her own positionality as a White U.S. citizen. As a journalist herself, she started paying attention to how the news and journalists were attacked, and intuitively decided to recreate the White House press briefing room. “Trump attacked the press every day, and people were talking about truth and post-truth and wild ideas. I was instinctively thinking about rebuilding the White House press briefing room in the style I make things and figure it out” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). Macon said, “I was making the thing without knowing where I was going. I would host press conferences and at the time I was a fellow at a place called Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology, so that’s where I started, but it wasn’t commissioned.” She later had a residency at the Abrons Arts Center in Manhattan as she was making the installation. There, she came across Timothy Snyder’s (2017) publication, On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the 20th Century, which prompted her how to utilize the installation as a platform she was creating at the time.

Eventually I got a residency in Manhattan and I was trying to figure out who would use this as a platform, how it would be structured, and feeling still overwhelmed at how to direct anything under the eaves of terror. I found Timothy Snyder’s book there, but I was already in the making for this platform…. When I read Timothy’s book, which he wrote 10 days after Trump was elected and which is super small and short to read encouraging small and easy actions that anyone can do, I used it as a framework for how I started this curation…. I wore a funny suit and read a statement about the project and where it was coming from, and it was January 2018, so one year after Trump’s inauguration. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)
In terms of the fabrication, Macon created the installation by looking at pictures from Obama’s administration and the flags and etiquette. In relation to the set-up, Macon shared:

I also looked at lists of journalists who’ve been killed or harmed, and I think in 2017 or 2018, the U.S. became one of the most dangerous places to be a journalist in the world, which was mind-blowing to me. At that second iteration of the project in Spring/Break, I had the names on the chairs with journalists from the U.S and other dangerous countries. I wanted to connect them. I think the way journalists have been treated in the U.S. is a slippery slope, so all their names were there. I was listening to all these different books on authoritarianism and fire and fury and all this … depressing research while thinking about this hard topic. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Macon also spoke about her response in the process of creating a replica of the White House press briefing room, questioning about the implications in the symbols and the name “White House.”

I never thought I would make an American flag, podium or presidential seal, I’m not a very nationalist person. They just reference those things like the White House placard, but took out that phrase on purpose since it’s just a white building, but we also live in this white supremacist culture, and what does it mean and who is involved in building that building … it’s ironic that it’s still called the White House. The flag is also not very close to the real thing if you look at it, so there are little subtle shifts there. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

The appearance of the sculptural installation was consistent with Macon’s previous works, having a sense of playfulness but dealing with heavy topics. The props of APC (podium, emblems, and columns) were created in cardboard covered with paper clay and joint compound painted in matte acrylic, giving off an impression as if it were made of play dough. The entire installation was human-scale and required a team for installation and de-installation, as the wood panel stage required assemblage along with the backdrop columns, which were two meters high.
Previous iterations of APC. The first APC took place at the Abrons Arts Center in Manhattan on January 19, 2018. Macon curated the event with invited speakers, in particular Timothy Snyder, whom she met when she went up to Yale. He was excited about the project and came to talk as one of the speakers for the inaugural APC event. The other speakers were artist Mimi Onuoha and actor and activist Reynaldo Piniella, who spoke on behalf of the Artist Campaign School.

The second APC was installed at the SPRING/BREAK 2018 contemporary art fair in midtown New York City (March 6-12, 2018). During the week-long fair, Macon invited speakers and performers everyday at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. for the programming, while public audience members were welcome to participate however they felt inspired to.

The third APC took place at Teachers College, Columbia University, as part of the Unleashing on-campus international exhibition. Although the main exhibition was up from April to May 2018, considering the complexity of APC, it separately took place in
early October for three days in collaboration with the Speak Out campaign carried out by TC’s Office of Government Relations. As TC was saturated with multiple events across campus, rather than having invited speakers for an event, the APC installation was set up as an open platform in the first floor main lounge. From 4 to 7 p.m. for the three days (October 8-10, 2018), participants’ responses from the platform were filmed to be sent to the New York State Senate. Macon shared about the collaborative process as an artist coming from the outside to TC:

When Isin reached out to me as [Unleashing’s] co-curator and brought me into TC first, I said I needed to connect to other community members since I’m not the best person to decide who should be talking [for APC]. Matt [Director of TC’s Office of Government Relations] made it happen in a different way than I could as an outside artist…. The one at TC was good for the community, and Matt as the student liaison to the Senate was a great way to mold that project for the community. Some came up and had a lot to say! (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

The fourth APC took place at Montclair Art Museum, carried out by Montclair State University (MSU) art school students at the end of November 2018. As previously described, Dr. Livia Alexander, professor at Montclair, who was also co-curator of the Unleashing exhibition at TC, invited Macon to collaborate in organizing APC as part of her senior-level undergraduate course Art & Design Forum (ARFD 400) for the fall 2018 semester. The course syllabus was modified based on the collaboration between Livia and Macon. Macon skyped into Livia’s course two times, explaining the intention and process of APC, encouraging students to research a topic, and networking to find a speaker who could address those issues on behalf of them. She communicated with the students in preparing the APC and emceed the APC event at the Montclair Art Museum. However, the majority of the facilitation was delegated by Livia as the course instructor throughout the semester.
**Pedagogical intent for APC.** In our conversation, Macon shared several points that she (and Livia) had intended for the Montclair students to experience by putting together their own *APC*. I organized them into the following five items.

First, she wanted the students to identify a pressing issue of their choice to work with throughout the course and even after the course was over. “My hope was to have them write and talk through things that are important to them, so that can carry over to the next thing they do. It was less about the final event and more about the whole process leading up to it” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

Second, Macon and Livia wanted the students to experience social practice, a process-based art that most students were not familiar with.

Livia shared about how her students were focused on discipline-based art and object-based art making. So we wanted the students to gain experience in creative approaches grappling with pressing societal issues as Livia’s course was bringing in a diverse range of artists to class anyways. We wanted to expand their understanding about making art in relation to the things happening in the world today. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Third, the project was about enhancing students’ skills in regard to networking and curating an event. This was related to gaining real-world experience and finding a community for oneself in order to spread the word and gain a community who could lend their ear to what they were saying.

We would talk and think about how we could create writing prompts to talk about things they are upset about, then to refine and pinpoint things they had in common. It was important that they didn’t all just do their talks like they did in other classes, but that they had to work in groups and talk about their issues, then find community members to bring in and see how the process works. I don’t think they had time to do that fully and they were panicking at the end because it’s a really hard thing to do. But it’s important to have a sense of reaching out to a stranger and gain real world experience….

It was important to reach out and create relationships outside the classroom…. I wanted them to see that you don’t diversify or complexify the audience unless you invite speakers who bring their communities into the room. If you invite them, hopefully they bring their friends or family
members who I can’t connect to directly. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Fourth, the intent was to have the students publicly present their ideas to an audience.

They had to present it, so all in all they had to try! It’s a cool thing we wanted them to learn about participating in them, not just learning about an artist through a lecture. What are the problems and pitfalls of other projects based on your own experience?… (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Fifth, the project was intended to have the students experience the process of an idea developing and taking different forms.

Also, Livia and I talked about how an idea can happen in multiple forms over time—writing the things you’re upset about, then voicing it to your peers, then hearing disagreements about the core issue, then having someone speak about it … ideally, they needed more support and time over that. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Macon’s Pedagogical Approach and Attitudes in APC

Table 16. Macon Reed’s Pedagogical Approaches and Attitudes in APC

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Understanding of pedagogy and learning. Macon talked about her own understanding of pedagogy and learning. Her responses were related to her approach to creating her participatory art projects that become platforms for collective sharing of resources among participants and for “finding connections.”

**Pedagogy as sharing information for growth and achieving goals.**

I think of pedagogy, as someone who hasn’t studied it formally at all, I think of it as *the philosophy and approach to teaching or sharing information*. For me, as an educator and artist, each individual or group or participant or venue, person or place should be defined from the outside in. *It’s the way of sharing resources to grow and achieve your goals.* (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

**Learning as “finding connections between things”—adaptability, flexibility, and listening.**

Learning is finding connections between things. Some systems would be memorization of facts, but my brain doesn’t work that way. Educators have one part of making sure students or participants come away with a set of information or a framework, but there’s another of seeing where people are at and what they need, so its adaptability, flexibility and listening. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

**Relationship between art and education.** Macon’s thoughts about pedagogy and learning naturally intertwined with art. She specifically talked about how the realm of art allows her to connect her various interests that span over other fields of studies: “My approach to being an artist and always stuck to this field is because it’s the only framework to learn about as many things as you want without being required to reach a certain depth. I can skim and connect to something else. *It’s a free path to research things in a different way.*”

As Macon shared about how being an artist allows the freedom to look at other fields and work with them in other ways, she particularly spoke about how “art is inherently an educational and dispersive tool” when information is presented in the form
of art. “If you present information as an artist, people are a lot more open to receiving it and engaging…. There is a lot of evidence that play and creativity are connected, which is important for kids in education. They’re inherently connected and I also use art to teach myself about things” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

As a student myself, I had a really hard time growing up, I got in trouble at school all the time and ran into the school police…. I think on some level I’ve always had some investment in the type of students that really need extra support or an awareness of the voices in the room. I am aware and try to bring those things into my projects and classrooms. Then I think I went into art because … I was having a hard time, but art was one of the only things that I didn’t feel like I was getting in trouble for, instead I got positive affirmation around. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

**Educator as facilitator.** Macon clearly spoke about her positionality as a facilitator: “I don’t know if I would comfortably say that I’m an educator or teacher as much as a facilitator of peers teaching one another. I don’t have something to teach you, but can create a structure for you to share.” She specifically emphasized her role as an artist-educator as someone who “creates a structure for sharing,” someone who “facilitates experiences among people” rather than a teacher who conveys information in a top-down style. Macon said, “I’m interested in experiential learning…. If educators have one part of making sure students or participants come away with a set of information or a framework, there’s another part of seeing where people are at and what they need…..” Her understanding of learning, mentioned above—learning in relation to *adaptability, flexibility and listening*—is directly connected to her stance as a facilitator creating structure for participants to bring their voices through conversations to learn from one another.

Macon stated that her tendency toward facilitation stemmed from her early involvement in the counter-globalization movement in the early 2000s.

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3 A social movement based on the belief that capitalist globalization has resulted in the constitution of a worldwide system of domination that is strictly shaped by economic interests (Fuchs, 2015, n.p.). Counter-globalists included a various range of people marching for the environment, the
I felt like I should be trying to do something “more active” or be more engaged, so I dropped out of art school [community college] and I spent a long time in different communities trying to organize…. Some of that was hands-on, very young making in the streets, organizing direct action or outreach into communities…. I went to all sorts of trainings. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

She shared her experience attending educational workshops prior to protests, which she stated as influential in working with specific models as part of her creative endeavors, especially in regard to facilitation.

These convergence centers, which is what they used to have before major protests up to a month beforehand. It would be at workshops around the block, like three workshops. I would go for a protest, but really going for all the education beforehand. I think a lot of those models probably taught me about facilitation. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

Create artwork as platforms for engagement and sharing. Macon’s artworks, APC as well as her other artworks, function as platforms for participants to engage and have conversations. “With A Pressing Conference and the Dyke Bar, I don’t think of myself as a person who has something to teach in that framework, but rather the person who is creating a structure for people to bring together what they have to share.”

Creating work to facilitate collective participation has been an evident tendency throughout Macon’s oeuvre, as stated earlier. Even before the term “socially engaged art” became prevalent in the art world, Macon had a tendency to involve people as a way to activate her object-based artwork.

When I was there [BFA program at Virginia Commonwealth University], I intuitively did social service projects, but I didn’t know about socially engaged art. I would just sort of wing it. I did a few different projects back then that were interactive or where I was a curator…. I did this project where I tried to get different types of people to interact that wouldn’t normally interact. I had everyone submit an idea of something they always

protection of American jobs, religious freedom for Tibet, debt relief for third world countries, and countless other causes.

The one common theme in the movement is the desire for an alternative to the corporate-dominated world system and a redirection of integration toward a more democratic spirit (Warner, 2005, p. 239). Many activists strive for the form of a future society as a global integrative and participatory democracy, yearning for a society where people determine and organize themselves and from below (Fuchs, 2015, n.p.).
wanted to do and then switch them so that everyone did each other’s idea. It kind of turned into an exhibition. That was 2004-2007. That was also making objects, but even then I would make a sculpture and then wear it or burn it or do something ... it was a need to engage the work beyond making it for me. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

As Macon stated in our conversation, “I come with a question I want to reach the bottom of with participants,” her artwork becomes the process of exploring questions together under her facilitation. As stated earlier, Eulogy for the Dyke Bar was driven by the set of questions that guided the entire process from ideation and fabrication to programming. Macon spoke of the work not doing its full justice when it lacked engagement among the audience members, since the core of the work was about the mutual engagement that emerged in the process.

It’s [audience engagement is] pretty inherent to the work and not even a clear line of audience versus participant in the projects. I’ve done the Dyke Bar project in a couple places without programming, but it fell flat for me. It’s so important that people are there, talking and engaging. All the sculpture is just an excuse to get people in the room to have those conversations. It’s not just me as an artist using them, but it’s a mutually benefitting experience of them sharing skills. It’s reciprocal. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

**Balance between structure and openness.** Macon clearly felt her role as facilitator to be someone providing structure.

When I’m teaching actual “classes” I am aware that, pedagogically people want to do a non-hierarchical, everyone can participate, sort of socially engaged projects with a prompt that is open enough. If you don’t give structure, it’s really overwhelming, so the trick of my facilitator job is to try to create enough structure and support for people to bring what they have. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

However, she strongly emphasized the importance of balancing structure and openness as a significant facilitation that she has been honing, as it has a large impact on the participants’ learning experience. Macon talked about how she explores this balance in her own teaching (in higher education): “When I teach I’m also trying things out and learning about myself as a facilitator, strengths and weaknesses. That plays into me organizing and gives me practice on thinking about structure. What is enough structure
and *what is too open?*” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). In the case of *APC* at Teachers College, where the installation functioned more as an open platform for anyone to voice their thoughts on the current political climate rather than having a programmed event of invited speakers, Macon reflected on how the prompts should have been more specific to ease the fear of public speaking and to enhance participation among the audience members.

I think that a combination of both [openness and programmed structure] is ideal. Open speaking to record, post and get things out is important, but also curated speakers. Some [audience members] aren’t as comfortable getting up in front of a mic, so the [invited] speakers pave the way. [In other *APCs*] We had each speaker create prompts for people to speak.

Sometimes open is too open; speaking about education, immigration, and all these political matters on the spot isn’t that easy…. We tried to give prompts, but they needed to be more specific, so that’s always a thing with all projects—*openness and structure*. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

**Raise political awareness, experience art as a form of civic engagement.**

**Identify and creatively respond to pressing issues.** As stated earlier, Macon impulsively started creating the installation of the presidential press briefing room. She could not sit still and strongly felt she had to respond by utilizing her skills and creative sensibility as an artist. When Macon skyped in class with the Montclair (MSU) students, she explained how she started *APC*: “What can I do [as an artist]? How can I respond?... Part of the practice as an artist is to think about what are the voices that I’m seeing are represented in the news, which ones are not.” As someone who had studied radio documentary and considered herself also as a journalist, Macon particularly responded to the media: “I couldn’t keep up with the news, it was moving too fast with all the things happening. Journalists were getting attacked here [in the U.S.] and worldwide. I kept on seeing this image of the press briefing room, so I decided to just start making it” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018). Among various social issues,
Macon had identified the media being controlled by the current administration as a pressing issue, which prompted her to create *APC*. As Macon shared her personal process of how she created *APC*, she asked the students, “What issue do you really feel concerned about right now?” She continued, “And who would be the people who you might want to talk about it in the way you haven’t thought about before?” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018). These became the central questions for the MSU students in putting together their own version of *APC* for the course.

Throughout the fall course, Macon and Livia designed the curriculum (prompted by *APC*) for students to work on three activities. The first was to have the students write an individual response to a pressing issue of their choice. Each student had to identify an issue, research about their topic, and write an essay (6-8 page length). Livia called this assignment “a very personal response.” (L. Alexander, personal communication, September 12, 2018).

Second, based on their personal essays, students had to carry out group work, which Macon referred to as “*APC* in the classroom” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018). The entire class of 26 students was grouped into four respective groups of 6-7 people based on the similarity of their topic. Even if the students were grouped together, as their individual topics varied, they had to negotiate in order to

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4 Guiding questions for the writing assignment:
- Are there things that effect you or your community that make you angry, upset, or you wish could change? If so, what are they and why?
- Do you see problems with the ways people have conversations about things they disagree about?
- What do you see changing in the country since the 2016 elections? How and why?
- Can you think of a time an artist or musician helped you connect with a cause you care about?
- What would you say to the public or the government if you could stand in the press briefing room at the White House and everyone could hear you? (Retrieved from ARFD 400, Fall & 2018 course syllabus)
decide on a specific topic to present as a group. The overarching themes identified by the four groups were: redline zoning and racial disparity, women’s issues, environmentalism, and mental illness. In the group presentation, students were required to present multiple perspectives in regard to their group issue and identify and present work of a creative practitioner who has been working with their group topic. Each group had to give a 15-minute presentation, keeping the exact time.

Third, after the class group presentation and for the actual APC event to be held at the Montclair Art Museum, students had to reach out and find a speaker—a creative practitioner who could convey their thoughts and speak on behalf of the student group in relation to their topic for 10 minutes. Macon talked about this process being similar to “electing someone who could speak on behalf of your concerns” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018). This creative practitioner could be someone among the visiting artists who came to speak in class (the original curriculum of ARFD 400 was comprised of weekly visits by artists and designers to share about their work in the first portion of the 2½-hour class session) or someone in reach through Livia and Macon.

Art as a form of civic engagement. Through APC, Macon and Livia wanted the students to voice their pressing concerns, research, and work with the issue both individually and with a group to elicit multiple perspectives, and to reach out and network with a creative practitioner in the field, who could delegate their concerns to a public audience. The learning process was scaffolded to promote a critical political awareness based on research, to collaborate and negotiate, to network, to publicly voice their opinions, and to gain real-world experience. Overall, Macon and Livia wanted the students to experience art as a form of civic engagement. Livia shared in class, “Even though we think we’re just making choices, we constantly make political choices as we make. So we should become more aware of why we make choices and what effect it has to others.” She prompted the students to think about the following questions: “What
motivates your own work? Why do those issues matter to us? How do we connect the things that matters to us matter to the world? This is where art becomes a form of civic engagement” (L. Alexander, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

However, Macon emphasized considering this process as an “art project” or “creative experiment” rather than a political campaign. She particularly stressed the relational aspect of the project about “bringing people together”: “Remember to think about approaching this process and outreach as it’s an art project, a creative experiment, not to get a political campaign or agenda across as so much as bringing people together who might not normally get to be in a room together” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018). Macon further added,

I want you to think about the human imagination as a realm for bringing social change and activating that in terms of imagining a world we want it to be. It’s about imagining creative solutions, the power of art of this moment....

For example, for an issue like climate change which is so huge that it’s hard to engage with in a concrete sense, think about what a new angle would be in having people think about it in a new way, that we can engage an imagination to engage a new perspective…. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

**Creating relationships, building community.** Although APC was created to prompt participant engagement, Macon particularly emphasized the relational aspect of the work and building community through the process of APC. As addressed earlier in Macon’s previous pedagogy-based works, the *Eulogy for the Dyke Bar* was an immersive installation that prompted relationships to be formed around the topic, which brought together senior dykes and the younger generation, even prompting a dyke takeover movement by *NYC Dyke March*. Macon shared how the project was therapeutic in connecting with her own community, which she personally needed. Different but similar in the sense of bringing people together, the purpose of APC was also about reaching out to people and establishing relationships in the process.
In my personal conversation with Macon, she spoke about APC as “something that needed to happen” and that “people needed a platform to speak up.” She said, “APC was not about a specific community [like it was in the case of the Dyke Bar], but a need to connect and find voices to bring everyone together” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

In class, Macon prompted the students to consider the concerns stemming from their own communities in terms of identifying a social concern or issue:

Think about your community, where you go home every night. Who you spend your time with. What might be important to them. This is a moment you could voice their experiences. To think about whose voices you hear all the time, and whose voices you are missing. If voices are missing, why and who are they? (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

Macon wanted not only to instill a sense of community among the students in reflecting about the needs from their own communities, but also to create new CGM communities by reaching out and forming new relationships. She shared with the students how she might think about reaching out to people in the process of identifying a speaker who could articulate their community issues: “What do I think feels important to get across right now? And then from there, I research organizations and people working with those ideas. I do a lot of reaching out to people.... What’s great about these projects is that they’re great excuses to meet people I normally wouldn’t meet” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018).

Then Macon talked about inviting people to the APC event as a way to build community. She wanted the students to reach out and invite their friends and families to attend the APC as a way not only to gain confidence through public presentation, but also to form a supportive community who could support the same issues and spread the word. This was a way for the students to gain experience in advocacy and civic participation.

Essentially speakers will bring their people and their community into the audience. Then there will be communities that you [the MSU students] chose to bring with, your own friends and families. Somewhat it will be dependent
on you guys. Think about, “Who needs to be in the room, Who do you want to bring to the pressing conference?” It’s also an opportunity to connect with people outside who normally don’t come to an art event. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

In terms of working with CGMs, which were the MSU students, Macon talked about how she normally puts in effort to establish trust with her CGMs. She mentioned that she normally works one-on-one with them, but in the case of Montclair, Macon’s role was delegated through Livia, who was the course instructor meeting with the students on a weekly basis, carrying out that portion of work.

Some of that, not as much with the case at Montclair, but in general, I do a lot to meet one-on-one with people who are a part of my projects to develop trust, let them ask questions, and commit to things I can do if anything is uncomfortable for them as a participant. So there is a lot of other work that goes into that. So, I was really sharing the role as a facilitator with Livia. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019)

**Methods and strategies.** Pertinent to Macon’s pedagogical approaches and tendencies, I identified the themes **collaboration, research, outreach and networking** as specific methods and strategies used in Macon’s work. These tenets were also emphasized throughout the curriculum in the Montclair classroom. They were the certain skillsets that Macon and Livia wanted the students to gain through the coursework—collaboration in the groups and with the speaker, researching a topic of one’s interest and identifying a speaker, and networking to build community and establish relationships.

**Collaboration.** As Macon has been involved in political movements and collective endeavors in diverse capacities, collaboration is prominent throughout her creative work and in her facilitation in teaching and programming. This was evident based on my observation of the two iterations of the APC at Teachers College and Montclair. At TC, she collaborated with the Office of Government Relations, and in Montclair she collaborated with Livia. Both projects, differing in duration and format, created a very different APC according to its context and the participants who created the content.
Macon spoke about the different contextual aspects (which entail different collaboration) that shift the piece according to its site:

> It gets more specific each time the venue changes. At Columbia, it’s more prestigious versus a state school in NJ, so students have different conversations and needs. The point was, “*How can this project be as impactful as possible for this particular place?*”

Each site has a different attention span, different openness to conversations around contemporary art and conversation around what socially engaged art might be. In a college situation, in the case of Livia’s class, they consent but are assigned. So that changed the context and means that they can be involved in a more long-term way and be guided. It’s all about what the most important thing is for each situation, and I can find out by asking those participating. I asked Livia what her students at MSU needed the most and what they needed to get out of the project. (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2018)

Not only did Macon collaborate with the facilitators of each site, she also collaborated with the students, as they were the CGMs for APC. She specifically addressed them as collaborators and talked about their stance in creating the APC together with her:

> You will become collaborators. You all get to be a participant. Although I created the physical platform, at this point, you have the right to make in the way that you think is important and engaging. So you’re actually participating in creating an art project which I think is something we don’t get to do often in classes. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

In terms of curriculum, as stated above, she (and Livia) also wanted the students to work in a collaborative fashion by grouping them and having them “negotiate their differences in the process.” Macon said, “After writing about the things you’re upset about, then voicing it to your peers and hearing disagreements about the core issue was something we thought was necessary for students to engage with” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). Macon and Livia also wanted each student group to collaborate with a professional who would be their speaker to speak on behalf of their group issue. Working together with a professional in communicating their ideas to be conveyed was another collaborative component implemented in the curriculum.
Research. As mentioned above, research has been an embedded process throughout Macon’s oeuvre, which she often mentioned in our conversation. Macon’s understanding of research was about “a way of collecting knowledge to ground one’s own purpose.” Thus, her research is a creative endeavor that does not necessarily follow the format of research in social science following IRB protocols, but is more about collecting ideas from people and from serendipitous encounters, a process that organically develops. Although the sculptural installation of APC was created more from an impulsive response to the current affairs, Macon actively sought out speakers by actively engaging in conversations with people and through internet search. In class, Macon shared her research process in terms of informally reaching out and talking to people, brainstorming and mapping out ideas (often in drawings), journaling, and searching through online and offline resources.

