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Beyond the Mask:
a contextual model for educational programming
with cultural objects in the art museum

Andrea Gumpert

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Education

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the Mask
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Andrea Gumpert

This thesis is structured by the reflexive conditions of action-research methodology and constructs an argument that advocates the implementation of a contextual approach to examining cultural objects in the art museum with a view to improving educational practice A theoretical model intended for practical application is proposed, implemented and assessed in a small education project to offer the reader some practical applications and insight into engaging viewers in education programs with the art and cultural objects they experience in the art museum. What I suggest with this model is that this type of learning engages the viewer's personal experience and enhances her/his ability to contemplate the different aesthetic frameworks from which the objects come. The contextual analysis of works in the museum encourages the viewer to relate this learning to the human situation of which she/he is a part, ultimately fostering tolerance and creativity

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

With the modest phrase in 1964, "the medium is the message," communications

theorist, Marshall McLuhan, challenged our assumptions about how and what we

communicate. His theories continue to influence our sensibilities when considering how

the visitor's experience is defined by the Western art museum. A recent study by

Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri (2001) concluded that there is an "amazing potential of

art museums to stimulate and transform those who use them" (p 36) Since "learning" is

often cited by visitors as one of major reasons that they go to art museums (Ibid), the

potential for the museum to frame the experience for the viewer by applying different

learning strategies is considerable

The educational relationship the art museum staff enjoys with its visitors has a

long and well-established history. Over time, museum pedagogy has been adapted to the

educational processes and structures that have occurred outside its white walls

Moreover, in this Postmodern age of cultural plurality, most museum administrators

recognize the value of attracting diverse audiences (Williams, 1992) Offering a variety

of perspectives with appropriate communication and interpretive strategies, therefore,

accommodates viewer learning.

Learning – whether formal (as in a classroom) or informal (as in a museum) – is

understood by educational theorists to be an active process whereby learners retain

knowledge only when they interact with it in meaningful ways (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000)

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While there is no single right way to explore a museum exhibition (Vogel, 1988), museum educators can teach viewers how to find their own meanings. Creative and imaginative education programs can help the viewer mediate the messages she/he experiences in the art museum.

Statement of the problem and discussion

Based on my experience as a researcher and educator in art and non-art museums, I have learned different pedagogical approaches to exploring museum objects that reflect museums' distinctive ideologies. Since the 19th century, museum exhibitions of objects from non-Western cultures have been classified under two major categories: scientific cultural artifacts or aesthetic works of art (Clifford, 1985). Accordingly, the ethnographic museum and the art museum have developed different modes of classification and exhibition.

While some objects might be shared between art and ethnographic collections, the manner in which they are displayed assumes very different conventions. Clifford (1988) writes, "whereas in the ethnographic museum the object is culturally or humanly 'interesting,' in the art museum it is primarily 'beautiful' or 'original'" (p.227). Often, cultural objects exhibited in the art museum are isolated from additional contextual information (for example, other related objects, dioramas, explanatory panels, etc.), in a curatorial effort to leave any potential meaning ambiguous (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Clifford, 1985). Therefore, where the contextual information is indispensable in the exhibition strategies of an ethnographic museum, the contextualization of a cultural

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object in an art museum is considered irrelevant to its essential meaning (Clifford, 1985)

The exhibits in many Western art museums are designed for the viewer to contemplate a work's formal qualities (structure, form, colour, etc.). Furthermore, the recent trend in art museums has increasingly altered the conditions so that the viewer is encouraged to have an "aesthetic experience."[1] Duncan (1995) writes that the

> ...installation design has consistently and increasingly sought to isolate
> objects for the concentrated gaze of the aesthetic adept and to suppress as
> irrelevant other meanings the objects might have (p. 17)

The viewer in the art museum is therefore encouraged to consider cultural objects in the same manner that she/he considers the fine arts from the Western art historical canon Furthermore, exposing cultural objects according to a Western aesthetic paradigm implies a hierarchy between Western and non-Western works when the attribute "art" is conferred upon objects from cultures to which such a distinction is meaningless (Barringer & Flynn, 1998, p.4)