We think as research as a really formal thing like reading a long book etc. For me, a lot of it is really talking to people. I am just having conversations with people all the time. Hashing things out, and almost all the time people say that I should meet this person who is working on that and introduce me to other resources. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

Macon stated that as someone who is interested in relationships, “having conversations with people has been extremely helpful.” She also talked about using Timothy Snyder’s book (described earlier) as a research parameter she gave to herself, as she was feeling “there were too many directions and too many things about the platform” she had been creating. She took each one of the 20 points by Snyder and had the speakers talk about one as a jumping-off point, which she stated was helpful in structuring the programming. She then explained how she would draw out connections in terms of a topic or key theme as a way of mind-mapping, and then carry out an internet search. Ok, “truth”—who’s defining that and what does that mean and then from there I just visually draw them out on a piece of paper, as I’m a tactile person. To think about all the different things that are connected to that and then setting out some parameters, and also mind-mapping for myself. Then, I
go on the internet looking for people who have engaged with that. Sometimes I’ll just type “author,” “truth” and see what comes up. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

Macon talked about the organic process of research, and the importance of keeping it open. “Let yourself approach the research from a place of openness, and let it lead you. Expand, get big. That can lead you to unexpected things and then you can narrow from there” (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018).

**Outreach and networking.** Intertwined with collaboration and research, outreach and networking were also strategies that Macon actively employed in APC. As part of the course curriculum, Macon and Livia considered reaching out to professionals and creative practitioners in the field to be a constructive experience for the students. “It was important to reach out and create relationships outside of the classroom, as that was another big piece. I wanted them to see that you don’t diversify or complexify the audience unless you invite speakers who bring their communities into the room” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). Realizing that this could be new to most students, Macon shared in class about her tactics for establishing mutually beneficial experiences for both parties when networking.

When I send out emails to organizations, as I know their strapped with time and funds, I ask what I can do for them. Sometimes I sign up to volunteer for their events as a sort of trade. I always think, “How can we mutually make this a beneficial relationship?” So each person I meet up for a conversation with, I think about how this can be a meaningful relationship for both. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

She also told the students how to network by using already-established relationships and to utilize them in reaching out to others.

I use my own network, who you know who already has the experience with your issue and just reach out to those people. Again, people may say no. New Yorkers tend to be really busy, but I’m always surprised that people say yes many more times. Sometimes if your friend knows someone, that person can introduce you to someone instead of a cold call (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)
Based on my observation, even though the curriculum was designed to have the students reach out to professionals to speak at the APC event with the support of Livia and Macon, eventually there was a shortage of time for students to accomplish this. Even though Livia and Macon had supported this process, it took longer to receive responses from the contacted professionals—they either did not have the time or had scheduling conflicts, and the compensation emerged as an issue. Thus, in the end, the four speakers who would be speaking for the four student groups were finalized by the availability and proximity of reach. Two speakers were the visiting artists who had come to class to share their work prior to the APC event, and the other two were from MSU—one was an administrator in the Art & Design program, and the other speaker was an MSU student majoring in theater arts.

Core Group Members’ Pedagogical Experience

There was a total of 26 students enrolled in Livia’s Art & Design Forum course. As stated earlier in Chapter III, interview data from five students were used for the study. In this section, I present findings in relation to what the CGMs perceived as learning by participating in the process of APC.

Motivations and Expectations at the Beginning of the Course

In comparison to the previous two cases of the study, the MSU version of APC was not voluntary for participants but part of a capstone course required for undergraduate art and design students. The majority of the enrolled students were in their final year of the program. Among the five CGMs, only Heather (CGM 2) was a junior, and the other four CGMs were all seniors having one final semester left.

In terms of expectation, students were not aware of the Art & Design Forum course having the APC component, which several CGMs voiced as a surprise. The course was
designed for students to gain practical knowledge and experience from creative practitioners and professionals working in the field of arts and culture. Although Livia would slightly modify it each semester, the consistent structure of the course was based on weekly visits by guest speakers from the art and design field and a visit to the Montclair Art Museum (L. Alexander, personal communication, September 12, 2018). However, in its fourth iteration, Livia had decided to add APC as part of the course curriculum by collaborating with Macon, whom she had met through the Unleashing exhibition at Teachers College the previous semester (spring 2018). For Macon, it was the fourth iteration of APC but the first time for APC to be embedded in a higher education curriculum and for the event to be hosted in collaboration with college students.

The CGMs stated that the APC component of the course was very confusing in the beginning, but as the course progressed, everything became clearer. Xavier (CGM 1) said, “I would say I understood the concept, but the steps getting to that concept was very confusing. How are all of our ideas getting reflected in this one conference? I asked to myself when I first heard about it in class. But after the fourth week, everything made sense” (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018). Melissa (CGM 3) shared about her feelings in regard to the course syllabus:

What I expected is that it would just be artists and designers coming in and talking to us because I knew that at the start of the semester she [Livia] totally switched up the class. I was kind of confused as to why we were doing that [APC], but once we got started, I was more interested in it because I understood what we were doing. When you hear a project for the first time, you feel totally out of your element and it’s not what you expect, so there’s a learning curve. (Melissa, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

Heather (CGM 2) and Tracy (CGM 5) mentioned feeling nervous when they heard in the first class that they would have to plan an event and find a speaker. But after going through the scaffolded classes, they became relieved about the process. Chloe (CGM 4) said, “Although I was surprised about the APC component added to the course in the
beginning, I was excited after meeting Macon and seeing her work.” However, she followed, “I immediately got nervous when she said we would be working in groups because I knew that not everyone was going to be represented,” as that had been the case in her previous experiences in her other classes (Chloe, personal communication, December 5, 2018).

All five CGMs said that it was helpful to see Macon, the artist and creator of APC, present her work with visuals from previous iterations in the second class session. This engendered trust and emotional stability in comparison to Livia’s first class session when they were first introduced to the idea of participating in APC (Macon skyped into the second class of the course). However, the CGMs shared that Livia was extremely supportive and responsive throughout the course. They mentioned how she would draw from her own curatorial experience in regard to communicating with other people, and helped with identifying the speakers for each group, which was one of the most difficult parts for the students.

**Learning Experience Described by the CGMs**

From the perspective of the CGMs, their perception of the learning experience in regard to APC was grounded in the entire Art & Design Forum course experience—the weekly class sessions facilitated by Livia, engagement with the nine visiting artists/creative practitioners, interactions with Macon online and offline, hosting the APC event at the Montclair Art Museum, and carrying out the coursework and assignments. As stated earlier by Macon, it was impossible to parse out solely Macon’s input, as the curriculum was designed based on the numerous conversations and feedback between Macon and Livia before and throughout the course. From the perspective of the CGMs, although Macon was the artist of APC and proposed a certain direction about the process, she only intervened in class two times via Skype and in person on the day of the APC event (although behind the scenes, Macon did personally communicate with students who
reached out to her). Hence, most of the course content was delegated and facilitated by Livia, who met with the students each week.

**Collaboration.** As mentioned earlier, collaboration was not only a prominent aspect of Macon’s artistic practice but was implemented in various parts of the APC curriculum. “Collaboration through group work” was the most salient finding in terms of the CGMs’ learning. The CGMs voiced the challenges of working in big groups in terms of the negotiation of ideas and scheduling, distribution of work, and figuring out each group member’s tendencies. However, in contrast to the difficulties, they also spoke about the rewarding aspects of gaining something they wouldn’t have been able to achieve by themselves. CGMs also shared about the productivity in collaborating with Macon and professional artists as their speakers, although the level of collaboration with them differed by each group.

**Collaboration through group work.** As Heather said, “This was my first big group project and doing a paper and presentation, then ending up at this event … just working collaboratively … that’s the first thing I would say”; this was a common response by the CGMs. All five CGMs mentioned never having done a group project to this extent in size and content in any other course.

I haven’t worked in a group this big. This was my first in college. It was tricky because we had seven people and had to figure out schedules to meet, we met every Tuesday when we were assigned to work on it. We had a group chat with everyone in my group except for one person who does their own thing, but we all worked well together, and it was enjoyable! We clicked pretty well. (Heather, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Chloe also mentioned the difficulty in scheduling her group’s meetings, as “most students were seniors who were busy with work and figuring out their future direction.” All five CGMs said they communicated through Google docs, i-message chatrooms, and Facetime to have everyone’s opinions reflected or gain consent. Not only was finding time for meeting time consuming, but as Heather shared, “figuring out each person’s different tendencies and approaches to incorporate everyone’s voice took a lot of time.
and wasn’t easy. Time was a definite constraint in the collaborative process” (Heather, Personal communication, December 4, 2018).

Xavier emphasized the conflicts among the group dynamics and perspectives. “There were conflicts in people’s perspectives that it was hard to negotiate. Especially when someone was shutting down and refused to respond” (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018).

For Melissa, the hands-on involvement of the content of the group work was challenging. She spoke about the group work in comparison to her other classes:

I did have an entrepreneurship project with a group of three, a lot smaller, but we had to reach out to the community and do interviews to develop business and products. In that case it was somewhat similar, but that wasn’t as much of an undertaking. I realized that our project [APC] was like creating an entire world, whereas the entrepreneurship project I had was a small group, we divided up the work easily, and it wasn’t as hands-on with the community as this was. (Melissa, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

Tracy shared her difficulty with her group due to the inactivity: “I was engaged with the topic of mental health because it’s directly related to my artistic work, but it was just so hard to communicate with my teammates because when we met they would just look at the ground and wouldn’t say anything” (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018).

All five CGMs I interviewed turned out to be group leaders or active members of their group who stepped up to coordinate and organize group meetings for the presentation and communicate with their group speaker. Heather, Melissa, Chloe, and Tracy all recounted becoming nervous that no one else was initiating anything, so they naturally stepped up in initiating conversations and organized group meetings. Melissa candidly described the process:

This project was way out of my element because I have never been asked to do something like this—a participatory art project. Especially as a design major, making installations and stuff…. It was a lot of teamwork and I have to say, in addition to the paperwork, the presentation was a lot of
organization to work out who was going to speak and write, and the event itself should have been more of a team effort together. It was hard to communicate with people I’d never met before, so it pushed me out of my comfort zone. I guess seeing that no one stepped up made me see what I could do. (Melissa, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

For both Tracy and Chloe, it was their first time to lead a group in a course. But again, as no one was initiating anything, they decided to take on the role. Even though at times it seemed they were the only ones working, their interest in the topic was motivational. Tracy shared, “Working with a group was really not easy. I just couldn’t get them to talk. But I was content that I was able to learn by researching deeper about mental health” (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018).

Xavier, who wrote a ten-minute poem to be recited at the APC on behalf of his team, realized that “you have to be self-less and make sure everyone’s voices are heard. You have to be a good listener. This was something I didn’t really experience before, especially to this degree in any other course” (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018).

Despite the difficulties, group work was also one of the most rewarding experiences. Xavier stated, “It went beyond what I could have done myself.” Heather also addressed the entire process as rewarding:

I learned the most by working as a group and feeding off each other’s ideas, also putting the event together and creating a part of a big collective event. We reached out to a speaker in the art world who makes a living off this and worked collaboratively to pull it off. It was really rewarding when it was over. (Heather, Personal communication, December 4, 2018)

CGMs also spoke about gaining friends unexpectedly and gaining leadership skills by stepping up and leading their team. Xavier said the course allowed him to work with his peers—like-minded artists—which was something he had not experienced before.

The most enjoyable aspect of this course was that I was able to connect with other like-minded artists that I haven’t been able to do before in other classes. This course forced you to interact and collaborate with your peers, which was the most challenging but also enjoyable part. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)
Chloe shared,

Although it was me and Lauren working together most of the time because people wouldn’t respond or couldn’t make the time, it was fun when we all got together. We would veer off into tangents in discussing our topic [women’s rights] and I would have to pull everyone back on track. But we would have all sorts of conversations about the topic. I think I unexpectedly gained friends. (Chloe, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Heather talked about gaining leadership skills as she coordinated the team and speaker and oversaw the process:

Everyone said that I was the group leader because I was always the one in the chat saying “we need to get this done!” Presentations stress me out to the max! So I didn’t want to be inconsiderate to our speaker [Nick], so I set most of the things to do since some couldn’t come, so I would have them do tasks like painting the canvas to makeup work so it was evenly distributed. I took the initiative to relay the emails to Nick so he didn’t have everyone emailing him questions and stuff.

I think I’ve gained leadership skills by working as a group and figuring out the different personalities of the group and working with them while incorporating their ideas and making sure they were heard. Putting the event together too. (Heather, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Melissa also said she gained leadership skills from the project, as she is normally not outspoken and tends not to engage with new people. But playing the role of coordinator for the team forced her to reach out and communicate with Livia, Jane [their speaker] and group members.

More than anything, leadership skills. As an introvert, I don’t participate that much in class or raise my hand unless I have something meaningful to say, I don’t direct and delegate or communicate with people I just met that semester, or Jane [group speaker at the APC event], who I had never met at all, so I was in another element there. I learned a lot about how to reach out to people, how to prioritize, etc. (Melissa, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Heather stated that going through the project from being nervous to undertaking the work and accomplishing it made her gain confidence.

The other groups did great jobs and had impactful presentations. I’ll always remember doing this and how enjoyable it was. I remember the first day of class I was like, OMG, I’ve never done this before, but it works out,
and this is what people do in the art world, this is what you will be doing and now you have background experience. Livia helped us so much. So if we ever plan an event, we know we can do it and if we have to do it in another class it’s not going to be as scary. (Heather, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

**Collaboration with professional artists.** Tracy said that working with Macon’s APC platform and Livia’s thought-provoking questions allowed her to speak up about her concern publicly:

> Besides our professors, we never had the opportunity to work together with an artist, especially to be part of an art project like this. In my sophomore year, we collaborated and passed drawings around a little, but working with Macon’s piece and utilizing it as a platform … to get our voice heard, and the fact that Livia asked, “Why are we doing art, what voice do you want to be heard, why is it important to you…?” we put that into action and shared our voices instead of keeping in a classroom bubble. (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Melissa shared her experience collaborating with her speaker, who was an environmentalist. Melissa not only learned from a person actively working in the field, but also commented on her tactic of spontaneously engaging the students in a reflective way, which Melissa shared as one of the most memorable moments throughout the APC process.

> Content-wise she [Jane, their speaker] would use examples of projects she was working on and send me materials all the time…. She also shared about her experience on how to reach out and talk to people as she does frequent work and conferences all over the world. It was really helpful.

> When she made us stand up and voice our concerns during the event, our group members were a bit startled. But it was really authentic. It pushed us to think about what really matters in climate change and to see our passion about it. And as someone who was prepared and knowing it the most [as the group leader who was in constant communication with Jane] I had to not only get involved, but step up in a public setting and be passionate. It was a whole other atmosphere to be in a public setting than being in a classroom…. (Melissa, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

**The research process.** Chloe wrote the entire 15-minute script for her speaker on behalf of her group, which worked on woman’s rights. She specifically shared how she created the script by going through all the text-based conversations in their group’s
Google slides, Google docs, and Chatroom, which was similar to a data-coding process. She created a flowchart as a way to organize each person’s voice/concerns. She recounted, “I first pulled a bullet from anything that someone said before and then put it on a piece of paper.” She started with the least broad thing, “like zooming in and then zooming out to heavier topics and themes.” She added,

> It was like a concept map, which I had to do in so many classes but I would think, what is this teaching me? And then I’m like using it in real life. When I was doing it [creating the flow chart], I was like, I need crayons! I need paper! Because I’m a visual person. I can’t represent anything in my brain that isn’t visual. I didn’t know any other way to organize it. That’s how we incorporated everyone’s voice into script. (Chloe, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Tracy also shared how she enjoyed the research process, even though it was difficult to work together with her group members. “I ended up really enjoying the research process about mental health issues, the complex issues related to it really transformed the way of how I saw things.”

**Experience a new form of art.** As mentioned earlier in regard to Macon’s intent for the APC curriculum, Livia and Macon wanted the students to experience this type of socially engaged art, as it was a first exposure for many students. Xavier said,

> This was my first experience with interactive art, or performance art, but in a way where dialog was attached to it. I’ve done performance, but it was either film or I wasn’t saying anything, so this was a very “in the moment, dialog, presentation” type of a deal. It felt more like a presentation than an art piece. It expanded my experience of art. Before I looked at it as primarily as painting or dance; traditional. But this opened my mind to other forms that I didn’t even know about. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)

This experience of “interactive performance art with dialogue” prompted Xavier to engage with “doing poetry,” an art medium he had not taken seriously before. Working with his group, he spontaneously responded to his topic of “redline zoning and racial disparity” and was able to write the poem in two days and present it (through the speaker performance artist Nick) at the APC event.
We were talking in a group brainstorming as usual, and one of my members wanted to do a performance art piece, so we thought what some forms were and we thought poetry. They thought it was a good idea, but no one wanted to or knew how to write it, so I said I’ll do it. I guess I came up with it first. It didn’t take me that long, maybe a day or two to write it…. I’ve done poetry for assignments before but this time I felt an emotional attachment to this since it was bigger and came from my heart.

During our first meeting with Nick K [group speaker who is a performance artist], I recited the poem. Nick K and everybody loved it. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)

Due to an enthusiastic response, Xavier has been continuing writing poetry. He told me he was writing his second poem at the time I was interviewing him.

Xavier also talked about how “the course provided me an opportunity to look at the world in a different perspective way more deeply.” He stated, “In society today, we lose sight of what matters and value objects more than people. But [through this course] we were looking at people’s issues and it made me realize that the materials, the things in my life don’t matter as much as I think they do” (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018). It seemed that this type of socially engaged art provided him a new pair of lenses to think about the urgent issues around us and prompting ways to deal with them through our creativity and artistic sensibility. This was a new way of experiencing art to Xavier.

**Gain real-world experience.** Several CGMs positively shared how seeing the professional artists and cultural practitioners and collaborating with a creative practitioner as a speaker provided them a sense of the real world. CGMs commented on how it broadened their perspectives in terms of the diversity in the type of work and the processes they engage with.

Tracy said, “I had never had speakers come in and tell you about what’s happening outside. You’re in the student life bubble, so it was like, this is what could happen outside of school” (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018). Heather also said, “The engagement with artists in the art world was eye-opening. It bridges the real world since
you have no clue what’s going on out there. It was helpful to hear about how they make a living too. Getting that tangible sense was helpful.”

I’ve never had a class like this where we had to plan an event and have speakers every week to introduce us to the art world. It was really cool. There were things I had no idea about before. We don’t learn that, we pick a concentration and focus on that, but now they [MSU Art and Design program] are integrating interdisciplinary classes a little more, so it was interesting to hear people from the real art world and how they make a living. (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

As a design major, Melissa particularly commented on learning from how the artists presented themselves, which she called “performance.” She said, “It was interesting to see how people talk about what they care about and how people engage throughout a performance like that. I probably don’t have the skills to give a presentation like that since I am still so young.” However, she continued, “But in my case where I have to present a case to a client, I feel like that gave me tips and tricks to use in my own practice” (Melissa, personal communication, December 4, 2018).

**Learning from APC in Comparison to Other Learning Experiences**

As the CGMs shared, the course content, including working with a professional artist on a socially engaged art project, was unique in itself. They specifically talked about this in contrast to their other courses and previous learning experiences. Most of their responses revolved around the pedagogical methods and approach, which they found unique, throughout the APC curriculum.

**Promoting agency in learning.** Although there were set activities and parameters the CGMs had to involve throughout the course, they had freedom in deciding on their topic and the way they would present it at the event. In a way, so much freedom itself was challenging; however, the CGMs shared positively about taking direction, as it would enhance their own artmaking practice.

The course was more wide-open [in comparison to other educational experiences I’ve engaged with]. Livia would say, how do you feel? It’s your
Melissa and Chloe also talked positively about having the freedom to decide a topic based on their interests and have the ability to take ownership in their direction. Chloe shared that she had never been a team leader like she was in this course. Being able to work with a topic that she deeply was concerned about motivated her to take on leadership of the entire group.

I found it unexpected to see myself being the team leader, choreographing the entire thing. I was never a team leader in other classes. The heavy research stuff [in other courses] weren’t the things that were a particular interest of myself. But here, I was able to select a topic of my choice and work with it. I was pretty into it. I found myself editing the things that other people said to make it more appropriate to the context and setting, eventually I ended up writing the entire script. (Chloe, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Chloe also expressed how relieved she was that the APC project was undertaken in the name of “art.” She shared that being engaged in an art project allowed her “to speak up and express things that otherwise would be difficult.”

Doing this project was interesting. The reason why I’m glad it was called art is because you can get away with a lot of things by calling it art. As I was writing it [the group script for the APC event], I was like, “This is pretty messed up. I’m saying a lot of things that are really horrible.” But I was really happy to see that people were responding to it [during the event]. (Chloe, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

**Dialogue-based teaching method.** Xavier spoke about his prior experience working at a museum through an exploratory program during high school. He said he would give tours regularly and give presentations to kids, which involved a lot of public speaking with other people. He said the APC curriculum was similar, but “there was a lot of learning that happened during our class sessions, in the process.” He particularly
mentioned the self-driven learning promoted through the curriculum and the dialogue-based instructional method, which broadened his perspective.

We had to develop our own methods and steps to get to the set goal of the course. It was really challenging and took a lot of time and conversation. But from the dialogues, I was able to see the world through multiple people’s perspectives: two people can live in similar places but have different outlook on the world and different issues surrounding the world. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)

Tracy talked about the course being very discussion-based in comparison to other lecture-style courses.

In this course, everything we did we had to discuss. It wasn’t like, read this and the teacher talks about it. The questions from Livia, that was different! Teachers don’t usually ask hard questions like that and expect you to answer. It wasn’t in essay format but on the spot, which was cool but stressful. (Tracy, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

Tracy felt the entire course functioned like an art critique session. She said that Livia constantly posed challenging questions, which activated her critical thinking skills, something she enjoyed. Xavier agreed:

Studio classes have critiques, which this class is like a critique on ideas more than your work, and you were asked about what you believe in and why you’re doing art, you’re talking to friends and asked some questions, and then the critique is the main thing, but this was the whole thing. Even the classrooms, everything is set up in an O or U shape. In my interdisciplinary class … it’s a little similar but nothing like these challenging back to back questions. It activated my critical thinking and I liked it. My friend was worried and I was like, it’s a lot but it’s not a lecture with reading … it’s not bad at all. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)

Tracy also talked about how Livia’s questions broke down the process, which “in the beginning was difficult but easier in the end.” She also commented on how the environment felt comfortable, stimulating “a sense to explore rather than trying to fit yourself to be correct.” “She was like, if you don’t know it’s okay, we’ll ask more questions and break it down. It was better than a lecture and more enjoyable. It was like
an art lecture, not art history lecture” (Tracy, personal communication, December 5, 2018).

Impact after Being Part of APC

It was hard to tell about the influence APC had on the students, as I interviewed them in early December, not too long after the APC event ended. However, the CGMs were working on the project for at least three months and told me what they noticed about themselves after engaging with the APC content for 14 weeks.

Improvement in public speaking. Xavier said he became more comfortable with public speaking and analytical as he discovered himself talking with his family and friends.

I feel like I’m more comfortable talking in public now, and also I’m able to do an in-depth analysis on the spot and faster. I’m sharper. Throughout this class we were constantly working that muscle and it got stronger. I noticed that because of the class, I’ve had deep conversations with friends and my mom about life more than ever, and I have a deep analysis or thought about…. I’ve always had it, but I couldn’t accurately convey it in words…. My mom thinks I’m a lot more mature now. I can tell. We talk about topics that she is more comfortable talking to me about now. She knew about the Pressing Conference, but not the steps, she did know I gave a poem and did a presentation. I was home when I wrote it and read her half, but she didn’t hear the whole finished version yet. She loved it though. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)

Enhanced articulation. As a painting major, Xavier also talked about seeing improvement in his articulation when explaining his concepts in his painting practice.

This course helped me to better explain the things I paint or illustrate. It’s been challenging to explain why I paint the way I do, but because of this class I had to do a lot of talking and how I feel about things, and that has helped me explain visually through words…. It was a great learning experience in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of myself in general … in the sense of people being a public figure or putting themselves in that role…. I’m good at talking, explaining things, although not so good at keeping eye contact with an audience. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)
The PAMs experienced *APC* only through its event form, which took place at the Montclair Art Museum. Macon was the emcee of the event. In the beginning, she explained how she created *APC* in response to the current political climate and briefly spoke about how the students engaged with the work throughout the semester. Then she invited the speakers one by one to the *APC* platform. Nic, a performance artist who was one of the guest speakers in the course and ended up being a speaker for one of the CGM student groups, first started his performative speech about redline zoning and the racial segregation in urban environments—particularly in New York City. He recited a poem written by Xavier, then invited the audience members to come up to the canvas set up in the front to post butterflies on the canvas, which had the imagery of a black-and-white space divided by a red line. Audience members lined up at the front, posted their butterfly pins on the canvas, and returned to their seats. Then Macon invited Stephanie, a graduate of the MSU art school and working as an administrator in the MSU Art & Design program, to share her personal experience suffering from depression and the importance of speaking up about mental illness. The third speaker Macon introduced was Jane, who spoke about the emergency of climate change. In the middle of her performative lecture, she called out the students of the group she was speaking on behalf of and asked them one by one to voice their concerns on the topic. After Jane’s speech was over, Macon introduced Beth, whose speech was titled “Feminism 101 for Dummies,” a script written by Chloe by incorporating each member’s opinions in comments throughout their group work. Beth performed the speech and concluded the speaker session. Then Macon asked the floor to make any comments or responses. Three people came up to the front to speak. Then the event ended.

As stated earlier in Chapter III (see Public Audience Member section), I interviewed four public audience members who had come to see the *APC* event at the
Montclair Art Museum. I investigated their purpose of attending the event and their experience with the work, particularly what they had “learned” by attending the event.

**Motivation of Visitation and Expectations**

As previously mentioned, among the four PAMs, three were Montclair students, and one was the curator who had commissioned Macon for the Teachers College *Unleashing* exhibition in spring 2018. All four PAMs attended the event from beginning to the end for about 1 hour and 15 minutes on November 28, 2018, at the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey.

Jil (PAM 1), a junior majoring in Fine Arts, came because the event was hosted by the Art & Design program. Jil came to the *APC* event after the professor in her *3D and Extended Media* course spoke about it to the class. Jil did not know it was an artist-led project and anticipated it to be a discussion of pressing issues in society and in relation to environmentalism. As she did not know much about the project, she did not have much expectation. She said, “I wasn’t entirely sure what I was going into. I expected to have in-depth discussion and talk about social issues. But I wasn’t sure how in-depth and who would be speaking” (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018).

Liza (PAM 2), a senior in art education, attended the event because her close friend was a CGM for *APC*. She said she had heard about *APC* all through semester and was very excited for her close friend to be part of it. She was particularly interested in *APC* because of her involvement with LGBTQ and social justice issues, sharing that she was the president of the gender and sexuality group and facilitator for the LGBTQ center. Knowing that her friend’s CGM group was doing a satire on women’s issues, she thought the other presentations would have the same tone, which was not the case.

Beth (PAM 3), a freshman majoring in Theater, spoke on behalf of one of the CGM groups at the *APC*. She happened to sit right next to me throughout the event, and I originally thought her to be a public visitor. She went up on stage and read the script for
the last student group on women’s issues, then returned to her seat. Beth later told me that she had been contacted by the professor from her program who taught the student seminar. Beth had spoken in her student seminar about her performance in a production called *Dianices in 69*, which was related to feminism. The professor figured that Beth might be interested in speaking on behalf of the CGM group and reached out to her. According to Beth, “I wasn’t sure what I would be getting myself into, but I thought, why not, it’s an opportunity and something I’ve never done before, so I took it up” (Beth, personal communication, December 3, 2018).

Defne (PAM 4), the TC APC curator, had seen APC at the Spring Break art fair but knew that the Montclair version would be different and that she would be a listener unless invited by one of the speakers at the podium. Regarding her expectations, “I was expecting to hear people’s political opinions. This is what I saw in the first spring break event. I am expecting in this case the students to be speakers because I knew they were participating actively. But that didn’t happen” (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018).

**Findings Pertinent to the Learning Experience**

In my interviews, the learning voiced by the PAMs was related to how they experienced the APC event from their respective perspectives. As I had constructed the interview questions in an incremental way, asking how they engaged with the work in terms of gains, surprising elements, memorable aspects, and then learning and impact, they subjectively expressed how they had experienced the event.

As the PAMs’ experience of APC was only through an event form, they did not have much background information about the students’ process in engaging with APC other than what was briefly mentioned during the event by the emcee. Thus, their responses mostly revolved around how they viewed the speakers’ performances, how
informative the topics were and how they resonated with them during and after the event, and their thoughts about experiencing the APC event as a performance-based artwork.

**Social-justice related topics conveyed through art.** As reflected in the title, *A Pressing Conference*, it was evident that the event would be tied to pressing social issues confronted today, but the fact that it was an art project made it interesting. Liza commented on how the students were able to bring up those pressing issues: “So many people are so insecure these days but people have to talk about their deepest darkest fears; climate change, gender … they are heavy hitting topics that are hard to talk about, which is why the students talked about them, since no one else is” (Liza, personal communication, December 3, 2018). Liza shared how she thought the entire experience of APC was “a great opportunity for the students in a higher ed art class to do art projects like this.” She added,

> Usually, there are restrictions to how you can express yourself —you have to use this material and do this and that. But it seemed that Macon and Livia had given the students enough rope to sustain critically, but they could talk about things they cared about. I think that was important. (Liza, personal communication, December 3, 2018)

Freshman Beth commented that she was surprised to see how “art can be political.” She said her experience of coming up and placing a butterfly on the poster was a simple gesture but very meaningful, which made her reflect upon the power of art. Jil, a junior in fine arts, spoke about the uniqueness of the platform being participatory.

> Overall, this was a very unique experience from different arts presentations that I’ve gone to. They weren’t participatory. You go and look at something, but this was 3D and you were encouraged to get on the podium with others presenting. I’ve never experienced this and I enjoyed that part of it. (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

In contrast to the MSU students, Defne spoke more about the work from a curator’s perspective, voicing critically about what worked and did not work and talking about how the work could have been activated in other ways. Defne wanted to have seen the involvement of the students more visible at the event. She said, “I really hoped to have
heard from them [the students], and not be educated by speakers about ecology. I thought they would speak about their own research or personal experiences” (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018).

**Resonating stories.** PAMs commented on the speeches that emotionally resonated with them. Three PAMs shared about how they were moved by the speaker who recounted her personal experience of going through anxiety, especially because they were familiar with the person working in their program. They were moved by her courage to vulnerably share her very private life story publicly in advocating discussion of mental illness to the students. Defne said,

I was very touched by one person who spoke about her intimate history in order to make a change for the college students knowing their backgrounds while having worked at the same university. She shared it not for her own interest but for them, so it was intimate, important and touching. I was touched to see how this platform could function in different ways, so I think the work has a lot of different potentials, but wasn’t used in the best possible way. (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018)

Liza and Jil also commented on the speaker’s powerful story shared publicly:

I think Steph’s story was the most memorable. People try to stigmatize mental health, but it’s super important. One out of four people have suffered from a mental illness and no one talks about it until now. It was powerful. (Liza, personal communication, December 3, 2018)

With the mental illness aspect, that is something I work with in my projects, having someone discuss their troubles with it and how everyone can be an advocate in some ways…. Learning about someone’s deep personal experience with it and hearing that was something I hadn’t considered before. (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

**Informative.** Jil said she was able to deepen her knowledge about climate change and redlining zoning. “The redlining piece was very interesting and something I had never considered before. When I relate it to my time in Brooklyn, you can still see the effects of it, and now I see it much clearer. The talks were very informative and increased my awareness of things that I never thought about” (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018).
Beth also shared how different it was to have these conversations in a public space and not in a classroom or among friends. “I’ve never been to an event like this before. I’ve only touched upon these serious issues with friends or in a classroom, but to talk about it in a public space with a bunch of strangers was very different. Experiencing it, it was a better way of learning that I think I ever could have imagined” (Beth, personal communication, December 3, 2018).

**APC’s educational potential.** In terms of learning, Defne shared how the work could have become a better platform for learning.

I can see this as an educational experience because it involves students and was part of the curriculum. It was in the art course and we can see the result of that. I think it was meaningful for the students to be part of this entire process and to become facilitators and even host the event. Although from a public viewer’s perspective, I don’t feel that I learned anything, they would be able to observe the end result and reflect upon their experience. In that way, the work does have the educational potential despite the criticism I have toward the work.

She further suggested to have more public engagement as part of the event.

If this was aiming at learning, it should engage the people in the discussions, and that was missing. It should have been more strategic about engaging the public. So it didn’t function as a learning tool from my perspective. The speakers only spoke. It could have been more engaging. (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018)

**Influences after APC.** As I talked with the PAMs during the two weeks after the APC event, I was curious what they would say in regard to influences or an impact after attending the APC event.

Defne shared that the story she heard at the event constantly resonated with her. “The talk [on mental illness] remained in my mind for a while. I think the participants [the speakers] have a lot of power to change the impact of the piece. Thanks to one feminist performance, she made it a good presentation. The potential and content that was shared had an impact on me.” She further elaborated:
One person took the initiative to talk to students and young people about her intimate experience that this would create a change in their lives. She had the courage or else it would have been hard to talk about it. She works in that institution, so people see and know her. It was almost daring. I think if this platform was not there, she wouldn’t have talked about it. The platform became a good excuse to talk about that issue.

It showed me how incredible the platform could have been if the students took over it. If there were three different presentations, maybe one could have been about the problems relating to educational institutions etc. Unfortunately, the students had a lot to say but were not asked. (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018)

Jil responded that she didn’t have remarkable changes but responded that she became “more observant of her surroundings and reflected more on several issues.” She said she had agreed with so much of what was said at the event, that the rest “would be integrating it more into my daily life.” However, she continued talking about how the mental health issue resonated with her. She talked about how she has many family and friends with anxiety and depression and that she had recently started to work with those issues in her artwork to call attention to those things. She said, “It’s an epidemic that is affecting young adults very negatively. The pressure put on students in college is going to cause more issues in the future and if something does not change about how institutions set up their curriculum to be more lenient with students with assignments.” She continued talking about her opinion on the stress level of students. As she shared her thoughts, she stated that “it would be great if the APC platform were set up in an open setting to the entire university for other students to hear each other’s opinions to know that they aren’t the only ones going through the same struggles and issues. And also professors can hear those issues” (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018).

Jil also shared how some students from her other class had gathered together right after the APC event and talked about it. She said they had a good discussion, particularly in relation to gender and race topics, as those were the two topics their class was not able to get into during the semester.

We discussed how impactful it was to hear about the gender and race topics because we had been discussing other social issues in class. We really
talked about those two aspects the most because it was something we had never considered as a group. We have gotten deep into the other two [environmentalism and mental illness], but these two topics [race and gender] we had never gone into in class. It ran into some points that a couple of us wanted to get deeper into. The speakers were engaging, we all came to the same consensus. We weren’t zoning out. (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

Liza said hearing the talks at the APC event made her become “more ecologically conscious” in her daily deeds. She shared an incident of refusing to take a plastic bag, being reminded of what she heard during the event.

I feel like that is my day-to-day activism that I’ve been missing. It’s funny, I bought a reusable coffee cup and water bottle, I try not to use grocery bags, and those little things that could make a huge impact. I feel like that encouraged me to do more. Sometimes you just need a nudge, I was thinking about it, and it was encouraging every day. I just got something to eat and the guy put my ticket in the bag and I was like, “No, don’t worry, I don’t need a bag,” and I was like, “Good job Liza! I really don’t need a bag, I’m just going to eat this.” I hope that other people do this too. (Liza, personal communication, December 3, 2018)

Beth, the speaker on behalf of the women’s issues group, shared how the response from the audience made her realize the power of being a speaker.

I felt like I performed to a certain extent, as I told a story, made a point and affected an audience. I didn’t realize how impactful it could be. I was genuinely surprised when people came up to me and told me how much they enjoyed my portrayal! All I did was read from a paper and I guess I brought it animation, but I didn’t expect such a response! It made me want to act upon spreading awareness of issues like these, as a simple, ten-minute speech could be so moving. (Beth, personal communication, December 3, 2018).

Experiencing positive response from the audience members, Beth shared that she realized the importance of voicing such issues. She said, “It’s important that we stick up for each other and make this issue known even to people across the world. Culture is different around the world, but the issue should be known everywhere.”
Summary

The findings pertinent to Case 3. A Pressing Conference were presented in three sections: the artist, CGMs, and PAMs. The context and intent of APC were explained, and Macon’s pedagogical approach was closer to that of a facilitator and collaborator whose teaching was mostly delegated by the course instructor Livia. Through collaboration, Macon and Livia had clear learning objectives for students to achieve, which were related to raising awareness of pressing societal issues and having the students experience art as a form of civic participation. Researching a societal issue and identifying creative ways to cope with the issue, communication skills, and coordination were emphasized skills to be developed through the course work.

CGMs voiced their challenges with the course work in relation to the intensity of the group work; however, the CGMs who actively participated in the group work shared that they had gained confidence and leadership skills through the group work. They spoke of discovering improvement in public speaking and articulation after the project.

PAMs’ experiences were based on their responses to the speakers at the APC event. They voiced the impact of hearing personal stories from the speakers, and the new knowledge gained from the content of the speeches. This resonated with them in their daily actions and prompted them to spread more information about the shared topics to others.

In Chapter VII, I discuss the key themes from the cross-case analysis pertinent to each research question with relevant literature.
Chapter VII

DISCUSSION

The work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others. (Dewey, 1934, p. 106)

Learning is not just facts and concepts; learning, particularly intrinsically motivated learning, is a rich, emotion-laden experience, encompassing much, if not most, of what we consider to be fundamentally human. At its most basic level, learning is about affirming self [original emphasis]. (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 21)

In this chapter, I discuss the salient findings in relationship to the research questions, the literature presented in Chapter II, and other relevant literature. Thus, this chapter is organized in the order of the four specific research questions. Each section is discussed by key themes based on the findings from Chapter IV to VI and in relation to literature.

1. What are the purposes or aims of these artists in implementing specific educational methods or strategies in their artwork?
2. How do these artists understand learning and concepts of education?
3. How do the core group members (CGMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?
4. How do the public audience members (PAMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?
Discussion I: Artist—Research Questions 1 and 2

In this section, I carry out the discussion based on the two research questions that pertain to the artists— their intentions and pedagogical frameworks in creating their pedagogy-based art projects. With regard to the first research question, I first provide an abridged summary of the artist’s intention by each case and then discuss the key themes from the cross-case analysis. Next, I discuss the key themes from the cross-case analysis in regard to the pedagogical approach and framework, the second research question.

Key Themes of the Artist’s Intention by Each Case

The first research question is: What are the purposes or aims of these artists in implementing specific educational methods or strategies in their artwork? The intentions by each artist are encapsulated as the following:

- Pablo: Facilitate an experiential space to engage with DREAMer-storytellers.
- Adelita: Foster a sense of social responsibility and critical awareness toward the institution through collective decision-making and theater exercises.
- Macon: Create a platform to facilitate artmaking as a form of civic engagement.

Each artist shared their pedagogical intentions in regard to the audience—the CGMs and PAMs respectively, which I review in the next sections.

Pablo: Facilitate an experiential space to engage with DREAMer-storytellers.

Pablo intended to create a space where an exchange of stories could take place between the DREAMer-storytellers (CGMs) and PAMs. Through the artistic medium of storytelling, he wanted to promote a sense of empathy and social connection among the audience, particularly in a time of political polarity (he conceived the project during the Trump and Clinton campaigns and the project was realized after Trump became president). He facilitated ten workshop series with eight DREAMers and undocumented immigrant young adults to have them gain hands-on experience with various creative storytelling techniques and theater exercises. For the project’s public presentation, he
transformed the gallery space into an environment conducive to public visitors’ engagement, with furniture and displayed objects one might find in a home, for visitors to listen to the stories told by the DREAMers and even share their own stories if they wanted to.

With regards to the educational intent for the CGMs, Pablo wanted to provide the DREAMers with “hands-on training of storytelling and sharing their own stories emerging from the process” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). Pablo also shared that the workshops were an opportunity for the CGMs to realize their own potential and to plant a “seed of curiosity” within them for them to use artistic mediums such as storytelling.

I think primarily it’s for them to realize their own potential and maybe plant the seed of curiosity for them about a particular medium like storytelling that they are capable of doing. In other words, participants can start a passion or love for storytelling that can continue further on. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

As for the (educational) intent for the PAMs, Pablo wanted them to have a direct experience with people (the CGMs) in the gallery space, which Pablo called “peer experience.” This peer experience is compared to a more traditional viewing experience centered on the engagement with object-based artworks in the gallery. Moreover, Pablo’s intent was to provide an unmediated experience in an era where people are distracted and very dependent on social media. He stated that, as a social practice artist, his aspiration of creating a work like La Austral was about “awakening a sensibility of the social experience” through conversation and multi-sensorial engagement with audience members:

So I am on social media,… but I feel that what I do tries to ameliorate the condition of being so connected and in a way I hope that…what we do in social practice is really to reawaken the sensibility of the social experience—how it’s multi-sensorial and really about conversation and really about experiences. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)
In sum, Pablo wanted the project to promote an “interactive and reciprocal exchange of stories prompted and delivered by the DREAMers” that could “evoke attentiveness to what is happening in this current political climate” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). Moreover, he curated the gallery space to have multiple entry points for engagement by having storytellers simultaneously deliver different stories in the front lit room and rear dark room of the gallery space, display interesting objects as story instigators, and coordinate games for PAMs to play.

**Adelita: Foster social responsibility and critical awareness toward the institution (MoMA) through collective decision-making and theater exercises.** In *The Council*, Adelita worked with a group of young adults (CGMs) to think through a problem together, which was about re-envisioning the function of the institution (the Museum of Modern Art) after a crisis that entailed a market crash, class struggle, and climate change. Through the project, she wanted the CGMs to work collectively with a sense of social responsibility by embodying the role of a council member who would make decisions on behalf of others.

For the PAMs, Adelita intended the photographic representations (produced from the workshops with the CGMs) to also evoke “the similar questions that [she] offered the participants…in less of a guided way” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 18, 2018). As she states, although the image has its own right to be interpreted according to the viewer, she would want the public viewers to critically think about the museum’s role after a crisis.

I think of it [the photographs] as a secondary pedagogical tool, and the work lives on in my eyes. The work itself has a life of its own, but to me it’s important that it retains the critical core that the workshop had or still speaks to those questions. (A. Husni-Bey, artist’s talk, April 12, 2019)

Moreover, she spoke about wanting the final representations to be presented to a larger population rather than just a teenage group. In a place like MoMA where the majority of the viewers are adults, she wanted the adult audience members to become reflective by
viewing the younger generation through their ideas about the future. This was based on her belief that “the young people’s imagining of the future suggests how they perceive the present.” She further elaborated:

Working with younger people who are imagining a future is hopefully for a pedagogical audience, makes them think about what it will be like for this young group who could potentially represent a larger group living in a world that they put together, that they are sort of complicit in having produced so far and will produce in the future. I guess it’s a question of responsibility, not simply mirroring what’s happening in the world. It’s also assuming that people will be made more conscious of their responsibility in the world’s systems, and that will be a motive for change or reflection. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018)

However, she was aware of the limitations of a process-based work presented in the form of photographs in the context of a group show, in comparison to a film as a solo presentation of the work in which she normally presents her work.

In sum, she wanted the CGMs and PAMs to engage with the overarching goal of thinking critically and collectively, acting upon the role of the institution with social responsibility.

Macon: Create a platform to facilitate artmaking as a form of civic engagement. Macon created the sculptural installation of A Pressing Conference (APC) in the form of the presidential press briefing room as an impulsive reaction to current political affairs right after Trump’s election. Rather than create a self-contained work, she created an open platform to invite people to voice and share their urgent issues within the current political climate. As she stated, “APC was not about a specific community but a need to connect and find voices to bring everyone together” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

APC has gone through several iterations and different programming according to its context. At Montclair State University (MSU) in New Jersey, APC was implemented as an overarching theme for 26 Art & Design undergraduate students (CGMs) to experience artmaking as a way to voice their opinions about pressing issues of their
choice and to network with creative practitioners experienced in working with their selected issues. Hence, *APC* prompted political awareness and provided an opportunity to experience art as a form of civic participation.

The *APC* course curriculum emphasized skills such as research, collaborative group work, and communication. The CGMs were requested to individually write an essay on their pressing matters, to carry out group presentations, and coordinate their own *APC* event at the Montclair Art Museum with respective speakers who could talk on behalf of their group’s issues.

In collaboration with Livia, the course instructor, Macon and Livia wanted the students to (1) gain experience with identifying a pressing issue, (2) experience art as social practice and as a form of civic engagement, (3) enhance networking skills and gain experience in coordinating an event, (4) confidently present ideas to a (public) audience, and (5) experience the process of how an idea develops and takes various forms (excerpts from M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

In addition, Macon underlined “building community” as one of the intentions for the *APC* event. She stressed reaching out to people and forming new relationships as part of the coursework (invited spokespeople to represent the groups), and encouraged the CGMs to invite family and friends to the *APC* event as a way to reach a broader audience and eventually build community.

Essentially speakers will bring their people and their community into the audience. Then there will be communities that you [the MSU students] chose to bring with, your own friends and families. Somewhat it will be dependent on you guys. Think about, “Who needs to be in the room, Who do you want to bring to the pressing conference?” It’s also an opportunity to connect with people outside who normally don’t come to an art event. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

In terms of the learning intent for the PAMs, Macon did not directly address specific aims. However, it was implicitly expected that the PAMs would respond to the
content shared by the speakers at the APC event, which would evoke further change within themselves and in their actions.

**Cross-case Analysis of the Artists’ Intentions in Three Cases**

- **Theme 1:** Promote art as a process and platform for collective knowledge-making
- **Theme 2:** Promote political consciousness through artistic means
- **Theme 3:** Promote a sense of community through collaborative group work:
  - Peer-to-peer learning, safe space, relational aesthetics

Three themes above were salient among the intentions of the three artists. First, the artists wanted to facilitate a participatory, process-based experience to “promote art as a process and platform for collective knowledge-making” (Theme 1). I intentionally use the word “process” to emphasize the experiential and durational aspects of the projects, and the word “platform” to refer to a physical site and discursive space where participants came together to share and create knowledge. Such aspects have contributed to a two-tier structure – a private workshop phase and a public presentation phase, in all three cases. In terms of subject matter/topics, all three artists explored topics related to current affairs and civic engagement. Second, pertinent to the topics explored in each project, it was evident that the three artists wanted to “promote political consciousness through artistic means” (Theme 2) among the CGMs. Thus, each project had the CGMs engage with political content in artistic ways through imaginative storytelling, theater, visual and bodily expressions, etc. Third, as the three artists strongly believed in the importance of collectivity, they intentionally engaged the CGMs in group work during the workshop process, which segued into creating the final presentations. Hence, they intended to “promote a sense of community through collaborative group work” (Theme 3). This entailed peer-to-peer learning, creating a safe space, and underscoring relational aspects as a critical component in the artmaking process. These three themes of the artists’
intentions also applied to the PAMs (in a less direct way). I further elaborate on each theme in the following sections.

**Theme 1. Promote art as a process and platform for collective knowledge-making.**

*Art as a participatory, process-based experience.* Although all three artists attended art schools and earned degrees in the Fine Arts such as painting and sculpture, their artistic practice expanded from creating object-based artworks to actively engaging groups of people as part of their artwork. The artists also work with other modes of practices including performance and theater (Pablo, Adelita, and Macon), participatory research (Adelita), and cultural programming (Pablo and Macon). This tendency of artmaking is related to the constant blurring with the everyday and audience participation that I have addressed in Chapter II. In particular, the three artists created their artworks in collaboration with a specific group of participants (CGMs) as a way to collectively produce knowledge. Thus, the intentions of the three artists are closely connected to the educational turn in contemporary art (elaborated in Chapter II), in which artistic practices “revolve around the notion of education, gaining and sharing knowledge, artistic/curatorial research, and knowledge production” (Lázár, 2014, n.p.). As curator Eszter Lázár (2014) states, “The emphasis is not on the object-based artwork.” Instead, the focus of these projects is on “the process itself, as well as on the use of discursive, pedagogical methods and situations in and outside of the exhibition” (n.p.). Lázár particularly pointed out “discursivity, exhibition display, and performativity” as major characteristics in these practices, which were also the salient methods implemented in all three projects in my study.

*Art as a platform for collective and transformative meaning-making.* Pablo stated, “if there is something I can do as an artist,…it is to create platforms where people can speak back and fill the blanks and complete the piece with their own input” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). This was also closely aligned with
Macon’s intention in creating APC, as “people needed a platform to speak up.” She further said, “I don’t think myself as a person who has something to teach in that framework, but rather the person who is creating a structure for people to bring together what they have to share” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 23, 2019). These tendencies reflect the artists creating open-ended spaces for people to engage and construct meaning through participation.

The groups in the three projects of my study can somewhat be considered as vulnerable populations such as DREAMers (Case 1), young adults (aged 17-23 years) from diverse backgrounds (Case 2), and undergraduate college students (Case 3). Hence, through the pedagogy-based art projects, three artists intended to empower the CGMs through artistic modes and literary practices that could promote collective knowledge-making. This relates to the tendency of what artist Anton Vidokle states as artists wanting to create “their work as transformative social projects rather than as merely symbolic gestures.” As he says, artistic practices have become to play an “active part as a transformative agent in contemporary society” (Vidokle, in O’Neill & Wilson, 2010, p. 149).

Specifically, I viewed this type of platform as promoting a democratic interpretive space facilitated by the artists and created by the collective voices through group dialogue. In The Council, although Adelita did not directly use the term “platform” in describing the intentions of the overall project, her effort in promoting a democratic interpretive space was reflected throughout the workshops, including the discursive activities in the small and large council groups.