Due to the inherent codes of display in the museum, the viewer could be left with the impression that all art is conceived of in the same manner and the object's cultural significance is subordinate to its aesthetics. Ironically, the aesthetic features of many cultural objects are conditional upon an object's precise meaning and function in that society and, without a cultural context, the aesthetic characteristics are of secondary importance (Danto, 1988). While many cultures from which their objects come have no

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[1]   Duncan (1995) defines the "aesthetic experience" as "a moment of moral and
        rational disengagement that leads to or produces some kind of revelation or
        transformation" (p.14).

word for "art" as it is understood and defined in the Western sense, the objects have become labelled and displayed as art in the art museum according to a Western criteria of aesthetic value. Therefore, a consideration of objects from a purely aesthetic perspective ignores the many other ways of seeing and of understanding.

As museum audiences grow increasingly diverse, and as museum collections continue to diffuse across disciplines, the need for a practical contextual approach to examining works of art is essential. Therefore, in this thesis I will explore the following question: What kind of model for a contextual exploration of art works can be developed and applied to educational programs that considers cultural objects in the Western art museum?

An overview of the methodology

This thesis is structured by the reflexive conditions of action-research methodology and advocates the implementation of a contextual approach to examining cultural objects in the art museum. To this end, I use the initial cycle of action-research to develop and implement a theoretical contextual model, and consider its practical implications in a small museum education project. Together, the theoretical model, its application in a practical trial and its assessment explore an educational approach to examining cultural objects in the art museum with a view to improving it. The thesis elicits some general conclusions in order that the proposed model might be adapted by the reader for other education programs that examine non-Western objects in the art museum. (A detailed explanation of the methodology is included in Chapter Three.)

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Definitions and assumptions

The following defines some of the key terms that I use in this thesis and briefly outlines some of my assumptions. These assumptions are borne of my readings and practical experiences to date and, while I recognize that they are routinely modified, they directly influence the construction and implementation of a contextual model.

The word __art__ is a vast concept that the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2002) describes as, "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects." This definition demonstrates the complexity in naming a term that is so widely applied and the confusion concerning its twofold nature. Art refers to the skill with which human beings produce things, as much as it names the things produced. While it is highly limiting, for our purposes in this study, art refers to the effects produced by artists and that are accepted as such by the Western art historical canon. In his tome to art history, Janson (2000) writes "art is meant to be looked at and appreciated for its own sake" (p. 17).

It is essential to describe art as it is used in this study, since the Western art historical definition is applied to all works in the art museum regardless of their origins and their own criteria of assessment (Wastiau, 2000). Yet many works that are included in an art museum have primary functions that are, by Western standards, non-aesthetic, and would have been assessed, first and foremost, by their ability to achieve those ends (Appiah, 1996). Therefore, to look at the work and appreciate it only for one aspect (in this case its aesthetic value) ignores its other (perhaps foremost) functions, which ultimately redefine the work. Moreover, by considering only the aesthetic aspect of a

work, we ascribe a Western criteria rather than considering the criteria used by the maker

The terms work or object are used to refer to all things exhibited in the museum This includes art, as it is understood in the Western sense, and cultural objects The term cultural object is used to refer to those works whose primary function is not aesthetic and come from outside the Western art historical canon. Often, cultural objects have practical functions that define their existence, but it is as a result of their aesthetic functions that they are included in an art museum collection

In the literature, other labels such as "ethnographic objects," "objets d'art," "artifacts" and "material culture" are interchangeable with the term cultural object as described here. Distinguishing the various terms, however, highlights the divide between the disciplines of anthropology on the one hand and art history and criticism on the other Therefore, the term cultural object encompasses those definitions and refers to the exhibited work that comes from a non-Western culture

The term aesthetic framework, used by Price (1989) and adopted here, refers to a system of assessment of works from the perspective of the people who made them Any artist is influenced by her/his environment and the conditions in which she/he works which affect the various stages of production. Therefore, the term aesthetic framework imparts that there are different conceptualizations of what art is and emphasizes that there is more than just the exclusively Western construct of art, which is often considered universal (Price, 1989).