**Structure: Private workshop phase and public presentation phase.** As stated above, the three projects I ended up examining for the study had a similar two-tier structure—first, a “private workshop phase” in which the artist worked in collaboration with the CGMs and second, a “public presentation phase.”
As explained in Chapters IV to VI, the final public presentation format of each project varied, reflecting the different artistic mediums used by each artist. Pablo, who is a performance artist and museum educator, curated the gallery space to promote storytelling exchange through CGMs’ performative storytelling; Adelita, who creates her final representations in the form of media installation, presented a body of photographs from the workshops with the CGMs; and Macon, who creates programmed installations, had the CGMs culminate their coursework in the format of an APC event open to the public.

**Topics: Current affairs and civic engagement.** All three projects had a strong emphasis in incorporating social and political issues as subject matter. Pablo intentionally recruited DACA recipients and undocumented immigrants as the CGMs to empower them through artistic storytelling and to have the PAMs listen to their stories. Although Pablo did not address political content during his facilitation of the workshops, he wanted the CGMs to self-initiate sharing their own autobiographical stories. For Adelita, although the major theme of having the CGMs envision the societal role of an institution after a crisis did not have direct reference to a current socio-political affair, she designed the workshop activities to engage the CGMs in a political process of collective decision making by having them embody a role of a council member. Many CGMs voiced that they found several parallels with current affairs in the real world. Adelita also shared photographic references from past social political movements introducing the Black Panther Party in the U.S., the Batista movement in Cuba, and global feminist movements during the workshops. Macon’s APC drew direct connection to current political affairs as the sculptural installation was a representation of the U.S. White House’s press briefing room. Thus, she wanted the CGMs to experience art in relation to civic participation by having them actively voice their pressing societal concerns and identify creative practitioners working with such issues. The subject matter of these artist-led pedagogy-based art projects closely connects to the next key theme.
Theme 2. Promote political consciousness through artistic means. The artists’ choice of topics related to current affairs and civic participation was also closely related to their intentions of engaging the CGMs in experiencing and enhancing political consciousness\textsuperscript{1} through artistic means.

Although it is difficult to compare each project, as the duration, number and time of the workshop, site of the project, theme, and the demographics and number of the CGMs varied, all three projects embraced a combination of political content and aesthetic aspects. However, the ways of combining the two differed according to the artists’ intentions and artmaking approaches. Thus, here I discuss the balancing act between politics and aesthetics by each artist. Then, in terms of aesthetics, I consider the literary components and sensorial embodied activities as they relate to how the artists intended to foster political consciousness through artistic means.

Balancing politics and aesthetics—Social imagination. For Pablo, even though he grounded himself in critical pedagogy, he intentionally avoided directly addressing political content during the workshops. He strongly believed the political content had to emerge from the CGMs themselves. In our conversation, he shared the tension in balancing the two aspects:

I struggled with the political dimension of this \textit{La Austral} because I did not want to make this just exclusively about DACA, and even though we initially advertised and asked for DREAMers to participate in this series of sessions, I did not want it to be explicit. I was in a way a little bit insurgent of interpretation like, well how explicit should we make it, and I just really needed to trust the process…. I felt that if the process were to be successful, that they out of their own accord and desire and willingness will have to do it themselves, and I’m very happy to see that it did happen. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

\textsuperscript{1}Political consciousness refers to a sense of self-awareness of politics—one’s position in the political system and history, and actions one perceives as available to take in an effort to influence the political reality in which one operates (Gurney, 2015).
Instead of addressing social justice issues or themes directly, Pablo had the CGMs visit the Theater of the Oppressed NYC twice for them “to have a taste of TO” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 2, 2018). During the workshops, which took place before and after the presidential election, he placed an emphasis on engaging the CGMs in creative storytelling techniques that involved the use of metaphorical thinking, improvisation, games, voice manipulation, and objects as conversation instigators.

In addition, as an artist interested in the interplay of fiction and non-fiction, the word “DREAMers” held a double connotation for Pablo. As stated above, although he was open to having any political content emerge from the CGMs themselves, Pablo “wanted the viewer to walk away with a story, but also to think about reality in different ways” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). He intentionally incorporated a basic set of stories\(^2\) to be told by the DREAMer-storytellers, which talked about the paradox of life and played with the idea of dream and reality. Based on my observation through multiple site visits during the evening receptions and weekend public office hours, the stories ranged according to each DREAMer-storyteller from fun and comical to more personal and autobiographical border-crossing stories. There was no upfront political activism or political content that I came across. DACA content arose from sharing personal experiences with public visitors. In sum, I viewed *La Austral* as a project in which the artist put more emphasis on the poetics of storytelling over the political content.

In *The Council*, Adelita similarly did not directly address current political affairs but rather engaged the CGMs in a political process of discussion and decision-making. However, political content such as issues related to governance and protests naturally emerged within this “make and believe situation” that Adelita had set up. As she had

\(^2\)Three stories were a basic set of stories that Pablo wanted to be told were The Infinite Dream of PaoYu, The Seven Messengers,,” and A Vision of Paradise. See Chapter IV.
stated in an interview with artist Anna Craycroft (2013), her intention behind creating educational art projects with groups of young people was to bring critical awareness of the current societal systems (“the institution” in the case of *The Council*). She said, “I think everyone who’s interested in the social-political realm eventually hits upon that we’re educated into a particular normativity…once you hit that, it’s sort of inevitable that you start looking at how we’re educated into it” (Husni-Bey as cited in Craycroft, 2013, p. 93).

Through *The Council*, she wanted the CGMs to experience, through walking in the shoes of decision-makers, the social responsibility that each person carries toward one another and on behalf of others. She wanted to promote a critical awareness of class, gender, and power structures that comprise our everyday. Interestingly, the project was based on a simulative situation. As the CGMs reported, even their most “crazy” ideas were welcomed and fictional ideas were embraced. In other words, imagination was a critical component of *The Council*; this was evident not only from their proposals for the institutions but also in the characters they developed and embodied during the plenary discussion sessions. As the final outcome of the project was to create photographic representations, the CGMs actively engaged in visualizing their conceptual narratives of their small councils through the gestures and poses of their bodies, and by making their own costumes, props, and backdrops. In order to foster a sense of community and social bonding within and among groups, Adelita intentionally carried out movement and theater exercises to develop sensorial engagement. Thus, I viewed *The Council* as encompassing a balance of political content expressed and experienced through aesthetic means.

Finally, unlike the previous two projects, Macon’s *APC* was directly tied to current political affairs: the CGMs worked with a pressing socio-political issue of their choice and identified creative practitioners while working with these issues. Although Macon and Livia wanted the CGMs to gain communication and coordination skills through the
coursework outlined in Chapter VI, the crux was about creatively responding to these pressing social issues as art and design majors. Macon emphasized this process as an “art project” or “creative experiment” rather than as a political campaign. She said:

Remember to think about approaching this process and outreach as it’s an art project, a creative experiment, not to get a political campaign or agenda across as much as bringing people together who might not normally get to be in a room together. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

Macon further added:

I want you to think about the human imagination as a realm for bringing social change and activating that in terms of imagining a world we want it to be. It’s about imagining creative solutions, the power of art of this moment. (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2018)

In *APC*, the aesthetic aspects of the project involved researching and identifying creative practitioners in order to understand their methods for addressing social issues in artistic and creative ways.

As reflected in these three cases, imagination served as a foundation for the artistic means of conveying the political, whether it was through a pedagogical method or by way of content. This echoes Maxine Greene’s (1995) concept of *social imagination*:

Social imagination is the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficit society, in the streets where we live and our schools. Social imagination not only suggests but also requires that one take action to repair or renew. (p. 5)

Greene particularly advocated for the arts, the realm of imagination, which allows “people to think of things as if they could be otherwise; it is the capacity that allows a looking through windows of the actual towards alternative realities” (pp. 1-2). Pablo, Adelita, and Macon all sought ways through their artistic practice to promote this sense of social imagination among the CGMs and PAMs. This leads to my next discussion, which illustrates how the artists instilled a sense of social imagination through artistic means.
**Artistic means: Literary and sensorial embodied activities.** Lazar’s (2014) notions of “discursivity” and “performativity” were both promoted in all three projects through pedagogical methods of inquiry-based discussion, dialogue, and conversation; and through performance-based activities incorporating theater, movement, and public speaking. However, these activities were carried out in various ways by each artist.

For *La Austral*, as the main medium was performative storytelling, the project naturally emphasized literary skills such as constructing narratives and communicating them through public speaking in front of an audience. Thus, Pablo had facilitated the workshops to have the CGMs come up with stories in an improvisational manner through imagination. There was a combination of stories to be written out and prepared in advance as assignments and impromptu stories told on the spot. Pablo requested that the CGMs tell stories from a perspective of a pet or an unanimated object, make stories with images or words written on cards randomly drawn from a card deck, and start stories with objects. Pablo actively engaged the CGMs in incorporating the sensorial and in utilizing metaphorical thinking in creating and telling stories. Thus, in the performative delivery of the stories, Pablo combined the literary components of storytelling with imagination and the use of sensorial modalities. Several CGMs mentioned this aspect as unique in comparison to the way literature was taught at school.

In *The Council*, although there was an emphasis on literary activities through both the small and large councils as a way for the CGMs to unpack the overarching inquiry of the project, Adelita also incorporated several theater exercises that involved physical movement. The value of embodied engagement is well reflected in the following statement:

Physical stuff is surprising in how much it helps the energy. Imagine if it was pure verbal and just talking. If the whole project was based on that. If there were no moments to feel each other’s energy, touch each other.
(A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, December, 2017)
In a similar vein, Adelita also voiced the effectiveness of embodied engagement in creating trust and social bonds among CGMs. She shared about the dependency exercise based on Boal’s TO methods, which several CGMs shared as being a memorable experience.

There’s something so poetic about that as a message. It’s about non-verbal trust, bodily trust and how it translates into different types of trust. Something so crazy can happen in 5 minutes and change perceptions of each other. You sit down and talk to people about their responsibility in this project, but that exercise probably helps the group more than sitting down and saying you’re individually responsible. (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 16, 2017)

Moreover, as stated in Chapter V, Adelita facilitated the CGMs’ exploration of the architectural spaces of the museum on barefoot to increase the experiential feeling of the spaces. Namely, she wanted the CGMs to embody what a refugee would feel like living in such spaces (content that emerged from a small council proposal). She also implemented several creative writing exercises, such as writing an essay from the perspective of a fictional character that the CGMs developed and embodied during the plenary discussion sessions and having them close their eyes, create word poems, and recite them altogether like a “choir” after seeing the snowfall on the rooftop. As reflected in these examples, literary and sensorial components were interwoven throughout the multiple activities in The Council.

In APC, in terms of the literary and sensorial means, it seemed there was a larger emphasis on the literary. The CGMs were required to write their personal essay on a pressing issue of their choice, then to work in groups to give a presentation based on their research, and finally to identify speakers who could speak on their behalf at the APC event. Although Macon had emphasized the imaginative aspect of artistic ways of dealing with societal issues, the coursework CGMs engaged with highlighted the literary rather than the sensorial.
Theme 3. Promote a sense of community through collaborative group work:

Peer-to-peer learning, safe space, relational aesthetics. In relation to the first theme of “collective knowledge-making,” the three artists significantly promoted “a sense of community” in their projects. First, they encouraged peer-to-peer learning to enhance a sense of community. To achieve this, they incorporated collaborative group work throughout the workshops and in the process of creating the final presentations. I viewed this approach based on their teaching philosophy as critical pedagogy (see Chapter II), which Pablo and Adelita had stated as their foundational philosophy. Although Macon did not explicitly discuss critical pedagogy in our conversation, her practice strongly reflected similar tendencies. They all pursued co-constructing knowledge through dialogue and viewed each CGM as an invaluable source of knowledge. As Pablo stated, “If you respect who they are, and let them be involved in the way they are, they exhilarate” (P. Helguera, personal communication, April 11, 2018).

Second, in order for co-constructive and democratic participation to take place, a safe space had to be set. A safe space is founded on trust and care within a group, as education scholar Peter Jarvis (2008) states, “magic moments—when relationships of care and concern are captured and the potential of the I—Thou relationship is rediscovered in a group form” (p. 206).

And third, as the three artists promoted collaborative group work during the workshops, they also wanted the relational aspects to be reflected in the final presentations of the work. However, in each project, the ways in which each artist promoted a sense of community differed according to their approaches and attitudes, which I discuss in the following.

Adelita: Promote relational responsibility, peer-to-peer bonding. Adelita, who grounds herself in anarcho-collectivism along with critical pedagogy, intentionally designed the workshops for the CGMs to experience the organic responsibility they carry toward one another. Adelita put in, as she stated, “a lot of care” to create a safe space and
an atmosphere that promoted social bonding. She applied several theater activities such as the TO-based dependency exercise, in which participants had to entrust their bodies and carry each other’s weight by leaning onto each other without touching the ground. She also wanted the CGMs to gain a sense of social responsibility by having them play the role of representatives of a council to see how their actions and behavior would determine other people’s futures. As discussed in Chapter V, the CGMs strongly expressed that the bond they had with one another and their group collaboration project was an enlightening experience. They also reported that the collaborative group activities led to having productive plenary discussions, and that the final photographs well reflected the relational aspects that played in.

**Pablo: Promote relational story exchange, intersubjectivity.** In contrast to *The Council*, in which the final photographs spoke on behalf of the workshop, *La Austral* promoted direct public exchange between the CGMs and PAMs through storytelling. The relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, [1998] 2002) that played in the final presentation promoted social bonding through active listening and sharing among the CGMs and PAMs. As mentioned in Chapter II, I viewed this aspect of intersubjectivity as a practice of listening, responsive understanding, and action or ethics based on reciprocity, pertinent to promoting a sense of community in *La Austral*.

However, in terms of group dynamics, which emerged as part of the group collaboration process, Pablo was hands-off when it came to forming a tight-knit group atmosphere. The CGMs who originally joined the project through an open call were from different ages (21 to 37) and backgrounds, and came from different areas of New York City. The common thread that connected them was their experience as an immigrant and DACA recipient. Based on my observations, there was some tension among the CGMs, related to communication and expectations for the project, that I thought could have easily been resolved through additional and explicit communication with Pablo. The project eventually took a break of three months, and during this period several
adjustments were made. In order to improve the communication, Pablo appointed Nora (one of the CGMs who was already assisting Pablo) to be the Program Manager. Also, a compensation for the CGMs was decided for the portion of the public office hours that would take place during the project’s public engagement phase. These decisions eventually led to a successful remainder of the project.

**Macon: Promote networking, building community.** In APC, Macon particularly emphasized the relational aspect of APC that was pertinent to networking and community building. As the CGMs were requested to identify a pressing issue of their own, she encouraged the CGMs to think from the perspective of their own communities. She said to the class in the beginning of the course:

Think about your community, where you go home every night. Who you spend your time with. What might be important to them. This is a moment you could voice their experiences, to think about whose voices you hear all the time, and whose voices you are missing. If voices are missing, why and who are they? (M. Reed, personal communication, September 12, 2020)

Moreover, Macon wanted CGMs to be courageous in reaching out to new people and to form new relationships as they continued working on their pressing issues. To that end, she shared with the students her own process for reaching out to people doing similar work.

Although the CGMs confronted difficulties in reaching out to speakers due to the shortage of time and the unfamiliarity with this type of artmaking, they agreed that it provided them an experience with a process-oriented and relational form of art that they were not exposed to before.

In terms of group dynamics in relation to the collaborative group work, the class of 26 students (CGMs) focused on the APC coursework carried out in groups comprised of six to seven students. As I discuss later, the CGMs voiced both challenges and growth in regard to the group work.
In sum, as each project differed in format, duration, and site, a sense of community played out differently in each project; but collaborative group work that encouraged peer-to-peer learning and relational aspects such as sharing and bonding were salient features promoted by each artist.

**Key Themes of the Artist’s Pedagogical Approach by Each Case**

The second research question is: *How do these artists understand learning and concepts of education?* The core themes from the cross-case analysis in relation to the pedagogical approaches and framework are the following:

- Theme 1: Learning as a project-based (art)making process
- Theme 2: Learning promoted through facilitation grounded in critical pedagogy
- Theme 3: Social and emotional learning
- Theme 4: Informal learning/situated learning
- Theme 5: Learning through (serious) play

**Cross-case Analysis of the Three Artists’ Pedagogical Approaches**

**Theme 1. Learning as a project-based (art)making process.** It is noteworthy that the three artists promoted “artmaking” as a collective experience of sharing and creating knowledge. Hence, the concept of “making” formed the basis of these art projects that underlined learning throughout. John Dewey emphasized the value of making when America was going through industrial and ideological change in the beginning of the 20th century. He said, “I think the whole problem of understanding should be approached not from the point of view of the eyes, but from the point of view of the hands” (Dewey, 1959, p. 95). To Dewey, making was more than giving something concrete form. Making was a process that encompasses interest through a process of inquiry and care that is invested. Dewey observed that making “can only be understood by carrying it out,” and that “the aliveness experienced by makers in the process derives
from what they truly care about” (Jacob, 2018, p. 13). Thus, Dewey sought the creative act of making as a critical life force.

As much as making has been a vital source in the practices of these artists, learning was evoked and intertwined in the making processes as well. “Making” was manifested in several ways, which I elaborate in the following.

First, making was manifested into a process-based “project” that culminated in a final presentation. Based on their specific aims and conceptual inquiry, the three artists conceptualized their artworks as projects in the format of a private working phase and a public presentation phase. Just as a studio-based artist puts his or her own artwork created from the studio out into a public milieu after its completion, the three artists worked with the CGMs toward an end goal of publicly presenting the work to a public audience. Thus, making was relevant to a process-oriented approach which had a closure as the final presentation, even if it was not the very end-goal in terms of learning.

Second, making pertained to a “hands-on way of learning,” which resulted in the artists carrying out their projects through “workshops.” As the literal meaning of workshop refers to “a usually brief intensive educational program for a relatively small group of people that focuses especially on techniques and skills in a particular field” (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.), the artists wanted the CGMs to obtain tools regarding an artistic and practical medium such as storytelling and to develop an artistic sensibility in relation to, for example, civic engagement, as discussed previously. This relates to “learning by doing,” experiential education in the vein of John Dewey (1938), David Kolb (1984, 2012), and Donald Schön (1983).

Third, making referred to “making material-based objects,” which is relevant to the more traditional artmaking. The Council was the only project that actively engaged CGMs with visual making, as the CGMs created visualizations of their small councils for the final photographs. However, visual making was projected in different ways in other projects. For example, in La Austral, Pablo and the CGMs (visually) transformed the
gallery space into an environment conducive to story exchange. In APC, the art and design major CGMs created promotional material for the APC event and props with which the public audience interactively engaged.

Finally, making related to the on-going transformative growth among the CGMs and PAMs. This relates to Elizabeth Ellsworth’s (2007) quote, “the learning self as an emergence—as a self and an intelligence that is always in the making” (p. 57). This aspect is further discussed in relation to the third and fourth research questions in the later sections of this chapter.

**Pablo: Making through apprenticeship project model.** For Pablo, creating his artwork in a project model—what he calls an “educational model of training a core group” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)—was closely related to conceiving La Austral as a pedagogy-based work among his other artworks. Pablo mentioned his earlier work The Seven Bridges of Königsberg (2008) as an immediate reference to La Austral, in which he trained a group of art school students to become card/palm readers for public visitors who came to the gallery space. In La Austral, he trained a group of DACA recipients and immigrant adults to be into storytellers who shared their stories and promoted story exchange with the public visitors. He said, “I thought it would be more meaningful for the DREAMers themselves to gain hands-on training of storytelling and sharing their own stories emerging from the process” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

Pablo’s usage of the word “training” may connote a hierarchical stance, which is in conflict with how he claims himself as a critical pedagogue who “facilitates” rather than “trains.” However, Pablo’s concept of training relates to the “apprenticeship model” of having the CGMs carry out the public engagement after the private workshop phase. This closely relates to experiential learning and specifically to “cognitive apprenticeship” of situated learning (Brown et al., 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991) explained in Chapter II. This approach acknowledges the situated nature of cognition by learners engaging with more
experienced experts, and socially interacting with others in real life contexts. As this experience was critical in the CGMs’ learning experience, I further elaborate in the second discussion part.

In addition, Pablo shared about the performative aspect of the project, “it’s closer to theater in the way you workshop a play, you workshop an idea” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). As these types of artworks actively involved people as a critical part of the work, the nature of these projects were performance-based and embodied, thus, closely connected to theater.

**Adelita: “Learning through making.”** For Adelita, making has been an important construct of learning throughout her work in general and in *The Council* specifically. Adelita has spoken about her deep interest in the Ferrer School learning model (see Chapter V), specifically the “integral education” advocated by the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), which highlighted “learning through making.” Integral education later developed into project-based learning, but it was also a way “to break down the class distinction between intellectual labor and manual labor” (Husni-Bey in Craycroft, 2013, p. 93). This was something Adelita was not able to find in other school models. She stated, “project-based education happens in Steiner and Montessori schools too, but how it [Ferrer School’s integral education] led to critical thinking was something that really struck me” (Husni-Bey in Craycroft, 2013, p. 93). Thus, for Adelita, making promoted a more democratic way of learning. This was also related to Pablo creating a space/environment conducive to multiple entry points for engagement as discussed in Chapter IV, and Macon’s approach to art connected to play that allows young people with diverse abilities to engage with learning.

Therefore, the way Adelita’s workshops culminated in creating a final representation through hands-on making activities—whether visually producing something or engaging through the body—was a critical component in her approach to
learning and her goal of promoting democratic learning, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement.

**Macon: Making the curricular event.** In the case of APC, the sculptural installation was already created by Macon in her signature style of pop-colors with a playful vibe. However, Macon activated the sculptural installation through a collaborative curricular process with Livia and her students by making their own APC event. Thus, for Macon, making was manifested through programming an educational curriculum which culminated in the form of a public event.

In terms of the hands-on making component, some CGMs created stickers and flyers utilizing their design skills to promote the event. One group created an image board for their speech that symbolized the racial segregation in local regions in New York City, which was used during the event for PAMs to interact with. However, overall, the making promoted through APC was focused on the collaborative process among the CGMs working in groups, carrying out group presentations and coordinating the APC event.³

In sum, making was manifested differently across the three projects. Pablo devised a project model that involved training a group of CGMs during the private workshop phase to perform stories during the public presentation phase; Adelita guided the CGMs by involving multi-modal making through literary and embodied activities during the workshops that culminated in a body of photographs; and Macon activated her hand-made sculptural installation as a collective and participatory platform through curricular activities that culminated in the APC event.

**Theme 2. Learning promoted through facilitation grounded in critical pedagogy.** As discussed earlier, critical pedagogy was the foundational philosophy of the

³It needs be taken into consideration that unlike the other iterations of APC, the APC at MSU was embedded in a pre-existing course with a curriculum of visiting artists and group presentations rather than an emphasis on hands-on making.
artists. They intentionally carried out dialogue and conversation during the workshops and created their art projects based on a co-construction approach, stating themselves as “facilitator.”

Macon clearly described herself as “facilitator” in her role as the artist-educator. “I don’t have something to teach you but can create a structure for you to share.” (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019). She further said, “If educators have one part of making sure students or participants come away with a set of information or a framework, there’s another part of seeing where people are at and what they need.” Macon particularly emphasized “adaptability, flexibility, and listening,” in a sense opposing the banking system of learning addressed by Freire and promoting a more democratic way of learning as mentioned earlier. However, it must be noted that Macon was limited in interacting with the CGMs on site (since Livia taught the course), in comparison to her other relational projects that pursue collective knowledge-making.

Macon’s pedagogical approach of “connecting things” was closely aligned with Pablo. Pablo specifically highlighted the CGMs as being the source of knowledge, and his role as “leading the process but not dictating the final outcome.” He said, “It really comes from critical pedagogy and formulating Paolo Freire’s intellectual knowledge of even the fact that if I am like, the artist, I just happen to be put in this role” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018). He specifically used the term “interconnector of knowledge” in describing himself as a socially engaged artist who creates art projects by connecting the tacit knowledge of the participants. Although, as pointed out earlier, it seemed a bit contrary that he used the word “training” in describing the project’s educational format, I viewed this in acknowledging his role as a seasoned art-educator who held advanced experience with the storytelling medium and was willing to work with this specific group with storytelling. Pablo stated, “It’s just that I have an expertise that is different from the expertise of others. But that expertise of others is really valuable in their own way. If there is something I can do as an artist, it is to just show how that
experience can be shown in their work” (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018).

Adelita also expressed that she grounds herself in critical pedagogy. As addressed in Chapter V, Adelita always prefers to be called by her name during the workshops, instead of “teacher.” During the workshops, she acknowledges her status as an internationally-renowned artist coming from the outside, but applies an emergent curriculum approach\(^4\) (Crowther, 2005; MachLachlan, 2013) for CGMs to gain agency in deciding the content and direction of their discussions. CGMs talked about the creative agency they held, and how they felt they were collaborating with Adelita on equal planes.

However, Adelita took full charge of the entire process of the art project, including its conception of the idea, workshop content and sequences of the workshops, photoshoot, and finalizing the final images. She came up with an overarching inquiry to be explored with the CGMs, and carried out the workshops with related themes to be discussed. Within the workshop framework, she encouraged the CGMs to take the lead in coming up with their own ideas and directing the content, and she modified the workshop sessions according to the CGMs’ responses. However, Adelita was the one who decided how the CGMs would be represented in the photographic images. For example, she directed the photoshoot to produce individual portraits of the small councils, and an image that captured a scene of the plenary large council discussion.

In conclusion, in all three cases, the artists conceived the entire structure of the projects’ workshops and public presentation format, and they opted for a facilitator stance so that the CGMs could have full agency in their learning process. However, the format of the public presentation (whether it was a performance or object-based representation of

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\(^4\)Emergent curriculum is popular in early childhood education, but can be practiced at any grade level. This philosophy prioritizes active participation, relationship building, flexible and adaptable methods, inquiry, and play-based learning. Curriculum is initiated by the learner, collaborative, and responsive to the learner’s needs (Biermeier, 2015).
the workshops) determined the amount of control by the artist. For example, in *La Austral* and in *APC*, in which the final presentation took form as performance-based event(s), Pablo and Macon did not have control over the final performances as they were directly performed by the CGMs or by the speakers who spoke on behalf of the CGMs. In contrast, the final public presentation of *The Council* took the form of photographs to be exhibited in a prominent exhibition and presented under the name of the artist. Thus, Adelita carried the creative responsibility as the artist for the final object-based artwork, which prompted a different way of working with the CGMs.

**Theme 3. Social and emotional learning: Promote a passion for something.**

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1999) states, “All learning, even of the most logical topic, involves emotion, just as emotions virtually always involve cognition” (p. 36). As the arts as a field often deals with emotional expression, it would have been natural for the affective dimension to be foregrounded by the artists. Pablo was vocal about the emotional dimension in his practice as an artist educator. He talked about the importance of communicating “a feeling for something” as something he learned, and as a goal for his work with the CGMs:

> Some of the best professors that I had, the one thing they gave me that I treasure more than anything else was basically a kind of love for something. It’s not specific data, it’s not they downloaded any information in my brain, it’s that they communicated a feeling, and that is absolutely crucial; a feeling for something. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

“Conveying a feeling for something” was also connected to sparking “a sense of curiosity and passion” among the CGMs, which all three artists addressed as a pivotal pedagogical intention of their work. Adelita shared about “sowing a seed of interest” among the CGMs in regard to the societal topics that emerged during the workshops. Adelita shared an example of the CGMs becoming angry about the labor rights toward immigrants and how they had a heated discussion in regard to the topic. She said, “even though it may not be visible immediately, who knows perhaps someone might become a labor rights
This was also related to Macon’s goal for the APC curriculum to be an opportunity for the CGMs to identify a certain issue they were passionate about, to research it, and to continue working with it beyond the course.

In addition to an emphasis on learning through emotion and passion, the artists also promoted a variety of experiences relating to a critical consciousness toward the social system and current issues through problem-solving and collaborative group work. I found the learning evoked by these pedagogy-based art projects in close relation to social emotional learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2005; Zins & Elias, 2007). As explained in Chapter II, I refer to the SEL (social emotional learning) framework by CASEL (2017) which outlines five interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship skills; and responsible decision-making. These competencies were promoted through each of the projects. For example, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness were prominent learning competencies promoted in La Austral. Social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making were salient in The Council and APC. Thus, I viewed the three art projects as invaluable learning opportunities for social emotional learning.

**Theme 4. Informal learning/situated learning.** Having its roots in the work of John Dewey and further developed by Malcom Knowles, informal learning refers to learning that is self-directed or learning from experience in contrast to formal learning “delivered” by trained teachers in a systematic, intentional way in schools (O’Neill, 2019). Museum educators John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000) adopt the word “free-choice learning” to highlight the organic and personally motivated learning that involves “considerable choice on the part of the learner as to what to learn, as well as where and when to participate in learning” (p. xii).

In our conversation, fellow museum educator Pablo elaborated on the significance of informal learning as he believes the most important learning of life occurs in informal
sites outside of school. His interest in the potential of experiential learning and immersive environments are reflected in the way he designed *La Austral* where learning occurred through social interactions with storytellers and through multiple entry points in the curation of the gallery space. He particularly highlighted the gallery space in relation to the meaning of “art as providing insight of the world.”

And the potential of all those experiential learning experiences is what interests me. I am interested in immersive environments, I’m interested in how these spaces that are in a way parentheses in our lives, and how art kind of can function and provide you with these insights. I think about that in art in general; in every artwork it gives you like a new insight of the world. (P. Helguera, personal communication, May 4, 2018)

Similar to Pablo, who emphasized learning in informal settings such as museums and immersive environments, Adelita shared her perspective of learning as “a very unlimited process … not just restricted to the scholastics, school, it’s not just family or what you see, learning that happens every day.” She stated her strong interest in “unhinged or unstructured process-based learning...that happen[s] all the time all around.” Thus, she draws inspiration for her work from everyday topics, current affairs, and things happening around her (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, September 16, 2019).

Macon specifically spoke about learning in terms of “finding connections between things” and voiced that “I use art to teach myself about things” as she shared about her community-based projects. Creating community art projects has allowed Macon to actively bring people together, to learn from everyone’s sharing which promotes a sense of belonging, and eventually to learn more about herself (M. Reed, personal communication, June 29, 2019).

I viewed the learning elicited by the work of these artists broadly relating to informal learning but more specifically to situated learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Brown et al., 2017). Situated learning posits that “activity and situations are integral to cognition and learning” and “by socially interacting with other in real life contexts learning occurs on deeper levels” (Brown et al., 1989, p. 32). Brown et al.
explained that, “people who use tools actively rather than just acquire them, by contrast, build an increasingly rich implicit understanding of the world in which they use the tools and of the tools themselves” (p. 33). Situated learning was prominent in La Austral as the CGMs had the opportunity to share their stories they had practiced during the private workshops in real-life settings to public audience members. Moreover, their honed storytelling skills became tools they continuously applied in their everyday endeavors even after the project ended. Situated learning was also evoked in The Council as the project was framed in a situation of an institution after a crisis and in council meetings, actively applying TO methods of character role play and embodied exercises.

In APC, the curriculum was based on the pedagogical intention (by Macon and Livia) to bridge the classroom and the real world by creating relationships between the students (CGMs) and creative practitioners through guest talks (nine guest artists visited the class during the Fall 2018 semester), and by having the CGMs directly engage and network with a creative practitioner in preparing the APC event. Thus, situational learning was promoted by Macon and Livia through the instructional design of the curriculum.

**Theme 5. Learning through (serious) play.** A sense of play was foregrounded in all three projects. Many creativity researchers have identified play as the conduit through which human creativity develops (Ashton, 2015; Brown & Vaughn, 2009; Carson, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Stuart Brown (2009), founder of the U.S. National Institute of Play, defines play as “an absorbing, apparently purposeless activity that provides enjoyment and a suspension of self-consciousness and sense of time” (p. 60). Psychologist Shelly Carson (2010) talks about how play “increases activation in the very parts of the brain associated with creative thinking” (p. 138). Play also closely relates to (art)making as it pertains to utilizing the imagination and being in a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and for bringing the imagination into reality through artmaking (Csikszentmihalyi, 1989, 1990). It was evident that the three artists used elements of play
as a way of working with serious issues that were pertinent to current political and social affairs.

In *La Austral*, imagination and the play between fiction and reality of life formed the basis of the stories prompted by Pablo. I viewed this approach stemming from Pablo’s personal aesthetics reflected in his previous body of work. He also promoted humor and laughter throughout the workshops and public receptions.

In *The Council*, Adelita promoted a sense of play through the collective making activities, but more than anything else, through the simulative framework to actively engage the CGMs’ imagination. I viewed this closely related to Carson’s argument that “play suspends reality and enacts a kind of ‘what if?’ hypothetical thinking that is not limited by the constraints of current reality” (2010, p. 110). This also relates to Brown’s statement: “We extend ourselves beyond our comfort zones and propel ourselves into imaginary circumstances that have limitless possibilities because play promotes mixing fantasy and reality” (2009, p. 136).

Playfulness has also been a significant aesthetic reflected in Macon’s playful and pop-colored artworks. When the *APC* platform was installed in the first-floor lobby at Teachers College, many passers-by would stop by and engage with the piece by taking photos and posing on the podium. The sense of playfulness invites the viewer, but the work eventually prompts serious reflection for discourse. Thus, playfulness functions as a strategy to invite the viewer to engage with heavy issues and prompt critical thinking. In our conversation, Macon particularly shared her emphasis on play in relation to creativity and how artmaking is a way of fostering creativity.
Discussion II: Core Group Members—Research Question 3

In this second part of the Discussion chapter, I focus on the third research question:

How do the core group members (CGMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?

Key Themes of the CGMs’ Learning Experience by Each Case

The CGMs’ learning experiences are captured by the following phrases organized by each case:

- **La Austral**: Overcoming challenges of public engagement led to gaining confidence; learning creative storytelling methods and techniques; social bonding; and being part of a “legit” art project.

- **The Council**: Gaining confidence in relation to publicity; developing creative agency; social bonding; expanding knowledge and understanding of art; shaping career path.

- **APC**: Developing negotiation, leadership, and communication skills through extensive collaborative group work; gaining confidence; experiencing a new form of art; improving public speaking and articulation of ideas; expressing freely in the name of art.

In contrast to Discussion I (artists’ intentions and pedagogical frameworks), in which I began by presenting a summary of the content pertinent to each artist, in this second part of the chapter, I provide brief summaries and examples of the CGMs’ learning experiences for each case embedded in the cross-case analysis discussion by theme.

Cross-case Analysis of the CGM’s Learning Experience

The key themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis pertinent to the third research question are:
• Theme 1: Collaboration experiences: Group collaboration, Community of Practice (CoP), and collaboration with the artist(s)

• Theme 2: Confidence-gaining experience: Public engagement, publicity, and creative agency

• Theme 3: Conducive learning environment: Inquiry-based methods, kindling a sense of exploration, embodied engagement

• Theme 4: Skills development: Public speaking, communication, interpersonal and leadership skills, critical thinking

• Theme 5: Expanded artmaking experiences: New artistic methods and tools

It was quite difficult to make direct comparisons among the projects as the CGM’s learning experiences varied by the different activities for each project, the size of the CGM groups, personal and demographic backgrounds of the CGMs, and the different informal and formal learning sites. Despite the differences, I organized the cross-case analysis by broad themes that ran through the three cases.

In the following sections, I first discuss the CGMs’ experiences in relation to collaboration as this was the most common learning cited by the CGMs across the three projects. I discuss the learning outcomes from the collaborative group work in relation to Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and in relation to Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Then, I address the confidence-gaining experiences, which were also a salient response across the three projects. In addition, the conducive learning environment, development of certain skills that the CGMs noticed within themselves, and their expanded understanding of artmaking are discussed.

Theme 1: Collaboration experiences: Group collaboration and collaboration with the artist(s). Across the three cases, CGMs reported that the level of collaboration incorporated in the workshops/class sessions among peers and the collaboration and relational aspects with the artists were unique and different from what they had
experienced before. I discuss the CGMs’ collaboration experiences in terms of group work and the collaboration between the artist and the CGMs.

**Group collaboration.** First, as discussed earlier, all of the artists applied group work in the private phase of their projects. However, according to the intentions of the projects and format of the final public presentations, the group work incorporated in the private working sessions varied. *La Austral* was the only project in which the final presentation was performed individually by CGMs, not in a group, even though the CGMs had to work collectively in carrying out the evening receptions. In contrast, for *The Council* and *APC* the final outcome was a group production or presentation involving collaborative work during the private phase. The photographs of *The Council* were images of the small councils and a scene from the plenary discussion, and the *APC* event involved four speakers who spoke on behalf of each group. Thus, the responses in terms of group collaboration differed by each project. I first provide a brief summary of each project according to themes that emerged from the group work.

*La Austral: Peer-to-peer learning and sense of belonging.* As the entire group of *La Austral* was nine people (including the curator and program manager), Pablo often carried out group activities in one large group. He would occasionally divide them into two groups or in pairs so they could collaborate on a more intimate level, and sometimes put them in competition as if playing a game. In *La Austral*, the CGMs spoke more about the social bonding aspect and connectivity they felt throughout the project, rather than the group work experience.

*La Austral* functioned as a social platform in which the CGMs shared their personal stories to peers who were willing to listen, appreciate, and give valuable feedback to one another. Carlos commented on how “[i]t was really empowering to hear and learn from one another’s stories. It really made the challenging aspects worth it” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018). Alyssa commented on how the CGMs were “super attentive and focused on what that person [was] saying because their stories
[were] so interesting, and you don’t know what [would be] coming next. You want to give good constructive feedback so they can improve their story.” She also shared the sense of community as the most valuable part of the project, of being “part of a group that was open and willing to listen to [my] stories and accept them.”

We all talked about moving states and countries and how fixing legal status allowed people to go back. We are connected in that way, and since we’ve shared so many personal stories and we are a small group, so it’s an intimate thing with fun memories. I always look forward to coming here to talk to people and share my latest trouble or mishap. (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018)

For Jose, who was disappointed that the project did not promote more political content in relation to DACA, “the storytelling techniques and tools were helpful and I always left with a good laugh, with wanting to come back” (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018). Moreover, the CGMs were willing to extend their relationships beyond the project’s ending. Carlos said, “I wouldn’t just take this just as being a part of a project and move on with [my] life. (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018). Thus, the social bonding aspect and the sense of belonging were prominent experiences for the CGMs in La Austral.

The Council: Positive and democratic collaborative experience, learning through role playing. For the CGMs in The Council, a main takeaway was the positive group collaboration experience they had, in comparison to their experiences in school. Many CGMs talked about group work experiences in school as feeling forced and disengaged. Art student Jesse shared that she doesn’t particularly like compromising with others, and that she cannot work well in assigned groups. But she stated that The Council experience enabled her “to gain a better understanding about a positive collaborative environment, and also how building a community itself can be an art practice” (Jesse, personal communication, July 31, 2018). Marco stated that “in [school] group papers, one person always does more work, someone isn’t interested, and you can’t switch groups.” He said, “Here, we partnered up by deciding on something together and it wasn’t as forced as
school... [In *The Council*]...the environment was very well put that everything felt 
natural and not forced at all” (Marco, personal communication, August 3, 2018).

Joe mentioned the democratic quality of the collaboration in *The Council* as a very 
rare and unique experience where everyone’s voice was heard and valued, something he 
thought would not be possible in art school:

> I think collaborating with so many people in a creative project was what I 
> learned, and how their opinions really matter and the scenarios that let them 
> stay how they are, then debating was great. Art school is not like that and in 
> the end the decision is still yours, but here *the ideas are shared.* (Joe, 
> personal communication, August 3, 2018)

Lynn specifically talked about how the group activities from the project instilled a 
sense of collective decision-making by playing a role of a council member. And Kiera 
shared how the role playing promoted reflective learning about her own morals and 
beliefs:

> …you had to reflect on your morals, which creates an idea of your 
> actual morals versus your character’s, religions’ and parent’s morals….more 
> *towards what you believe in and value.* (Kiera, personal communication, 
> August 5, 2018)

**APC: Challenging aspects of group work, overcoming the challenges and gaining 
leadership skills.** The group work in *APC* was considered to be, in one CGM’s words, 
“very challenging.” In comparison to the other two projects’ CGMs, which were much 
smaller in number, there were 26 CGMs in *APC* and the four small groups were six to 
seven people. Moreover, the participation was optional in the two other projects, but the 
CGMs in *APC* were required to take the course as part of their degree fulfillment. Thus, 
the level of self-driven motivation differed from the beginning, and the participation and 
engagement level throughout the course greatly varied among the students.

All five of the CGMs I interviewed stated that they had never participated in course 
that had such an extensive group project. Among the challenges cited, Heather said 
that “figuring out each person’s different tendencies and approaches to incorporate
everyone’s voice took a lot of time and wasn’t easy” (Heather, personal communication, December 4, 2018). The CGMs also had difficulty in distributing the work evenly as each member’s level of engagement varied. Tracy brought up the issues of motivation and inactivity: “I was engaged with the topic of mental health because it’s directly related to my artistic work, but it was just so hard to communicate with my teammates because when we met they would just look at the ground and wouldn’t say anything” (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018). For Xavier negotiating the different perspectives in the group was a challenge: “The conflicts in people’s perspectives, that, it was hard to negotiate, especially when someone was shutting down and refused to respond” (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018).

The group leaders oversaw the coordination, organized meetings for their group presentation, and communicated with their group speaker. Several, who were not used to being leaders, took the initiative to do this when no one else would step up. For example, Tracy and Chloe shared that they had not volunteered for these kinds of roles in the past. Melissa also shared how the project challenged her tendencies as an introvert and pushed her out of her comfort zone.

In the end, the CGMs shared that even though the group work was the most challenging aspect, overcoming the challenges was rewarding and led them to gain leadership skills and an expanded understanding of others. Xavier stated, “It went beyond what I could have done myself” and “it allowed me to work with peers—like-minded artists—which was something I had not experienced before” (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018). Heather shared, “I’ve gained leadership skills by working as a group and figuring out the different personalities of the group and working with them while incorporating their ideas and making sure they were heard” (Heather, personal communication, December 4, 2018).

Community of Practice: Identity development. As explained in Chapter II, the learning voiced by the CGMs shared many commonalities with Wenger’s Community of
Practice (CoP) learning theory. Wenger (1998) posited “learning as social participation – the individual as an active participant in the practices of social communities and in the construction of his or her identity through these communities” (p. 4). CoP promotes the growth of the individual through the social contexts that the individual participates in, which Wenger states as “identity in practice” that is “produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities” (p. 151). As explained in Chapter II, Wenger highlights “participation” and “reification” in the process of meaning-making. Thus to Wenger, identity is a layering of participation and reification events by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. Thus, “identity exists – not as an object in and of itself—but in the constant work of negotiating the self” (p. 151).

Wenger (1998) suggested three elements that established a CoP—“the domain” (an identity defined by a shared domain of interest); “the community” (members engage in joint activities, discussion, and build learning relationships among each other); “the practice” (develop a shared repertoire of resources, a shared practice). As all three art projects in the study involved a group of learners undergoing various activities and developing a shared repertoire to achieve a goal (final presentation of the project could be one of the common goals), I found it useful to view the projects through the lens of CoP in terms of how the CGMs constructed meaning through their participation in them. I first discuss La Austral in terms of the CoP framework and then in comparison to the other two projects.

The workshops of La Austral took place in an informal setting, in the gallery, and in the evening after the CGMs’ work and school. The CGMs’ self-driven motivation for storytelling, connectivity toward one another, and the goal to achieve a successful public performance/exhibition were the driving forces that brought the CGMs together. This was closely related to Wenger’s (1998) CoP, in which “learning occurs in social contexts that emerge and evolve when people who have common goals interact as they strive towards those goals” (p. 6). Alyssa spoke about how La Austral required responsibility and
commitment, and talked about how the commitment level of each member would determine the success of the project.

...this [La Austral] was a common goal that we were committed to... here you can network but because you’re committed to complete the project, it’s more structured and there’s more expectation, you’re going to be here and tell at least one story.... This is like doing a job, so I have responsibilities associated with it. I like to think of it that way. In a way, it’s a job to make this project a success. (Alyssa, personal communication, May 10, 2018)

As described above, Alyssa talked about the commitment level toward the project as the main force that sustained the group and determined the success of the project. I viewed this aspect of motivation and commitment critical in overcoming the challenges and in the overall learning experiences of the CGMs across the three projects. This was also closely connected to a sense of belonging—a sense of identity, that was reflected in their responses.

As mentioned earlier, the three art projects in my study all involved a group of learners pursuing an artistic practice toward a common goal (the final presentation of the art project), functioning as a CoP. However, among the three CoP elements (domain, community, practice), I viewed the domain—an identity defined by a shared interest—as what made a difference in how the CGMs of each project perceived a sense of belonging as a CoP member. The domain was established in close relation to how the CGMs joined the project and worked together.

In APC, the CGMs were assigned to groups by the instructor based on the students’ preferred topics of interest. Although Livia and Macon intentionally designed this component of group work for the students to undergo challenges such as negotiating the differences among the group members, there was a varied degree of motivation among the CGMs. The CGMs carried out the work because they were getting nervous approaching the deadline, and in one case concerned about grades. However, they were motivated to participate because of their interest in their selected topic. Even though
meeting together was a challenging task, they were able to gain deeper knowledge about their topic, form meaningful relationships with their speaker, and gain confidence and leadership skills by overcoming the challenges.

In *The Council*, even though the CGMs did not have high expectations of the project in the beginning, they were motivated to participate because of previous positive experiences with MoMA Teens. Moreover, even though most of them did not know each other, “entrusting the process even if you aren’t sure where it is leading to” and “taking it as an experiment” were already developed dispositions. Thus, on that prior foundation, going through an intense series of workshops together (that were designed to promote peer-bonding) and being featured in a MoMA exhibition, only intensified their identity as MoMA Teens. Their sense of comradeship grew particularly strong by sharing this common experience of *The Council*.

In *La Austral*, although the CGMs received less publicity in comparison to *The Council*, a strong sense of belonging and bonding was fostered through the project, as explained earlier. Although the CGMs have taken their storytelling practice in different ways since the project ended, they have been in continuous contact with one another and some CGMs have continued participating in other projects led by Pablo.

In conclusion, examining the three projects through the lens of CoP highlighted certain aspects in relation to a sense of belonging: self-directed motivation for learning, commitment level, and social bonding. Although I viewed these projects through a contemporary learning theory from one particular aspect of that theory, “domain”—and this does not capture the other learning elicited in the projects—the importance of “a sense of community” in the learning process should not be overlooked, especially in comparison to learning in more formal school environments. The findings here may suggest ways of implementing meaningful learning in the classroom, as I take up further in the final chapter.
I viewed this as a positive asset of these art projects. As Wenger (1998) states, “In spite of curriculum, discipline, and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative, turns out to be the learning that involves membership in… communities of practice” (p. 6).

**Collaboration with the artist(s).** The CGMs from each project shared positive responses in regard to the collaborative experience with the artist(s). In APC, the CGMs collaborated not only with Macon (and Livia), but also with their group speakers who were creative practitioners. Tracy shared that working with an artist in this way was a thought-provoking experience that pushed the thinking forward to taking action.

…working with Macon’s piece and utilizing it as a platform…to get our voice heard, and the fact that Livia asked, “Why are we doing art, what voice do you want to be heard, why is it important to you…” we put that into action and shared our voices instead of keeping in a classroom bubble. (Tracy, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

Melissa shared how collaborating with a creative practitioner who was an environmentalist helped her gain real world communication skills and up to date information on the topic.

…she would use examples of projects she was working on and send me materials all the time… She also shared about her experience on how to reach out and talk to people as she does frequent work and conferences all over the world. It was really helpful.

When she made us stand up and voice our concerns during the event…it pushed us to think about what really matters in climate change and to see our passion about it. And as someone who was prepared and knowing it the most I had to not only get involved, but step up in a public setting and be passionate. It was a whole other atmosphere to be in a public setting than being in a classroom… (Melissa, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

The CGMs in APC not only learned specific content from the artists/creative practitioners, but the engagement with the artists sparked them to experience art as a form of civic engagement and led them to take a step out of the classroom and into the public realm.
In *The Council*, the CGMs also valued the learning gained through collaborating with the artist. Joe mentioned that even though he had worked with several artists through the MoMA Teens program, it was a unique experience to work with an artist in the capacity of creating work together. Similarly, Lynn commented on how the collaboration with Adelita felt supportive and how she felt she was creating the work together with her:

> Being a collaborator. I think that our role was supported by Adelita’s role, which was good because I thought I was just going to be a subject and photographed, but I feel connected to the work that I did. I produced the work with Adelita and I think others feel that way too, so it was good. I didn’t feel used. (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018)

In sum, collaborating with artists and creative practitioners coming from outside of the class in *APC* bridged the classroom and the real world/public; and participating in making a renowned artist’s work through meaningful collaboration was rewarding and empowering. I further elaborate on the specific aspects of each project that promoted confidence among the CGMs in the next section.

**Theme 2: Confidence-gaining experiences: Public engagement, publicity, and agency.** Across the cases, the CGMs identified “gaining confidence” as a prominent experience after going through the entire process from workshop/course sessions to the final presentation phase. Although the scaffolded activities of each project led to this outcome, the final public presentation had a large impact on the experience of the CGMs in relation to “gaining confidence.” In comparison to classroom-based learning that often closes with a test or presentation in front of the class, the closure of the three art projects involved presenting the work (from the private working phase) to a public audience. This was a challenging process as it required courage accompanied with a sense of risk to put yourself out in the public realm, not knowing how others would respond. I discuss how the CGMs gained confidence through each project as the public presentation format of the three projects differed in medium and duration. In what follows, I first focus my discussion on *La Austral* because it had a six-week period of direct public engagement
between the CGMs and PAMs, which elicited a strong sense of confidence among the CGMs. Following this, I discuss the CGMs’ confidence building in relation to The Council and APC.