The term formal analysis refers to a method that considers the visual qualities of works, as in a work's colour, line, shape, etc. (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). The formal

analysis "assumes that there are universal aesthetic standards without taking into consideration what is culturally valued in the arts by people in various parts of the world" (Ayiku, 1998, p.130). While the aesthetic qualities can be appreciated in all works, a formal analysis implies a Western sense of value.

In contrast, the term contextual analysis refers to a method that examines works from the context of the specific societies from which the art forms are produced. It illustrates what art means, how art is valued and how it functions in the culture from which it originates. It can also include an inquiry of formal or aesthetic elements employed by the makers of the object.

The term Western art museum is used in this study to refer generally to an institution that operates in a manner that is faithful to the discipline of art history and subscribes to notions from the art historical canon. To label the art museum as "Western," emphasizes the notion that a Western perspective is exacted. Therefore, while all works in the art museum's collection are not Western, the manner in which they are exhibited generally conforms to Western standards.

In addition to the definitions above, the following are further assumptions that affected this study's development, implementation and assessment. The first assumption is that education is an important aspect of an art museum's mandate. As part of its fundamental ideology, the museum is designed in order that the viewer learn about its works. While the educational objectives of any museum can be expressed in a variety of ways, they are not always evident to the viewer. Indeed, Vogel (1988) claims that most visitors are unaware of the degree to which their experience is conditioned by the

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museum (p. 11). Hooper-Greenhill (1991) relates that at the beginning of the 20th century, educational work in museums took a back seat to curatorial practices. The "communicative role" of the museum, with an emphasis on all the influences that aid and abet a viewer's learning, is a relatively recent concern and one that Hooper-Greenhill maintains is still problematic.

Most staff in museums' educational services would claim that the ultimate educational objective for the museum environment is one where the learner is "learning how to learn" (Booth, Krockover & Woods, 1982, p. 17). Unfortunately, Hooper-Greenhill (1991) suggests that few examples exist of museums whose curatorial and educational staff pursue the same goals to provide a "whole museum approach" (p. 188). Therefore, she recommends that, while a museum's education policy is "profoundly influenced by the specific circumstances and objectives of the particular institution," efforts to communicate with the public in all museological aspects need to be explored (p. 190).

A second assumption is that while the curators for most art museums exhibit all works in the interest of their aesthetic qualities, a variety of perspectives of their works and/or their exhibits should also be included. Harper (1993) insists that a philosophical shift in museums has taken place wherein the viewer's demands have compelled the museums to examine their responsibility to society. While the early 20th century "museum ideal" was to present works of art exclusively as objects of aesthetic contemplation (Duncan, 1995, p. 16), today, museums are obliged to be aware of the diversity of viewers who hold "competing perspectives and interests" (Roberts, 1992,

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p.153).

The viewing of art objects, isolated from their intended milieus and exposed with other (sometimes-unrelated) objects, can engender extraordinary conditions for the viewer. Gallant (1992) states that "objects that have been selected for exhibit in the art museum are still not considered as intellectually approachable by the general public in the same way that scientific phenomena are in the science museum"(p 204) Therefore, he recommends that, since many people learn by "actively processing 'information' from the environment," the art museum should be a more "'active' and participatory setting" (p.202). The exhibits of the museum can be used to actively encourage diverse interpretations by exposing some different perspectives of museum works

A third assumption is that a contextual method of exploring works in the art museum is beneficial to the viewer because it helps her/him to understand the significance of a work and to recognize how the meaning of objects is constructed. Education programs, which are modelled on the contextual methods practised in anthropology museums, can encourage the viewer to understand the works from the perspective of the makers. Rather than "isolat[ing] properties of a work of art by separating form from content" (Lankford, 1984, p.151), a contextual approach that includes and explores different philosophical precepts encourages the viewer to understand the embedded meanings and realities of the people who make the works, thereby offering the viewer a holistic synthesis of the work's significance.

By appreciating the aesthetic qualities of a work from the point of view of its makers, users, curators, traders, etc., the viewer learns that systems of aesthetic standard

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are complex and multi-faceted. Moreover, works are defined and re-defined depending

on their owners' intentions as well as the "political exigencies of any specific historical

conjecture" (Coombes, 1994, p.3). Education programs in art museums can be designed

to validate and vindicate the various perspectives that contribute to a work's contextual

significance.