**La Austral: Public engagement through cognitive apprenticeship.** In La Austral, the CGMs went through a private training period with Pablo, the goal of which was to directly engage with PAMs in a social context/situation. As mentioned earlier, this type of learning was closely connected to cognitive apprenticeship and situated learning (Brown et al., 1987, 2017; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Cognitive apprenticeship is related to novices learning from a teacher/facilitator who uses modeling and coaching for the learners to learn a certain skill (Edmondson, 2006). Learning theorists Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1987) posited cognitive apprenticeship as bringing “tacit processes into the open, where students can observe, enact, and practice them with help from the teacher” (p. 4). As explained in Chapter II, acquiring a skill develops in three stages: cognitive stage, associative stage, and autonomous stage (Anderson, 1983; Fitts & Posner, 1967).

Pablo shared similarities with Brown’s view of cognitive apprenticeship in terms of coaching the CGMs to develop their stories, acknowledging their tacit knowledge, and facilitating the CGMs to apply their learning from the private workshops to real world contexts by having them directly tell their stories to a public audience.

During the workshop phase, similar to the “associative stage,” CGMs were allowed to make mistakes, and openly addressed their struggles and received feedback from Pablo and their peers. However, during the public engagement phase, the CGMs had to perform in front of the public audience members. CGMs voiced this public engagement as the most challenging but also the most rewarding experience of the project. The public engagement is closely related to the “autonomous stage,” in which

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5In the associative stage, mistakes and misinterpretations learned in the cognitive stage are detected and eliminated while associations between the critical elements involved in the skill are strengthened (Edmonson cited in InstructionalDesign.org, 2006, n.p.).
“the learner’s skill becomes honed and perfected until it is executed at an expert level” (Edmonson cited in Instructional Design, 2006, n.p.).

Carlos shared that “the challenge was to overcome the nervousness by repeatedly doing it over and over….the nervousness could come, but not to have [it] hold you back” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018). For Jose, who said the “public performance was not my forte,” the experience helped him “be more comfortable and confident” (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018). The CGMs embraced “the process of being uncomfortable itself [as] the process of learning and overcoming challenges” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018) and voiced that continuous practice made them overcome the nervousness and feel comfortable engaging with the public audience members. In particular, several CGMs pointed out that going through improvisation exercises, which the CGMs voiced as the most difficult part of the workshops, equipped them to carry out the live performances in front of an audience.

Moreover, while the evening public receptions were more of a collaborative effort (as all the CGMs performed their stories in different spots of the gallery, one after the other); the public office hours were carried out by a single CGM who was in charge of the entire gallery space for that session. The public evening receptions required the CGMs to attend to the overall flow of the evening, whereas the weekend public office hours offered the CGMs the freedom to use the space in whatever way they wanted—they could try out new ideas and apply new methods. For example, Jose actively shared his personal stories and DACA-related content in depth with the PAMs during his public office hours. PAMs were able to learn first-hand from Jose about DACA and were moved by his stories. They asked questions and shared their own stories as well. I viewed this way of storytelling as soft activism. This type of story exchange was also closely connected to situated learning/cognition (Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991), in which “learning takes place through the relationships between people and connecting
prior knowledge with authentic, informal, and often unintended contextual learning” (Clancey, 1995, n.p.).

**The Council: Publicity and creative agency.** Although the CGMs voiced many positive aspects of the intense four-day workshops in *The Council*, the impact of the high publicity on the CGMs set that project apart from the other two projects. Moreover, the fact that the CGMs were featured in a permanent work of photographic art was also very different from the other two performance-based projects in which the CGM’s performances were ephemeral.

As discussed in Chapter V, this aspect of publicity provided a surge of confidence among the CGMs that made me wonder how different it would have been if the final images were not displayed in such a prominent venue. As Kiera said, “so the aftermath was even more confidence-boosting. It really showed me, hey I might not be an all-star athlete going to a Big 10 school but I have something to bring to the table and to show for it” (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018).

In addition to the publicity aspect, creative agency was also something that contributed to the CGMs’ experience in gaining confidence. At first the CGMs thought they would be following Adelita’s instructions in a top-down manner to create her body of work, but then they discovered they would have creative agency (within Adelita’s workshop framework), and this was very rewarding. Joe said the freedom to voice their imaginative ideas (even if they were non-sensical) and to make their own choices was empowering: “It gave us an authority to make stuff through self-driven learning. It’s also intuitive, saying things that we feel is possible … this is about doing what you want to do and no one’s forcing you” (Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018).

**APC: Agency and overcoming the group work challenges.** If the majority of the CGMs in *La Austral* gained confidence by the experience of direct engagement with the public visitors and the CGMs in *The Council* through publicity, the CGMs in *APC* attributed gaining confidence to being able to work on an issue of their choice and
overcoming the challenges from the group work. Although there were set activities and parameters the CGMs had to work within throughout the course, they had freedom in deciding their topic and choosing the way they would present it at the event. In a way, so much freedom itself was challenging; however, the CGMs shared positively about taking direction, as it would enhance their own artmaking practice.

Livia would say,… “It’s your project, do what you want to do.” She gave us agency and we had to figure it out. It was challenging but made me happy in a lot of ways….we had a goal and however you get to that goal didn’t matter as long as you got there. (Xavier, personal communication, December 10, 2018)

For Chloe, who had never been a team leader before this course, being able to work with a topic that she was deeply concerned about motivated her to take on leadership of her group.

In addition to overcoming the challenges from the group work as addressed in the previous section, CGMs shared how they were able to gain a sense of achievement that was unexpected in the beginning. Heather stated that going through the project from being nervous to undertaking the work and accomplishing it made her gain confidence.

I remember the first day of class I was like, OMG, I’ve never done this before, but it works out, and this is what people do in the art world, this is what you will be doing and now you have background experience….So if we ever plan an event, we know we can do it... (Heather, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

In the APC event, in comparison to the two other projects, the CGMs did not present anything in front of the public audience. Instead, the speaker they had selected spoke on behalf them, presenting to the public the pressing issues and the work they had been pursuing in their small groups throughout the semester. As explained in Chapter VI, the activity was designed to emulate a political system with elected representatives, to have the students negotiate in finding a common issue for the group and then to find a speaker to “represent” the group’s issue. There were mix reactions to this, including relief on the part of some CGMs who felt uncomfortable with public speaking and frustration
on the part of CGMs who did not have a problem with public speaking. It made me wonder how it would have been different had the CGMs presented their work themselves in the APC event.

In sum, direct public engagement and self-directed learning elicited a sense of confidence among the CGMs. As Falk and Dierking (2000) stated, “Learning is at its peak when individuals can exercise choice over what and when they learn and feel that they control their own learning” (p. 138). The CGMs’ choice and control promoted agency and a strong sense of accomplishment.

**Theme 3: Conducive learning environment: Kindling a sense of exploration, safe space, embodied learning.** The CGMs addressed how the learning environment was critical in supporting their learning. The learning environment was established by the artists’ open-ended pedagogical approach that promoted the CGMs’ agency, and a safe space created with, in the words of one CGM, “like-minded peers” that promoted a sense of belonging. In addition, the creative strategies and embodied exercises promoted bonding and a democratic space through making. I elaborate on these aspects in the following.

**Instructional approach: A sense of exploration and inquiry-based methods.** As Dewey stated (1938), a primary responsibility of the educator is to be attentive to and aware of conditions that “are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth” (p. 40), the artists’ approaches and mindset were influential in the CGMs’ learning experience.

In APC, Tracy stated that that the course felt like an “art lecture” that facilitated exploration and critical thinking. She said, “studio classes have critiques, this class [was] like a critique on ideas.” She specifically pointed out Livia’s thought-provoking questions and inquiry-based approach in promoting this type of learning. For Tracy, “the environment felt comfortable, stimulating a sense to explore rather than trying to fit
yourself to be correct…[Livia] was like, if you don’t know it’s okay. We’ll ask more
questions and break it down. (Tracy, personal communication, December 5, 2018).

In The Council, Lynn commented on Adelita’s open-ended approach that allowed
the CGMs to come up with their own ideas and learn from others. She said, “In
comparison [to art school], Adelita’s approach was a better way for me to have
discussions with other people since it was open-ended; she didn’t have answers for
anything and it was all about us, so that was an effective way of talking to people and
understanding where other groups were coming from” (Lynn, personal communication,
August 8, 2018).

In La Austral, Carlos also talked about Pablo’s pedagogical approach that was “not
imposing his own method, but guiding,” and “not leaving you alone in the learning
process” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018). Carlos also shared his great
interest in education with me and stated that he was grateful to have this exposure to a
pedagogical experience that he could further apply in his future endeavors.

As reflected in the CGMs’ responses above, inquiry-based methods, open-ended
pedagogical approaches and instilling a sense of exploration carried out by the artists
(and instructor) fostered critical thinking skills and promoted a sense of agency in their
own learning. This approach is aligned with critical pedagogue bell hooks’ approach
reflected in Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom (2010). She strongly urges
teachers “to acknowledge what we don’t know” and to foster “a radical commitment to
openness which maintains the integrity of the critical thinking process and its central role
in education” (p. 10).

Safe space and democratic learning environment. Particularly in The Council,
“safe space” and “judgment-free zone,” were common words the CGMs used in
describing their learning experience. The aspects of emotional stability and “not feeling
judged” (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018) were important for these late
teens and young adults to engage in learning with their full potential. This reflects Falk
and Dierking’s (2000) research, in this they state: “Study after study has shown that people learn better when they feel secure in their surroundings and know what is expected of them” (p. 139).

In terms of the “safe” space for learning, Lynn shared her experience of The Council after being away from the MoMA Teens program for three years, pursuing her college degree in art school: “I realized I really missed the encouraging spirit. In college everybody is mean, judgy, and pretentious, and I really missed pressure-free art conversation… I was allowed to evolve while growing and no one was mean or judgy: I felt very safe” (Lynn, personal communication, August 8, 2018).

Marcos commented on the democratic quality of learning that was established in The Council among the like-minded CGMs: “everyone has the same creative drive, everyone is thriving for something artistic…it’s an equal playing ground.” As Marcos’ statement reflects, “a sense of play” was kindled through the “creative making” spirit of the CGMs, which promoted a less hierarchical atmosphere and a more democratic learning environment where the uniqueness of each member was expressed and respected.

In a similar vein, Joe emphasized the “experiential making” quality of the project in comparison to other subjects in school and how artmaking, in particular, incorporates intuition. He highlighted how the project was a culmination of the tacit knowledge of the members:

…this was about making with what we have. It’s so heavily based on experience. In comparison to other studies… It’s much more collaborative and intuitive… There is freedom in this where you aren’t limited by information but more regurgitating information that is inside already. (Joe, personal communication, August 3, 2018)

**Embodied and multi-modal learning.** In La Austral, Jose pointed out how performative storytelling was an embodied practice that would not necessarily happen in a school classroom. He said, “Sitting down, not really learning how to use your body,
different outlets to your advantage. English class storytelling [in school] wouldn’t make you come up in the front and make you tell a story.” He spoke about the assets of learning in an informal setting such as *La Austral*, in terms of working with a passionate artist educator and self-driven passionate participants, and having more flexibility without grades. (Jose, personal communication, April 20, 2018).

Kiera described a number of activities that engaged various sensorial modalities in *The Council*. Through activities like exploring the basement spaces without shoes on and projecting their voices throughout the architectural spaces to experience them aurally, Kiera felt the project encouraged creativity. Another example is described here:

> There were exercises we did while it was snowing, we went upstairs and there were tall glass walls peering into the garden. We would take 30 seconds to look, study it, then close eyes and describe the whole scene with your eyes closed… it was like painting a picture with words. (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018)

The props, signage, backdrops and clothing the CGMs created to express their small group council concepts also combined multiple sensorial modalities; the making of these artefacts clearly speaks to Falk and Dierking’s (2000) statement that “learning is a whole-body, emotionally rich experience” (p. 18). It also closely relates to Wenger’s (1998) concepts of “reification” and “participation” as explained in Chapter II. If participation is about acting and interacting (the social aspect), reification involves producing artifacts such as tools, words, symbols, rules, documents, concepts, etc., in which the negotiation of meaning is organized. Thus, as Wenger states, participation and reification are complementary and intertwined in deepening the learning.

**Theme 4: Skills development: Public speaking, communication, critical thinking, social emotional learning.** The three art projects incorporated several literary activities such as inquiry-based discussions, presentations, verbal and written communication tasks, and storytelling. The general learning outcomes that the CGMs
identified in terms of skill sets were enhanced public speaking, expanded methods of communication, and critical thinking skills.

In *La Austral*, as the entire project revolved around creative storytelling, verbal and written stories were emphasized throughout the ten workshops. During the workshops, the CGMs would give feedback to one another in regard to the structure of their stories, punchlines, and effective ways to deliver their stories. As stated earlier, Pablo intentionally incorporated improvisation exercises, which the CGMs stated as most helpful when they were publicly sharing their stories to the public visitors. Heliis said, “The workshop exercises have given me the ability to put myself in a spot and communicate with other people, and that has made me realize that there are so many stories and viewpoints to tell from” (Heliis, personal communication, April 20, 2018). Gaining an understanding of multiple perspectives expanded the CGMs’ communication skills, which they continued to practice and apply in their daily texting and email writing, and in engaging with clients in their jobs.

In *The Council*, although the CGMs participated in creative writing exercises, discussions and debates, they talked more in terms of social emotional learning competencies such as self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2017) that were developed through character role playing and collaborative theater exercises. A sense of “making” was also prominent in the project, which the CGMs commented on as “gaining an unexpected sense of an artistic sensibility” (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018) that was enhanced through the various artistic means of theater, photography, and visual making. They also talked about how liberating they felt by expressing their imaginative ideas.

In comparison to the other two projects that took place in an informal setting, the CGMs in *APC* particularly spoke about improved skills in terms of learning. They stated public speaking, communication skills, critical and analytical thinking, and leadership skills gained as a learning outcome of the *APC* curriculum. I viewed this not only related
to the scaffolded learning activities of the course (essay writing, group presentation based on research, and coordinating a presentation with a creative practitioner for the APC event), but also in relation to Livia’s inquiry-based approach. Tracy shared how “Livia’s questions were hard to respond on the spot,” saying that “it was cool but stressful” (Tracy, personal communication, December 5, 2018). Xavier stated, “there was a lot of learning that happened during our class sessions, in the process.” He said, “We had to develop our own methods and steps to get to the set goal of the course. It was really challenging and took a lot of time and conversation. But from the dialogues, I was able to see the world through multiple perspectives.” Xavier along with many of the other CGMs, reported an increased comfort with public speaking and in-depth analysis. Xavier also talked about seeing improvement in articulating his concepts in his painting practice. In addition, as addressed earlier, the CGMs shared about gaining leadership skills. Melissa spoke about how the APC experience forced to move out from her comfort zone and communicate with people she would normally not interact with:

As an introvert, I don’t participate that much in class or raise my hand unless I have something meaningful to say, I don’t direct and delegate or communicate with the people I just met that semester or…who I had never met at all, so I was in another element there. I learned a lot about how to reach out to people, how to prioritize, etc. (Melissa, personal communication, December 4, 2018)

**Theme 5: Expanded understanding of artmaking.** Going through a participatory process-based art project was a new experience for the CGMs. As they came from diverse backgrounds, to some it did not matter whether the project was an art project or not, whereas it was a big deal for others to be part of an art project led by a renowned artist in the art world.

In *La Austral*, for Alyssa and Heliis, it did not necessarily matter whether the project was called art or not as long as they were engaged and learning something from the project. For them, learning the various creative storytelling techniques and approaches from Pablo was gratifying and eye-opening. However, Lynn and Jesse from
The Council, who were both fine arts majors in art school, shared how the project exposed them to a new way of artmaking that was process-based and involved people as an art medium. They both shared how they applied this idea in their own art practice. In the following, I particularly share how the CGMs perceived art through this experience of participating in a pedagogy-based art project.

**Art as a platform for free expression.** In the following examples, the CGMs from each project reflect how art functioned as an outlet that allowed them freedom of expression that would not be possible in a different discipline/field.

In *La Austral*, Jose said, “Art as a platform definitely helped me. I take a little from each [workshop] and make them my own. Being an undocumented immigrant, going through a lot of stuff, using art as a platform to express myself” (Jose, personal communication, April, 2018). For Jose, the art project functioned as an outlet to voice his concerns and thoughts in a therapeutic way, particularly living as someone undocumented.

Kiera, from *The Council*, who was in her late teens, spoke a lot about how the project served as a non-judgmental safe space where she could be her true self, in comparison to her competitive high school environment. She said, “The most enjoyable aspect was the freedom of thought and expression. The freedom to be your most pure self without fear of judgment” (Kiera, personal communication, August 5, 2018).

Chloe, from *APC*, expressed how relieved she was that the *APC* project was undertaken in the name of “art.” She shared that being engaged in *APC* allowed her “to speak up and express things that otherwise would be difficult.” Moreover, her free expression of thought elicited good response from the public audience members, which was rewarding:

Doing this project was interesting. The reason why I’m glad it was called art is because you can get away with a lot of things by calling it art. As I was writing it [the group script for the *APC* event], I was like, “This is pretty messed up. I’m saying a lot of things that are really horrible.” But I
was really happy to see that people were responding to it [during the event]. (Chloe, personal communication, December 5, 2018)

**Public presentation/engagement as art.** How the CGMs from *La Austral* perceived art differently as a result of their participation was closely related to the public presentation aspect of the project. Carlos had participated in one of Pablo’s previous projects, but he stated that being part of *La Austral* felt like it was his “real first time being a part of an art project” because of the public engagement component:

But this was like really getting into the feeling of being in art and that stuff, this is like the first time ever…. but what I consider to be an art show, it was very different from telling a story with your family and friends then sharing your own personal stories to people you don’t know, it’s the first time you’ve seen them. And I think that is why I call it “really getting into the art world.” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018)

Carlos also shared about the creative process and the work put into storytelling that added to “the feeling of being part of a real art project.” “It’s one thing to just tell a story as anyone would tell it, then the process of, yes you know the story but you can also tell it in many different ways, so that mental exercise and going through something you didn’t go through before...” (Carlos, personal communication, May 5, 2018). He described the effort and time of refining his stories as art in contrast to plainly talking to someone.

Similarly, Jose said that *La Austral* was his first time “being part of a legit art project,” which not only introduced him to the art world, but also motivated him to become more of an artist in his own right, by “putting his own work out by himself.”

But in order to become an artist I feel like I have to do something on my own, I have participated with them, but I haven’t done to show who I am, as a person in the arts. Do a one man show…. *Put my work out by myself*. I am determined to do that. *This project pushed that.* (Jose, personal communication, April 15, 2018)

Thus, the CGMs perceived that putting the artwork out to a public audience, in particular, to an art world audience, made the difference in something that was a “legit art” or not.
In conclusion, the CGMs voiced their learning experience in regard to extensive collaboration, the supportive learning environment, and creative agency that enhanced their confidence. CGMs also talked about the skills they developed as learning outcomes and their understanding of art by being part of the art projects. In the following section, I discuss the findings from the cross-case analysis in regard to the learning experience from the perspectives of the public audience members (PAMs).

**Discussion III: Public Audience Members—Research Question 4**

In this third part of the discussion chapter, the cross-case analysis is discussed in regard to the fourth research question: *How do the public audience members (PAMs) describe their experiences overall, and with particular regard to learning?* I first present the key themes organized by each case, and then discuss the cross-case analysis.

**Key Themes of the PAMs’ Learning Experience by Each Case**

The PAMs’ learning experiences are captured by the following phrases organized by each case:

- *La Austral*: Feeling connected through storytelling; sensorial learning; critical role of the audience; welcoming set up of the space
- *The Council*: Making initial impressions and interpretation of the photography-based artwork; limitations of the photographs capturing the process; influence on art teaching practice
- *APC*: Gaining information on social justice related topics conveyed through art; resonating stories from the speakers; educational potential of the APC platform; small changes in actions after the event

Brief summaries and examples of the PAMs’ learning experiences of each case are embedded in the cross-case analysis discussion by theme in the following sections.
Cross-case Analysis of the PAMs’ Learning Experience

In relation to the fourth research question, the key themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis are:

- Theme 1: Feeling connected and emergent learning: Sensorial and embodied engagement
- Theme 2: Educational potential of the projects: Public dialogue
- Theme 3: Expanded understanding of art: Direct experience through story exchange, pedagogical process-based artmaking, outlet for conversations on pressing societal issues.

PAMs’ responses differed according to the format and site of the final presentation by each case. *La Austral* took place as a series of performative events in a storefront gallery in Brooklyn, in which the PAMs directly interacted with the CGMs through story exchange. PAMs listened to the stories delivered by the CGMs, played storytelling games with them, and shared their own stories. By contrast, in *The Council*, PAMs viewed the final photographs produced from the workshops in the context of MoMA’s *New Photography 2018* group exhibition. Some PAMs also engaged with the audio guide (recorded by the CGMs) provided at the museum and the additional photographs from the workshops and audio excerpts from the plenary session on the MoMA website. In *APC*, PAMs attended the *APC* event and listened to the four speakers who delivered ten-minute speeches on behalf of each CGM group at Montclair Art Museum.

Overall, PAMs’ experiences were second-hand in comparison to those of the CGMs’ who went through a first-hand learning process with the artist. In response to my question in regard to “learning,” several PAMs talked about their impressions and interpretations of the work and invaluable insights gained from engaging with the work, and made suggestions for ways to have the educational process of the project be more clear in the final presentation of the work. In the following sections, I discuss the cross-case analysis by each key theme.
Theme 1: Feeling connected, emergent learning: Sensorial and embodied engagement.

Emotional connection, resonating stories. Emotional responses were evoked among the PAMs in the projects that conveyed stories—the stories told by the CGMs in La Austral and the creative practitioners who spoke on behalf of the CGMs at the APC event. Further, these emotional responses of the PAMs lasted beyond their experience of the events themselves—when I interviewed them even months after La Austral and weeks after the APC event, they shared how vividly the stories still resonated with them. Alex stated that the stories from La Austral had such a long-lasting impact that it “made her think of the responsibility about what we share with others” (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018). These accounts suggest the emotional impact the stories had on PAMs, and support cognitive studies that “the stronger the emotional value, the more likely sensory information is to pass this initial inspection and be admitted into memory” (Barker & Wright in Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 18).

By listening to the CGMs’ stories, PAMs in La Austral either felt empathetic toward the CGM-storytellers or it made them self-reflective. PAMs described how they “felt a connection,” as the stories were either relatable to their own lives or evoked a nostalgic connection to their own cultural and personal memories. This closely related to the concept of “connected knowing” posited by cognitive psychologists Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), which is an empathetic way of incorporating and acknowledging self-knowledge (i.e., private thoughts and feelings) into dialogic discourse.

Bruner (1991) argued that constructing stories is an innate nature of how we make sense of the self and others, and that the sense of self is in a constant dialogue with others as meaning is made through the tools of culturally embedded narratives. Witherell and Noddings (1991) have particularly described the pedagogical power of stories as tools for learning and understanding: “Stories help us understand ourselves, others, and even the
subjects we teach and learn” (p. 279). Alex, who is an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, shared that she often uses storytelling as a teaching method with her students. Experiencing La Austral in the position of a listener refreshed her skills in storytelling and made her realize the resonating effect of stories. She said, “you never know when you tell the story to someone how it might affect them…it travels and you pass something on like passing a torch” (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018).

In APC as well, PAMs commented on the speeches that emotionally resonated with them. Three PAMs shared how they were moved by the speaker who recounted her personal experience of going through anxiety, especially because they were familiar with the person working in their program. Defne also shared how that story constantly resonated with her, which made her realize the potential of the APC platform. “The talk [on mental illness] remained in my mind for a while. I think the participants [the speakers] have a lot of power to change the impact of the piece…The potential and content that was shared had an impact on me” (Defne, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

**Experiential space promoting embodied engagement.** Sensorial embodied engagement was specifically tied to PAMs’ responses to La Austral as it was the only project in which the final presentation involved active and direct audience engagement with the CGMs. Lola described the learning from La Austral in a way that suggests “sensory learning.” She said, “You get from being there and interacting with the bodies of people that were there, with the artifacts and colors, as opposed to learning from a book or lecture” (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018). She shared that the project evoked a theatrical experience, in that the space was set up with contrasting lighting and the storytellers shared their humorous and interesting stories. This was closely related to the multiple entries for engagement that Alex commented on: “This project allowed multiple ways to engage with. The objects were interesting, it was visual,
you could listen to the stories, it was very theatrical” (Alex, personal communication, September 28, 2018).

As previously mentioned, Lola and Alex were educators, and they both commented on how *La Austral* elicited informal learning, sensorial learning, and situational learning. Alex shared that not only would she use some of the strategies from *La Austral* in her own teaching with immigrant adults, but she highly recommended a project like this to be implemented for children and after-school programs.

The PAMs also thought the warm and comfortable ambience of the gallery space was enjoyable. Jade said that it was a rare quality that would be difficult to find in other contemporary art projects. It made the PAMs feel comfortable and supported their engagement with the CGMs.