Significance of the study

After a few years of working as an educator in different art museums, I had the

opportunity to study the education programs of the ethnographic collection of the Musee

royale de l'Afrique centrale (MRAC) in Belgium in the fall of 2001. Despite an

overwhelmingly colonialist atmosphere, the programs were designed to solicit responses

from their viewers that challenged the very ideology upon which the museum was

originally founded.² The programs facilitated contextual explorations of works,

examining their significance to the cultures from which they came and offered a variety

of perspectives from those whom the works concern (de Meersman, 2001). While

examining the aesthetic qualities of a work was not always necessary (given the

ethnographic mandate), their significance was expounded by the contextual meaning. For

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² The MRAC was founded in 1897 by Leopold II, the sovereign King of the Congo Free State "to generate some interest in Belgium for his overseas expansionist policies" (van den Audenaerde, 1992, p.5). Today, the Art Nouveau architecture and exhibits remain largely unchanged, displaying the Belgian presence in the Congo until the 1960s (van den Audenaerde, 1994). One reporter described the museum as being "preserved in aspic" (Grauman, 2001), while Wastiau admits that little has changed since the colonial exhibition style: "We present non European art in the same way we did in the colonial era. It reflects an idealized Africa, as if African art has not been affected by history" (Ames, 2001).

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an unprecedented exhibition in 2001, titled ExitCongoMuseum, that concentrated on the definitions and re-definitions of some of the MRAC's masterpieces, curator, Boris Wastiau wrote:

> to appreciate a work on the basis of a personal aesthetic is one thing, seeking to know and appreciate its history is quite another which, by joining emotion to reflection, evocation to interpretation, allows a far better assessment of the beauty of the mediating role of art and artists between people (Wastiau, 2000, p. 10).

This experience helped me to recognize how the exhibits in the Western art museum often imply a universal system of aesthetic value. The collections in art museums, that might otherwise be found in an ethnographic exhibit, are appropriated and stripped of their cultural significance (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998).

This study outlines a methodological framework detailed in Chapter Three that demonstrates both a theoretical and a practical contextual approach to inquiring about cultural objects in the art museum. While this study presents a specific museum education project, the aim is to offer the reader some practical applications and some insight into engaging viewers in education programs with the art and cultural objects they experience in the art museum.

Given that educators can and should endeavour to enrich the significance of works exhibited in the art museum by stretching beyond an aesthetic analysis, this study proposes an active method for them to explore works in the art museum with viewers. The educator as "activist" or "agent of change" assists the viewer in critical and reflective

thinking and in participating in her/his own learning (Brodie, 1997, p. 74). This kind of

learning experience teaches the visitor how to find information that, in turn, develops the

viewer's competencies in independent learning, which can be applied in other

circumstances. Booth, Krockover, and Woods (1982) insist that learning to learn is the

"ultimate goal of museum education " (p 17). Furthermore, since the viewer is engaged

in an active learning process with an educator in a relevant and contemporary approach,

as proposed by the model in this study, the viewer is encouraged to recognize that

meaning is never static and that the readings of works can go well beyond surface

attributes (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

Finally, a general objective of this study is to demonstrate that art objects can be a

means to serve greater human purposes rather than as ends in themselves (Ayiku, R.,

1998). The framework for the theoretical and practical contextual approach suggests that

the viewer recognizes some perceptions of others by interacting with objects from other

cultures.[1] By this, it is not intended that the viewer's categories change to become like

those of the makers or the original audience, rather that the viewer's perceptions are

encouraged to grow to include them (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). Ideally, this study

proposes an approach that engages the viewer in self-reflection and offers her/him a

forum to explore concepts as they are understood by others, thereby fostering tolerance

toward foreign cultures and creativity by examining and applying solutions derived by

others.

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[1]   The words "other" or "foreign" are used in this study to refer to the belonging to,
    relating to, or characteristic of a group of people, a place or a country other than
    the one under consideration.