**Emergent and non-linear learning.** In relation to what has been said above, I wanted to emphasize the non-linear learning that Lola addressed through her engagement with *La Austral*:

The circulation of teaching and learning doesn’t follow one direction but it comes through variance, through different directions and through different means or materials. I think that it differs from other learning opportunities in the sense that it was framed as a sort of a theater. There was a stage, it was dark, and the tone of the conversations and stories that we heard were somehow humorous…

…as an artist or teacher, to be okay with the unexpected, with the possible drifts and differences that people may take from the work. In the sense of less thinking of the outcome or the point that I want to make as a teacher or artist and more about how do I want to say or engage people. Then you see how the outcome is initiated among the participants. (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

In complexity theory, Biesta and Osberg (2010) address the politics of engagement based on the questions of value and power in education. Biesta and Osberg speak about “the complexity’s emphasis on nonlinearity, unpredictability and recursivity which is about how it evokes learning that emerges in genuinely generative ways” (p. 2). I viewed this type of learning evoked by *La Austral* as closely connected with emergent knowledge.
based on Biesta and Osberg’s complexity, that is not prescribed but is discovered and that provide multiple entries to engage.

**Theme 2: Educational potential of the projects.** When I finally asked the PAMs about what they learned, many had difficulty responding. For example in *La Austral*, when I asked the PAMs what they “gained” from engaging with the work, they shared about their “gained understanding of the work” and “personal introspective reflections” that the work prompted. Afterward, when I asked them what they “learned,” three PAMs paused. One responded, “I’m not sure of what I learned, but it really made me think of….,” For Lola, she clearly stated that she didn’t learn anything, but rather talked about the project’s interesting and salient features including her perspective on its educational quality. This tendency of the PAMs perceiving the concept of learning in relation to obtaining knowledge or a gained insight was also discovered in the other two projects. In the cases when the PAMs could not think of what they learned, they instead talked about the “educational potential” of the projects and also made suggestions to have the educational message come across more clearly.

In *La Austral*, Lola shared how she viewed Pablo’s facilitative approach as educational:

> If you think of teaching and learning, *what is important is the path of how you get there.* So this work, I’m not saying this is the way, the efficient way, but he’s [Pablo is] showing a way in which he puts a series of elements, maybe they were not the most accessible ones, like books, collage, and artifacts, but he created this environment, chose to frame it within the storytelling as a tool, *but he’s not imposing that this is the way to get there.* It’s like “I propose this with hope that this will eventually lead us to having a conversation about….” (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

Thus, this very open and suggestive approach gave greater responsibility to the audience members to actively engage. Lola also viewed the storytelling approach as a different tool in a particularly polarized political time:
This could have evolved into something more critical if you wanted, but that depended on the space and people, time and possibility to speak up…. *From my perspective, this work is education*….

It is also interesting when I think of the current political environment which is very aggressive and confrontational, how do you go about it with another tool to fight it … do you have to be confrontational or would there be a more welcoming or sympathetic path that would be more effective in the end … it’s an interesting question. (Lola, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

In *The Council*, three of the four PAMs clearly stated they were not able to learn anything by viewing the photographs, which was the only object-based work among the final presentations of the three projects. Only Ivanna, who had invested her time reading the wall texts and listening to the audio guide, talked in length about her realizations and gained insights as delineated in Chapter V. This aligned with Csikzentmihalyi and Robinson (1990)’s study in regard to audience engagement with artworks, that an aesthetic experience can only be achieved “by those who have invested much time in looking and interpreting what they see” (p. 184). However, as the photographs were conceptual and represented only a fraction of the entire workshop process, PAMs’ spending more time might not have been enough. Ivanna suggested, “I think they [MoMA] could have done a better job in displaying the work to convey the experience… It would have been interesting to see the staged process. So why not invite the viewer into that process…. It would also be more educational to the viewers too” (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018). The final presentation of the project held limitations in fully conveying the educational aspect, thus prompted other ways of display to engage the PAM to comprehend the pedagogical aspect of the project.  

In *APC*, three PAMs stated their learning in terms of how informative and insightful the social justice-based issues were that resonated with them even after the event. However, Defne and Jil suggested other ways for the *APC* platform to be activated

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6As addressed earlier, Adelita usually presents her process-based work in mixed media installation as a solo presentation. *The Council* was commissioned by the photography department curator at MoMA to be part of the group exhibition.
in the educational context situated in MSU. Defne, who had seen APC in another iteration eight months prior to the MSU version, commented on how the work could have fulfilled its educational purpose other than how it was presented at the event. She said:

I can see this as an educational experience because it involves students and was part of the curriculum. It was in the art course and we can see the result of that. I think it was meaningful for the students to be part of this entire process and to become facilitators and even host the event. Although from a public viewer’s perspective, I don’t feel that I learned anything, they would be able to observe the end result and reflect upon their experience. In that way, the work does have the educational potential... (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018)

She further said, “If this was aiming at learning, it should engage the people in the discussions, and that was missing. It should have been more strategic about engaging the public.” (Defne, personal communication, December 14, 2018). She also suggested that it would have functioned better if the platform was activated by the students themselves, voicing their problems relating to educational institutions etc. Jil also stated that “it would be great if the APC platform were set up in an open setting to the entire university for other students to hear each other’s opinions to know that they aren’t the only ones going through the same struggles and issues. And also professors can hear those issues” (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018).

Thus, as reflected in the examples above, although the works evoked meaningful responses among the PAMs, the pedagogical aspect of the works could have been conveyed in a stronger way through improving its public display and by engaging more public dialogue. The PAMs also suggested ways to deepen the learning experience of the work among the public audience.

**Theme 3: Expanded understanding of art: Direct engagement, pedagogy-based art, outlet for difficult conversations.** Similar to the CGMs’ responses in Discussion II, this type of art was novel to the PAMs as well. In La Austral, Jade, a professional photographer, stated that she was more interested in socially engaged art
projects of this sort “because of the direct experience you could gain as an audience member in comparison to an object-based work” (Jade, personal communication, October 9, 2018). In The Council, even though the final work was an object-based work, Ivanna, an art teacher, said, “The artist is now playing the role as an educator. [It] expanded my understanding of what art is, which is a pretty big thing to do, pretty impressive. I learned about what art can do and what art can be…. (Ivanna, personal communication, October 13, 2018). And Jil from APC, a junior fine arts major at MSU, said she had “not experienced a participatory art platform like APC before” and also commented on its significance “to function as a platform to voice important issues of our time” (Jil, personal communication, December 1, 2018).

In other words, the social experience—the direct engagement with the artists and the collective artmaking aspect for even the PAMs themselves to become part of the art project evoked unique and meaningful learning for the PAMs. In The Council, even though the PAMs only viewed the images that emerged from the workshops, the conceptual idea and process came through after engaging with the work with time and effort, which elicited a realization about how art has come to fulfill purposes of education. Ivanna also shared how The Council has influenced her own teaching, which has prompted her to find ways to engage her students with more agency and give more voice to them in their making processes.

This was an aspect that was strongly reflected in APC as well. Liza particularly talked about how APC was a platform that functioned as an outlet for difficult topics to be discussed together. “So many people are so insecure these days but people have to talk about their deepest darkest fears; climate change, gender … they are heavy hitting topics that are hard to talk about, which is why the students talked about them, since no one else is” (Liza, personal communication, December 3, 2018). She also stated that the entire experience of APC was “a great opportunity for the students in a higher ed art class to do art projects like this” and further added:
Usually, there are restrictions to how you can express yourself—you have to use this material and do this and that. But it seemed that Macon and Livia had given the students enough rope to sustain critically, but they could talk about things they cared about. I think that was important. (Liza, personal communication, December 3, 2018)

Beth shared about how she felt the public aspect of having these difficult conversations provoked a strong learning experience in comparison to having these conversations within her own circle. She said, “I’ve never been to an event like this before. I’ve only touched upon these serious issues with friends or in a classroom, but to talk about it in a public space with a bunch of strangers was very different. Experiencing it, it was a better way of learning than I think I ever could have imagined” (Beth, personal communication, December 3, 2018).

The PAMs’ responses shared many similarities with responses from the CGMs in terms of how their understanding of art was expanded. CGMs had also talked about how the art projects served as an outlet for freedom of expression and how the public engagement solidified the project as “legit art.” Experiencing the APC platform functioning as an outlet for students to speak up in a public space was a response shared by both the CGMs and PAMs.

In sum, as reflected in the responses by PAMs, although there were some criticisms and suggestions for ways to improve public engagement in the educational aspects of the works, the art projects elicited different ways of learning (in comparison to formal learning) such as emotional connections and non-linear learning elicited by sensorial and embodied engagement. The projects also informed and raised consciousness of societal issues, and carried the potential as an outlet for public dialogue.

Summary of the Cross-Case Analysis

As I stated in Chapter III, this multiple case study was not intended to generalize the art projects, and each art project should be fully respected in its own right. I carried
out the cross-case analysis for the purpose to discover salient patterns or tendencies, valuable and informative insights, and areas to be further researched in relation to my research questions. Through the cross-case analysis, it was interesting to see how the findings from the perspectives of the artists, CGMs, and PAMs coincided in similar nuanced ways.

The three artist-led participatory projects functioned as collective knowledge-making platforms that elicited experiential learning through sensorial embodied activities and discursive activities. Responses from the CGMs and PAMs reflected transformative experiences that allowed them to exercise agency and gain confidence. Learning evolved through extensive collaboration that promoted peer-to-peer learning, social bonding, a sense of belonging, and social emotional learning. The CGMs reported improved skills in regard to public speaking, communication, leadership, and critical thinking. PAMs’ experiences were second-hand in comparison to those of the CGMs. PAMs not only gained information from social justice related performances, but also felt connected through the stories that were shared by the CGMs and speakers who spoke on behalf of the CGMs. PAMs voiced limitations in the final presentations in conveying the pedagogical content, and suggested ways of conveying the educational message of the work by promoting public dialogue and effective display strategies.

In the next chapter, the final chapter of this study, I provide a summary of the dissertation and discuss the implications and recommendations for art/education practice and research, and artistic practice.
Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is a matter of communication and participation in values of life by means of the imagination, and works of art are the most intimate and energetic means of aiding individuals to share in the arts of living. (Dewey, [1934] 2005, p. 350)

In this final chapter, I first provide a summary of the study, and then discuss implications for the fields of art/education practice, art/education research, and artistic practice. I conclude with a final reflection.

Summary of the Study

I carried out a qualitative multiple case study to examine the learning elicited in three participatory artist-led art projects. The artists intentionally collaborated with a group of audience members by employing various educational methods and formats in the process. The artists conceptualized these process-based, participatory projects as their “artworks” by designing the projects from their conception to execution, which entailed the curricular content of the workshops/class sessions and the format of the private workshops and public presentation. Hence, the audience members, by actively participating and engaging with the artist’s pedagogical facilitation, took part in creating the artist’s work.

This type of participatory art production in relation to education emerged in contemporary art in the early 2000s. However, in contemporary art literature, the
spotlight has focused on the artist as producer of the work and there has been little attention paid to the participants’ experience. There is also a lack of empirical studies in art education that focus both on the artist and the audience experience in these pedagogy-based art projects. Thus, from the stance of an artist-educator, I sought to investigate not only the pedagogical intention and approaches of the artists, but also the learning experience of the audience members in relation to contemporary educational paradigms (Chapter I).

To address these questions, I surveyed and synthesized relevant literature pertinent to socially engaged art and the educational turn in contemporary art, and the salient methods and approaches used in these art practices. As my study examined these art projects from an educational lens, I presented contemporary learning theories that were in close connection to the learning that was elicited in my three art projects based on Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning perspective. I particularly examined the pedagogies of collaboration, specifically Situated Learning (Brown et. al 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2010; Wenger-Trayner, 2011, 2015), as they provide insight into knowledge-making processes occurring in groups that function as sites for learning. Moreover, I examined the philosophy, methods, and techniques grounded in critical pedagogy as they served as the foundational philosophy of the three artists in my study (Chapter II).

The three pedagogy-based art projects shared a common two-tier format: a private workshop phase in which the artist created his or her artwork in collaboration with a specific group (which I identify as “core group members”); and a public presentation phase of having the work presented to a public audience. Therefore, I studied the learning experience from both the “core group members” (five CGMs per project) and “public audience members” (four PAMs per project). As I wrote in Chapter III, I carried out on-site observations to gain a first-person experience of the artworks and to observe the performance of the artists and the CGMs. I individually interviewed the artists, the
CGMs, and PAMs. In addition, data were collected from written material pertinent to the artists (critical reviews, websites, published interviews, publications, etc.), and public talks and workshops carried out by the artists in person. The data were analyzed and organized by salient themes in relation to the research questions by each case (Chapter IV, V, VI). Then I compared and contrasted the findings from each art project and discussed in light of the relevant literature (Chapter VII).

Findings from the study suggested how artists work with current affairs topics in order to instill a political consciousness among the core group members. The artists balanced the political content with the aesthetic, foregrounding imagination and incorporating artistic means and embodied activities. Thus, through collaboration with the CGMs, these artists carried out their art projects as a process and platform for collective knowledge-making.

The CGMs shared their learning experience in relation to the extensive collaboration carried out in groups and with the artists. “Gaining confidence” was a prominent learning outcome voiced by the CGMs as a result of overcoming the challenging aspects from the public engagement and negotiation processes with their peers in the group work. A conducive learning environment supported their creative agency; this was achieved through the artists’ open-ended and exploratory pedagogical approaches, inquiry-based methods, and sensorial embodied activities. CGMs reported such learning outcomes as development in skills such as public speaking, communication and leadership skills, and critical thinking. Moreover, their participation in these art projects allowed them to experience art as a civic form of engagement that expanded their previous understanding of art and motivated them in wanting to create more art in this sense.

The PAMs, who engaged with the projects during the final presentation phases, commented on the informative quality and the resonating effects as their learning experience. They were impressed by the potentiality of artmaking that was process-based
and participatory, and shared suggestions for the final presentations of the projects in relation to public dialogue and public display.

This study supports recognizing the value of pedagogy-based art projects in relation to learning that is intrinsically motivational and meaningful. Moreover, the art projects in my study can serve as arts-based models of teaching and learning about social justice issues and performing social activism. In result, the study supports and illustrates how artists’ approaches can diversify educators’ pedagogical approaches: taking storytelling into different forms and media that build empathy and allow difficult conversations on political concerns, creating simulative situations in which learners build and embody character as a way to expand their perspectives and experience social responsibility; and implementing “making” throughout the curriculum that promote a democratic interpretative space, are just a couple of examples. On the other hand, educators’ perspectives and knowing the educational outcomes of the audience members can positively support artists in creating empowering work with audience members: how a sense of exploration motivates the learners, the rich learning evoked through a multimodal learning such as combining sensorial embodied and discursive activities, and promoting group collaboration in motivating ways, are just a few among many. Ultimately, this study advocates for the value of art as a collective, transformative experience.

Implications for Art/Education Practice

Integrated Learning Approach

The responses from the CGMs and PAMs in the study highlight learning in relation to the connections between the body, the learning context/environment, experience, culture, emotions, and higher-level thinking (Dorn, 1999; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Freedman, 2003a; Roland, 1992). This perspective of learning is based on the integrated
cognitive learning theory that views “the mind as an integrated system that unites symbol-processing with socio-cultural factors” (Efland, 2002, p. 51). Thus, it reflects not only that cognition engages symbol processing, but that it is also situated, socially-constructed, and a culturally mediated process of meaning-making as I have described in Chapter II.

**Holistic learning.** I want to emphasize that these art projects facilitated a combined learning of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Bloom cited in Efland, 2002, p. 48). In other words, the CGMs in my study were able to engage through multi-modal learning in playful and serious ways that fostered various emotional and cognitive responses. The learning outcomes were closely related to the five competencies of social emotional learning (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2017)), and elicited: acquiring information on social justice issues and social movements, a sense of belonging connected to identity development, skills development (public speaking, expanded communication, leadership, critical thinking, articulating ideas), applying communication skills in their daily endeavors, making socially conscious daily actions, and gaining insight in their career paths and artistic practices.

Thus, the learning outcomes from my study not only highlight the intellectual and meaningful learning through art, but also speak to a holistic approach to learning—a learning that contributes to the overall development of the learners, in Dewey’s words, “the total and growing experience” (Dewey, 1991, p. 204).

**Integrated learning/interdisciplinary learning.** The learning elicited from the art projects in my study strongly attests to integrated learning facilitated through contemporary art (Marshall, 2008; Marshall & Donahue, 2013). The artists engaged the learners with topics with regards to social studies, literature, theater, history, and politics, by inquiry-based methods and by fostering a sense of exploration through artistic and embodied means. The learning experiences reported by the CGMs and PAMs were
closely aligned with the dispositions fostered through artistic practices addressed by Marshall (2013):

Curiosity, flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, and the willingness to look at an idea, issue, or problem from many vantage points, even a nonsensical one that leads to serious inquiry that involves creative play with knowledge, forms, and methods with the purpose of understanding. (p. 12)

Marshall (2013) argues that art-centered integrated learning provides opportunities for “learners to understand the structures and the purposes of the disciplines” (p. 9). She states that art-centered integrated learning “involves applying the thinking strategies of art to knowledge in other disciplines, allows learners to develop habits of mind that not only are useful for learning across the curriculum but also will be critical to their development as learners and to their learning in the future” (p. 11).

Pedagogy-based art projects infuse discipline-based learning in engaging and thoughtful ways. Moreover, because the artist’s pedagogical approaches are often open-ended, according to the participant’s (learner’s) input and participation, they can take multiple directions. This collaborative aspect makes these art projects unique, allowing the participant (learner) to take agency in his or her process.

These types of artistic practices can serve as an entry to engage learners in a specific discipline or a social matter (as these projects often facilitate learning related to social justice issues). However, these projects can also work the other way around, such as combining learning from multiple disciplines and merging them through artistic means and embodied practices.

Within this merging of art and education practices as part of these kinds of contemporary art projects, it could be that artists collaborating with an educator would enhance the learning of participants in these projects, as the expertise of the educator can complement the artist’s artistic vision in the engagement process with the learners.

**Community-based art learning.** As the projects in the study worked with a specific group in real world contexts with social matters, they were closely related to

Art educator Ross Schlemmer (2017) states that community arts connect the philosophies of art and education to the larger spheres of culture and community. The common learning identified in community-based arts practices are “a sense of community, social justice, democracy, collective responsibility, activism, and equity” (p. 4). Even though the projects in my study were dealing with specific themes, with different perspectives, they collectively addressed social and global issues such as immigrant rights, women’s rights, and environmentalism just to name a few. For example, in La Austral, the political content was not upfront but PAMs were able to gain a first-hand experience by meeting and talking with undocumented young adults, which was, according to the PAMs, more empowering than reading about DACA through secondary sources. In The Council, character role playing and embodied theater exercises prompted a strong (and visceral) sense of awareness of the social responsibility the CGMs held toward one another. Each project applied different strategies, evoking different responses. Thus, exploring a more diverse range of projects, perspectives and methods can amplify and deepen our understanding and further engagement with pressing topics, and can be integrated with other disciplines as well.

**Participatory politics, cultural citizenship.** In a similar vein, the CGMs explored societal issues of their concern, and were able to experience art as a form of civic participation. Thus, the projects sparked learning about *participatory politics*, which Kahne, Middaugh and Allen (2014) define as “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern, express their ideas and participate in the political sphere, eventually producing culture”
Thus, participatory socially engaged art projects carry the potential to be further developed into a form of participatory politics, and a way to foster cultural citizenship (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008, 2011; Kuttner, 2015; Silva & Menezes, 2016). Henry Giroux (2018) argues that education and artistic production should be concerned about “matters of civic engagement and literacy, critical thinking, and the capacity for democratic agency, action, and change.” He states,

> If young people, artists, and other cultural workers are to develop a deep respect for others, a keen sense of the common good, as well as an informed notion of community engagement, pedagogy must be viewed as a cultural, political, and moral force that provides the knowledge, values, and social relations to make such democratic practices possible. (n.p.)

In sum, I viewed pedagogy-based art projects with an integrated learning approach. Pedagogy-based art projects can serve as models for art-centered integrated and interdisciplinary learning, community-based art learning, and fostering cultural citizenship.

**Implications for Art/Education Research**

Research and teaching go hand-in-hand, informing each other. Thus, implications for art/education research addressed in the previous section all require further exploration. In this section, I briefly touch upon the potentiality of research with regards to artists’ pedagogy, and arts-based research.

**Research on Artists’ Pedagogy**

This study contributes to the growing research on the pedagogy of artists (Bowman, 2012; Daichendt, 2010; Galton, 2008; Hall et al., 2007; Pringle, 2002, 2008; Selkrig, 2011a, 2017). Positive arts-rich learning experiences gained through artists working with young people have received attention and have been continuously explored. However, there are hardly any studies that have investigated cases in which the
participants were directly collaborating with the artists in creating the artist’s work, especially in contexts where the artist described their collaborative art production as having to do with pedagogy or teaching and learning, such as the cases in my study. As stated earlier, I viewed the public engagement aspect as critical in enhancing the learning of the CGMs. Co-creating work with an artist also included aspects of publicity and the politics of contemporary art, which I further elaborate on in the next section. In my study, although I include different sites such as a community-based gallery, museum, and college classroom, more cases with different backgrounds of audiences and sites are needed as further research.

**Arts-based Research**

In a way, these art projects functioned as arts-based research (using visual and other arts as methods or forms for research), particularly in *The Council*, as the project was propelled by an inquiry for exploration. These projects have the potential to serve as arts-based models for learning and teaching social justice-related themes and artistic activism.

**Implications for Artistic Practice**

**Artistic Collaboration with Educators/Curators**

*The expanding role of the artist.* The pedagogy-based art projects in my study reflect how conceptions of art have expanded, including the dialogue and the meaning it generates. Marshall (2013) puts it well: “Art lies in a work’s ideas, the social dialogue and dynamics it promotes, and the performance of the ‘piece.’ It also resides in the learning and in the new perspectives and understandings that the work generates” (p. 76).

As reflected in my study, artists have taken on the roles of educator (engaging the participants in curricular activities) and curator (designing programming and public
engagement). Thus, carrying out this type of work calls for artists with certain dispositions including flexibility, adaptability, and proficient communication and negotiation skills as the work requires collaboration in multiple situations and contexts. However, artists may not always be equipped with these qualities, nor are they necessarily effective in group communication, with administrative work, and working with a group learners. As reflected in my study, there is a need for pedagogically-minded artists to work collaboratively with other educators and curators to successfully carry out their projects, and particularly to deepen the learning experience of the CGMs.

**Need for collaboration with educators/curators.** Although my study focused on the pedagogical approaches of the artists and the learning experience of the CGMs and PAMs, the role of the curator and educator were pivotal in carrying out the projects. Adelita called them “institutional figures, who are like glue putting the project together.” She further said, “It’s really interesting because the only thing that really is physical is the artist and the participants [in her work] and not the underlying structure that makes the work possible. If you’re talking about the work that is commissioned by an institution and funded by them, then that link is vital to the project even existing” (A. Husni-Bey, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

As I mentioned earlier, *La Austral* took a break to improve communication among the artist and CGMs and to maximize the CGMs’ participation. Several adjustments were made including appointing a program manager and designating compensation for the CGMs for their public office hours, which eventually led to the successful completion of the project. This incident reflected the strong need for collaboration with figures such as the educator and curator in carrying out these types of pedagogy-based art projects.

Among the three cases, *APC* at MSU served as an example and model for a pedagogy-based art project carried out in collaboration with the artist and an educator/curator. Although *APC* was initiated and created by Macon, Livia (professor at MSU) invited Macon to be part of her senior-level undergraduate course at MSU. Macon
and Livia collaborated on designing the learning objectives and curricular activities of the course, and the APC event as a culmination of the coursework. Even though Macon was not present during most of the class sessions, Livia carried out the teaching and supported the CGMs’ learning process from beginning to end. Livia’s role as the educator and curator was critical in facilitating a meaningful learning experience among the CGMs (and PAMs) overall.

In The Council, even though the CGMs did not hold high expectations toward Adelita’s project, they were eager to participate, as they had an established trust with the MoMA Teens program over the years. Adelita also, before initiating the project, researched the MoMA Teens program to see whether her pedagogical approach would be a proper fit to collaborate with the program. Only after several meetings and conversations with the curator and Teens program director was Adelita able to come up with the theme and design for The Council.

Thus, as reflected in these cases, clear and effective communication with CGMs and project-related people is important in carrying out these types of projects.

**Need for reflection with CGMs.** I also observed the reflection/evaluation segment significant in these pedagogy-based projects. Based on my study, Adelita was the only artist who allotted a separate time for reflection in her four-day workshops. The CGMs were able to reflect upon their goals that they had submitted in the beginning of the workshops, and openly discussed their experience. In APC, Livia carried out a separate reflection session after the APC event. The students were also required to submit a reflection paper as their final assignment in completing the coursework. Again, APC reflects a case in which the artist and educator/curator carry out respective roles that can enhance the learning experience among the CGMs.
Pedagogy-based Artmaking and Contemporary Art World Politics: Labor Rights, Authorship, and Representation

As these art projects were created by artists presenting their work in the contemporary art world, the relationship with the art market raised complex issues. Although *APC* was presented in art fairs and other venues before MSU,¹ the Montclair version *APC* was the only project among the three that did not have ties to the art market and only to an educational institution (MSU).

*La Austral* was commissioned by the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) as an off-site social practice project. Thus, Pablo was commissioned as the lead artist for the project. In the beginning through the open call, the CGMs consented to having no compensation, however, as the project evolved, Pablo decided that the CGMs should receive compensation during their public office hours as mentioned earlier. In terms of producing representations of the final work, as *La Austral* was performance-based, there were no objects produced. The video and photographs from the project are archived by ISCP.

In contrast to the two other projects, *The Council* was the only project in which the final presentation culminated in the form of a body of photographs that was on public view at a prominent cultural institution and held market value. Hence, this created issues related to the CGMs with authorship and compensation as I have stated in Chapter V. Thus, as part of the pedagogical act of her projects, Adelita has devised a contract that clearly defines the roles of the artist and the CGMs in the project, and the CGMs’ compensation should the final representations be sold. As *The Council* reflects, the bridging of pedagogy and the art market raises interesting questions in relation to the politics of the contemporary art world and education, which requires further research and discourse.

¹Paintings and drawings created by Macon related to *APC* were on sale in the art market in 2018, and after the *APC* taking place in Brussels in January, 2020, the sculptural installation is on sale.
In sum, I have addressed the need for the artists to develop dispositions such as clear communication and adaptability for collaboration with participants and program co-designers. In particular, working collaboratively with curators and educators can enhance the overall quality of the project, and the experience of the participants.

**Reflection**

That real art is essential life and essential life is art. (Albers, 1935, p. 392)

I embarked on this study without really knowing what it would entail and how long it would take. It just made sense to me as someone whose main purpose of engaging with the arts was about the meaning we make with it. Coming from a fine art background, I became more interested in participatory process-based artmaking, as someone who was very much aligned with a Deweyan approach toward life and art. The question posed by Felix Guattari “How do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a piece of art?” (cited in Bishop, 2012, p. 241), continuously resonated with me as it depicted the way I envisioned my own approach to teaching and my purpose of becoming an art educator. This question propelled my direction in investigating process-based art that closely connected to education. I eventually examined works of art/projects that were educational, and education that was artistic.

These pedagogy-based and socially engaged art practices deeply consider the practice of life itself through symbolic/artistic means and acts. My numerous site visits and conversations with the artists, core group members, public audience members, educators, and curators expanded my view of how art elicited meaningful learning and empowerment. I am sure there is so much more than what they had expressed in words to me, and that the experience has supported their overall growth ever since.
In my own teaching, I have been able to interweave instructional methods that I had observed as effective in my field work with the projects in my study. I had the opportunity to design a new capstone course for preservice art teachers titled *Socially Engaged Art Education*. Although I did not conceptualize the course as an “artwork,” I allowed the students to have freedom deciding on the topics that were important to them, planning a lesson (in any form) that engaged their topics, presenting socially-engaged artists of their choices, having in-class conversations with artists, and so on. I applied scaffolding from individual work to group work, and applied parameters so that the group collaboration would be evenly distributed. Most of the students were not familiar with socially engaged art, but they were excited to see how their pressing matters were approached by other artists and began to make their own imaginative ways of working with them.

I was first surprised and deeply moved by their genuine passion; and second, how they said they were able to find their own voice for the first time. Allowing them agency within the parameters of an institution-based course and merging the classroom with real world situations and contexts, increased intrinsic motivation that led to deeper learning that was complex. I’m excited to continue exploring artist-led pedagogical approaches, and to further incorporate other ways such as theater and embodied activities, that can make learning multimodal, more engaging and meaningful.

As I write this last chapter locked in my apartment in New York City, I reflect upon the value of artmaking while everything is closed except for essential entities and businesses during this COVID-19 pandemic. It makes me wonder, “How essential is artmaking? What is the use of learning through artmaking when schools are closing and people are losing their jobs?”

The projects in my study cannot be more relevant to this time, as in *The Council*, imagining the function of an institution after an apocalyptic crisis and realizing the responsibility we carry toward one another. Or when we lend our ears to hearing stories
coming from our community members that we cannot sympathize more with as in *La Austral*, and discussing our views of critical and urgent matters in our society that raise political consciousness and change in actions as in *APC*. They all propel us “to think of things as if they could be otherwise,” in Maxine Greene’s (1995) words. Artmaking, as Ellen Dissanayake (1992) and Richard Hickman (2010) state, is not a choice but a natural biological behavior of being human. However, if making art is a basic biological act of being human, we also find ways to make those basic acts with meaning that reflect our social existence and aspiration in current times—through learning, which elicits growth and development beyond mere surviving.

As artist Rick Lowe (2019) states, “My concern [as an artist] is what’s deeper than the practical outcome: are people empowered, and do they see their own voice in this thing? Is there a poetic relationship [through art] that adds value for people there, not just an outcome from the mayor’s office?” (p. 20).

Then, we should be continuing to create and disseminate the spirit of the “otherwise”—social imagination manifested through thoughtful and engaging art.
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Appendix A

Images from Case 1. *La Austral, S.V. de C.V.*

(Images without texts are photos taken by the author)
Appendix B

Images from Case 2. *The Council*

(Images without texts are photos taken by the author)

From the series The Council, 2018 “Founder’s Room: Third plenary session on the future of The Institution” C-print mounted on dibond, 152 x 304 cm
Images on this and next page were taken during the workshops by Kaitlyn Stubbs, Petrie Fellow, Teen and Community Programs, Department of Education, MoMA)
Excerpts from the workshops during the plenary discussion session: “Riot”
(Retrieved from https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/52/773)

Anatola: So how will the institution respond to this riot? Let’s have a short debate. Because some members on that floor are demanding better conditions, like there have been so many complaints about the things that are happening on floor two.
Ava: But it’s an educational floor…
Anatola: They’re really unsatisfied with the education we’re providing. They have banded together to riot. What are we doing wrong?
Emily: We should just send them all to the basement.
Anatola: If we’re providing for the people, and the people are disappointed, should we listen to the people or should we install, like, order?
Billy: I think we should meet with these people.
Emily: I agree.
Jocelyn: I think we should listen to the people or else we look like dictators.
Khachoe: I think we should bring back the microphone and the whisper box. I know I wasn’t present when this was going on, but um…
Anatola: Why do you think…
Khachoe: But since it’s in the atrium, there’s a microphone and a whisper box, so to avoid future riots maybe we can have someone monitoring all the concerns that the public is bringing to the microphone.
Anatola: Or a suggestion box? Like suggestions…
Ava: If people are really that upset about conditions they’re still gonna riot.
Khachoe: But have we given them a chance to suggest?
Emily: Yeah, we haven’t given them the floor yet, I think.
Billy: Are we that out of touch with our community?
Emily: Yeah, that’s a good question.
Amirah: Are we?
Carol: How involved are we with our community?
Emily: If there’s a riot, I think we have to be a little out of touch, I guess.
Carol: A suggestion box is not going to fix a riot.
Anatola: Yeah what about fixing the second floor solution.
Ava: We could also kick them out.
Jocelyn: People will be afraid of talking to us if they see the way we handle problems is just kicking them out.
Ava: Well, if they’re rioting…
Eric: Then the whole building would riot!
Jocelyn: But there has to be a reason…
Carol: Send them to the Lab.
Khachoe: We should hear them out.
Bianca: We should, Billy suggested a, oh I’m sorry, William suggested a town hall.
Carol: Give them what they want.
Eric: Yeah.
Anatola: What do think it is that people want?
Emily: Not to play devil’s advocate, but if we give them what they want then every time something shitty happens it’s like, okay, let’s riot and then it becomes like…
Ava: They step all over us…
Jocelyn: I think allow communication so that this thing doesn’t happen again.
Khachoe: That’s the thing. Exactly. We have a town hall…and we have a town hall where people come and speak. Do we have people who are there monitoring and listening to what the concerns of the people are?
Jocelyn: I guess not. Maybe we should be more present.
Yared: Yeah. Right. We need a town meeting to make them know that riots aren’t okay.
Anatola: What if it’s saying something about us and our performance?
Khachoe: I like the idea that Anatola brought earlier about a party that says we appreciate what you’re doing here, so a date for everyone…
Amirah: I think that we should try to do the union idea per floor, but also I think the party idea can be great in the long run, but right now I, I don’t think it’s gonna solve much. So maybe like once a month have a…Instead of like a super professional, like, type of meeting, have, you know, like a lunch or a dinner discussion at a table and have certain rules, like these are the guidelines: you can express how you feel but we need to maintain the peace.
Anatola: Let’s listen to every single idea we’ve had so far…and then we have to vote soon. So we’re gonna read about it, we could digest and then vote.
Yared: Since we’ve talked about unions and all that, why don’t we just hold an election? We’ve been talking, we’ve talked about unions, we’ve talked about representatives at every floor.
Anatola: Election.
Yared: Represent, select a representative.
Anatola: Like its own government…Like the United States. Like each floor is its own state?
Yared: Each floor is its own state…
Anatola: And then we’re the whole united, we’re like the country, national government.
Yared: And since that way they don’t feel like they have a hierarchy, they can represent, they can elect their representative by themselves and can come to us with their problems.
Anatola: How would the second floor communicate with the Dome?
Khachoe: Then how does that…that doesn’t work.
Amirah: No.
Anatola: It’s one building…
Jocelyn: Why don’t we…
Anatola: It’s also a building…
Bianca: Where’s the “Mòma” in this?
Maya: Penelope suggests that the rioters visit the Lab. Maochi suggests that the microphone whisper box be brought to the rioters so we can understand why they are rioting. A suggestion box was then suggested. A town hall, but changed to be more open to hearing people’s opinions. A representative for every floor was then, um, suggested. And a survey of other’s experiences was suggested. A union for each floor, um, to minimize conflict. An evening or feast to show appreciation and then those two were
both merged into union and a once a month feast. Um, and then the feast would have
guidelines. And then, an election for the Council by each floor.
Anatola: Is there one that most people… wanna just, like, say what you’re most interested
in out of those?
Emily: I think the union and then…
Anatola: I like the union… town hall thing.
Khachoe: I think the union/town hall/party/microphone all could be together.
Anatola: I do too, I like that option.
Jocelyn: I strongly oppose having a party. I think it’s really condescending for us to be,
like, throwing a party.
Carol: It’s so elitist.
Khachoe: It’s not a party, it’s not a party…
Ava: It is a party. Even if it’s not a party.
Emily: Yeah, no, you’re right.
Jocelyn: It’s like, oh thank you so much for, like, listening to me while we’re having this
party.
Maya: Is it an adequate way to spend our funds?
Carol: It is not.
Eric: If I get invited to some event and it’s like, oh come here and hang out, and then
what’s that going to do for me?
Anatola: Let’s get back to um, representatives?
Amirah: Representatives or just people?
Anatola: Or surveys? Or parties?
Khachoe: But that destroys the idea of a town hall. A town hall is something where
everyone can come.
Anatola: Yeah, go for it.
Emily: I feel like the workers vote should count more than everyone else’s.
Eric: I feel like…
Khachoe: But see, like, that’s the thing, the workers can come to the town hall and speak
up.
Anatola: Would the worker like to share their thoughts?
Eric: I feel like if I go to the town hall, it would be just way too many suggestions.
Anatola: What about right now? You’re at a sort of town hall, so like your opinion would
be able to be heard.
Khachoe: What would you say that would make the working conditions better?
Emily: Damn, you killed us.
Eric: It’s not about, okay, it is about the work conditions, but I’m saying like, as a… like,
I think I need a representative because that way it’ll collect not just one, but let’s say
maybe two or three, it’ll get all of like, me and everyone else…
Carol: But okay, representatives will, like, it doesn’t get everything, it’s just generalizing
all these ideas, so why not voice these opinions yourself? Why not get it directly to the
source? Why do you need another medium?
Anatola: So town hall?
Carol: Why do you need another medium? Why can’t you directly influence these
changes?
Anatola: We’re about to have a town hall, y’all.
Billy: I think the representative also experiences what the worker experiences and is able to prioritize as a group what they need in a certain month or whatever.

Khachoe: I think that, I think the workers can organize within themselves, so you’re talking about a union in that sense…

Anatola: We have voted. It’s, it’s eight to four town hall to representative.

Yared: But a town hall has to…if you have a town hall how are you going to sort through everyone’s needs? Thousands of people that are not able to speak in a town hall because you have a line of how many hundreds of people are up there…that’s gonna cause a lot of discord.

Anatola: But they have the opportunity…But with none, there’s no opportunity…that’s why the riot happened.

Carol: Why do you have to go through another medium?

Anatola: Also, the call is to put an end to riot. That’s it.

Maya: What if we made a town hall for every floor once a month and everybody throughout the building can visit each town hall so we can be in communication with each other?

Anatola: I like that.

Eric: So it’s not way too crowded in to one.

Emily: Phoebe for the win.

Group: Meme. Meme.

Anatola: Yeah, that was a great end, thank you for uplifting us.
Appendix C

Images from Case 3. *A Pressing Conference*

(Images without texts are photos taken by the author)

*A Pressing Conference at Teachers College, Columbia University*  
*(October 8-10, 2018)*

Installation view at Teachers College, Columbia University, October 8, 2018.  
(All images taken by the author)
A Pressing Conference at Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey (November 28, 2018)

Students at the APC event at Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, November 28, 2018. (All images taken by the author)
Appendix D

Interview Protocol for the Artists

(The following are a basic set of questions that were posed to the three artists. However, I modified the interview questions according to each artist in order to gain a deeper and nuanced understanding of the respective art projects that were unique in its own way.)

1. Please describe your art education background such as formal training, early education, or any supplemental education you feel is relevant.

2. Can you talk about how this project came to be? For example, how you conceived the work, the commissioning process, the time frame from inception to realization, the design of the project, things that changed as the project unfolded, and so on.

3. What were the intentions in creating “project name”?

4. What would be the references from your other work to “project name”?

5. What would be the educational implications of “project name”? What do you think the educational or pedagogical aspects are in “project name”? You can talk in comparison to your other works as well.

5-1. If you think your work entails learning, what are the indicators of learning - how do you think you can measure/assess them?

6. In a broader sense, how do you understand education? What does education/pedagogy mean to you? (I’d appreciate if you could talk about what you mean by “education” and “pedagogy” respectively.)

7. Why is education important to you? If you have any strong influences or relevant experiences in relation to this, please share them.

8. Can you elaborate on your understanding about the relation between art and education?

9. (Most likely already mentioned while responding to the questions above) How do you view audience engagement as part of your work?

10. Can you elaborate on the different responses generated by different age groups/demographics/ or other characteristics of the audience? (Question was modified according to the flow of the interview)

11. Please feel free to comment or add anything on what you have said.
Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Core Group Members and Public Audience Members

1. How much time you have put in to be part of this project?
   (Please describe the time duration – approximate dates, number and duration of each time involved in the participation of the project.)

2. How did you find out about the project? What was it about the project that made you interested in participating?

3. What did you think was going to happen as a participant? What expectations did you have before participating in the project?
   3-1. What did you think the artist was going to do?
   3-2. What did you think you would be doing?

4. What was it like to be part of the project?
   4-1. What were you asked to do?
   4-2. How did you engage with the artist, and how did you engage with other participants?
   4-3. How did the artist engage with other participants?

5. What were the most memorable aspects of being part of the project? Can you tell me why this was memorable?
   5.1 What were the most enjoyable aspects? Why?
   5.2 What were the challenging aspects? Why? How did you deal with them?

6. What do you think you gained from being part of this project?

7. In what ways were your expectations met as you participated in the project?

8. What, if anything, did you gain from your experience that you did not expect or that was a surprise?

9. Can you describe what you learned by being part of this project?
9-1. Are there any other elements of learning that could have come from people’s experiences as participants?

10. Can you describe how this learning experience compares to other learning opportunities in your life? (For example, learning that took place at school, after-school programs and activities, community center, home, meet-ups, educational organizations, cultural institutions such as museums or arts-related organizations, and etc.)

10-1. Can you describe how this experience was different from or similar to your previous art experiences?

10-2. Can you describe how this experience was different from or similar to your previous education experiences? (How was your learning experiences like in school? Outside of school?)

11. Can you talk about what, if any, the influence or impact the work has had on you? Were there any changes you have noticed in yourself after participating in the work?

12. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about your involvement with this work? Please add, comment on anything as you wish.
Appendix F

IRB Consent Form for the Artists

**Protocol Title:** Pedagogical Art Projects: Case Study of Contemporary Artists & Audience Members

**Subtitle:** Consent for Artist Interview & Observation of the Artist’s Work in Progress

**Principal Investigator:** Eunji Lee, Instructor and Doctoral Student
347-557-5160, el2702@tc.columbia.edu

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**INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to participate in this research study called “Pedagogical Art Projects: Case Study of Three Contemporary Artists & Nine Audience Members.” By participating in this study, you will be asked to provide subjective data regarding your experiences in relation to your art practice/ project(s) that holds educational implications, as reviewed by the principal investigator.

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**

This study is being done to investigate the artistic sensibilities and implications of your work of art in relation to education (which implies pedagogy, and learning).

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you decide to participate, the principal investigator will observe your work in progress (one or more sessions), and you will be interviewed by the principal investigator on the same day or separate time. During the interview you will be asked to discuss your experiences about making/ facilitating your work of art, and your thoughts or approaches towards education and art. This interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You will be able to review the transcripts. The reviewed interview transcript will be analyzed and used as data as part of the research process. After the study is over, the researcher will discard the audio recording(s).

In terms of your work, if your work is performance-based or takes place at a certain venue, certain parts will be photographed or/and video recorded using a portable camera by the principal investigator. This footage will be analyzed in relation to the responses you will provide in the subsequent interview. If you choose you do not want to be recorded in any way, you will not be able to participate in this study.

You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. You can choose whether or not you would like to participate in a follow-up interview. The follow-up interview, will also be audio-recorded and transcribed, and used as data as part of the research. After the study is over, the researcher will discard the audio recording.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The risks associated to this study is minimal. Based on my experience, participants often reflect on past experiences that may lead to other personal reflections. While unlikely,
you may encounter some slight discomfort in this process of reflection or, in some cases, boredom. You do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don’t want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time. You may choose to use your real name or a pseudonym for the study. In the latter part of this form, there is a consent area where you can mark that selection.
The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential, such as keeping all information of the audio and video files, on a password protected computer and a password protected separate hard driver. After the study is over, the interview audio files will be completely deleted from all devices. The photographs and/or videos from the observation session will only be stored in a password protected external hard drive that will be locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of art & art education of understanding pedagogical implications in contemporary art practices.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?
You will not be paid to participate.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?
The study is over when the researcher has carried out the observation, and you have completed the interview (and the follow up interview). However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven’t finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY
The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a file drawer in her apartment. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer and separate external hard driver that is password protected. The audio files of the interview will be deleted after the study is over.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?
The results of this study will be used as part of the principal investigator’s dissertation study. Research reports might be given at conferences, presented at meetings, published in journals, and used for other educational purposes.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR VIDEO RECORDING
Audio recording of your interview, and video or photo taking of your art project in progress is part of this research study. If you decide that you do not wish to be audio recorded for your interview, you will not be able to participate in this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded or not during the researcher’s observation session. Please specify if you allow only phototaking, or both phototaking and video recording when the researcher is observing your art work in progress.

In terms of audio recording for the interview:
_____I consent to be audio recorded for my interview

__________________________________________________________

Signature

_____I do not consent to be audio recorded for my interview

__________________________________________________________

Signature

In terms of photographing and video recording for the researcher’s observation of the work in progress:

_____I consent to allow my work in progress to be both photographed and video-taped.

__________________________________________________________

Signature

_____I consent to allow my work in progress to be photographed only.

__________________________________________________________

Signature

_____I do not consent for my work in progress neither to be photographed nor video recorded.

__________________________________________________________

Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___I consent to allow written, video and/or audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College, Columbia University.

__________________________________________________________

Signature

___I do not consent to allow written, video and/or audio taped materials viewed outside of Teachers College, Columbia University.

__________________________________________________________

Signature
THE USE OF YOUR NAME

There will be minimal risk that the study will adversely affect your reputation as an artist. However, you have the choice to use either your real name or a pseudonym for the study. You may decide how you would like to use your name after viewing the transcripts of your interview with the principal investigator.

___I consent to allow to use my *real name* for the study.

_________________________________________
Signature

___I consent to use a *pseudonym* for the study.

_________________________________________
Signature

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes ________________________
No_______________________

Initial                                           Initial

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Eunji Lee at 347-557-5160 or through el2702@tc.columbia.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.
PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS

• I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
• I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
• The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion, in the case if the collected data is not fitting to the intention of the study.
• If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
• Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
• I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: __________________________ Date: ______________________

Signature: ____________________________
Appendix G

IRB Consent Form for CGMs and PAMs

**Protocol Title:** Pedagogical Art Projects: Case Study of Artists & Audience Members

**Subtitle:** (Adult) Audience Member Consent: Questionnaire & Follow-up Interview

**Principal Investigator:** Eunji Lee, Doctoral student and Instructor
347-557-5160, el2702@tc.columbia.edu

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**INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to participate in this research study called “Pedagogical Art Projects: Case Study of Three Contemporary Artists & Nine Audience Members.” By participating in this study, you will provide subjective data regarding your learning experience in participating in an artist’s (one among the three artists that are my subjects for the study) pedagogical art project.

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**

This study is being done to investigate the learning experience from the perspective of an audience member, who has partaken in an artist’s work of art that has been reviewed as a pedagogical art project (reviewed by the principal investigator). It will provide insight about the learning that occurs in the engagement process of such artist-led pedagogical art projects.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take a questionnaire (approx. 30mins) created by the principal investigator. The questionnaire will ask you about your experience in participating in the artist’s work of art, in particular any aspects of learning through your engagement with the work. This questionnaire will be conducted in written form either in digital form or in hard copy. The collected data will later be analyzed and used as part of the research process.

You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview to further discuss your survey data. You can choose whether or not you would like to be contacted for a follow-up interview. The follow-up interview will be administered in person or over the phone (approx. 30-60mins). This data will be audio recorded and transcribed, which you will be able to overview. The confirmed transcripts will be used as part of the research. Once the study is over, all the audio-recordings will be deleted.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The risks associated to this study is minimal. Based on my experience, participants often reflect on past experiences that may lead to other personal reflections. While unlikely, you may encounter some slight discomfort in this process of reflection or, in some cases, boredom or
embarrassment. You do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don’t want to answer. You can stop participating in the study at any time. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information from the questionnaire, and audio-recording on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

**WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of art & art education of understanding pedagogical implications in contemporary art practices.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not be paid to participate in this study.

**WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?**

The study is over when you have completed the questionnaire (and the follow-up interview). However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven’t finished.

**PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY**

The investigator will keep the hard copy of the questionnaires in a locked desk drawer in her apartment. Any electronic or digital information will be stored on a computer that is password protected. After my dissertation is completed, I will delete all the audio-recordings from the follow-up interviews.

**HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?**

The results of this study will be used as part of the principal investigator’s dissertation study. Research reports might be given at conferences, presented at meetings, published in journals, and used for other educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published.

**CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING IN FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW**

You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded or not for the follow-up interview. If you choose not to be recorded in any way, you will not be able to participate in the follow-up interview.

_____ I consent to participate in the questionnaire

_____________________________________________
Signature

_____ I do not consent to participate in the questionnaire

_____________________________________________
Signature
For the follow-up interview after the questionnaire,

_____ I give my consent to be audio-recorded

______________________________
Signature

_____ I do not consent to be audio-recorded

______________________________
Signature

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes ________________________               No_______________________
Initial                        Initial

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Eunji Lee at 347-557-5160 or through el2702@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

• I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
• I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
• The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion, in the case if the collected data is not fitting to the intention of the study.
• If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
• Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
• I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.
My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: _________________________________  Date: ______________________

Signature: _________________________________
Ms. Eunji Lee
Doctoral Student
Teacher’s College, Columbia University

Dear Ms. Lee,

After an administrative review of your research as described in your Request to Engage in Research with MSIJ Participants form and subsequent documentation (fully submitted: 10/03/2018), we approved your recruitment of Montclair State University (MSU) students in Dr. Alexander’s Fall 2018 ARFD 400 class for the research study entitled “Art as Pedagogical Experience: A Case Study of Three Contemporary Art Projects.” You may proceed with your recruitment as planned.

Since you are not affiliated with Montclair State University (MSU) this human subjects research activity did not constitute engagement of MSU employees, students or staff. This procedure constitutes an administrative review, not an IRB review. Responsibility for IRB review in accordance with regulations lies with the researcher’s chosen IRB of record. Please be aware that the Dean or other Designated Officials reserve the right to reject or terminate such activities from being conducted with Montclair students at any time. Significant changes to your protocol or any unanticipated adverse events should be reported to us within 3 business days.

Please be aware the all student records (including emails) are subject to FERPA regulations. All faculty and staff must abide by the restrictions to accessing data. More details can be found here: (http://www.montclair.edu/student-development-campus-life/ferpa-faculty-staff/)

If you have any questions regarding this review, please contact me. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Amv Krenzer

Senior IRB Coordinator
973-655-7583

Cc: Livia Alexander, Chairperson of the Art & Design Department
Hila Berger, Director of Research Compliance and Regulatory Programs