The next Chapter critically reviews the literature related to a contextual exploration of art works. The literature has been reviewed in relation to the objectives of this study and discusses the fundamental opinions of this thesis.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Using a contextual analysis in museum education programs is an effective way of exploring art with the viewer – particularly with objects from cultures outside of the Western canon of art history. While the exhibition styles of most art museums highlight the objects' formal qualities, public education programs that emphasize a contextual analysis can consider the socio-cultural factors that influence the making of works and can, ultimately, explore different concepts of what art means in different cultures.

First, this Chapter will explore why a contextual examination in education programs is an appropriate method of exploring cultural objects in the art museum. I will suggest that constructivist pedagogy complements the contextual examination. Next, this Chapter will discuss some of the pedagogical influences including Anderson's (1995) "Model for cross-cultural evaluation of works of art," in the development of a contextual model applied in the Museum Education Project (MEP), discussed in Chapter Three.

Art, context and education

Traditionally, the mandate of the art museum has been to encourage its visitors to examine artworks for their formal qualities (Anderson, 1995), considering only what can be seen in the work: colour, line, shape, etc (Parsons & Blocker, 1993). Exhibits in art museums generally accentuate the formal properties of a work through lighting and positioning, eliminating any interference with the viewer's aesthetic appreciation. This gives the impression that a universal aesthetic standard exists in the art world (Ayiku,

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1998).

However, exhibiting works in a manner that emphasizes art's formal aspect speaks more about our Western categories and attitudes regarding the work than it does about the work itself (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). While no installation can be neutral (Weil, 1990), viewers are inclined to disregard "truth" or "reality" as a point of view, rather than "a unique and privileged kind of knowledge" (Dissanayake, 1988, p 19) Bouttiaux, in Wastiau (2000) writes

> ...in general [the] work of art is wrenched from its context, the forms are admired, the plastic composition is commented upon, the balance of the volumes and when, at best, this or that ethnic group is referred to in connection with the stylistic characteristics of the piece, one is satisfied that recognition has been given to the creators, while yet again they have paid the price of our pretension (p 44)

In overlooking the aesthetic frameworks, respected by the various artists whose work is exhibited, the art museum engages in what Dissanayake (1988) identifies as "an imperialistic act of appropriation" (p 134). Therefore, to counter this effect, there is a need to recognize how the meanings of objects are manipulated. Venet (2002) writes

> Art historical inclusiveness requires a paradigm shift from ethnocentrism to cultural relativity. To understand a culture's art, it is necessary to understand its aesthetic, the philosophy that indicates salient features and functions of art within that culture (p 46).

Contemporary exponents of an anthropological theory of art suggest that we look

at the aesthetic systems in which art is produced (Wastiau, 2000). Given that different cultures make sense of the physical world in different ways, a purely formal analysis of artwork ignores its social and cultural contexts, separates the work from the circumstances influencing its production, and disregards the various purposes and meanings the artist might intend to have for it (Ayiku, 1998). Moreover, Hooper-Greenhill (2000) states that "the meanings of objects are ambiguous" (p. 115). An object's meaning is partially indicated through context. Therefore, Hooper-Greenhill argues that each new setting (such as a museum display) alters how the viewer can interpret an object, and that each viewer ascribes different meaning to the object. While a contextual analysis is just one of the possible approaches of a museological strategy, it is a preliminary step to understanding art through the circumstances that influence its production (Ayiku, 1998).

An education program with a focus other than that of the exhibit can supplement the considerations of works that are not apparent. By empowering the viewer to understand the embedded meanings of the object and the realities of the people who make the objects, an education program can encourage her/him to recognize different value systems and avoid an ethnocentric evaluation of objects.

Parsons and Blocker (1993) admit that no one theory for art criticism is applicable to examining all art. Rather, it depends on the particular goals of each program and the museological limitations. Instead, they write "it is more important to be aware of the range of possible answers than to choose one of them in a final way" (p. 151). Gallant (1992), in his dissertation studying the educational processes in museums, concluded that

there is a lack of a consensus among museum professionals about the basic objectives for

museum education. Each museum identifies its educational approaches according to its

individual collections, exhibitions, and objectives.

A contextual inquiry is one that examines artworks from the point of view of the

specific societies in which the art forms are produced including their behavioural,

historical, and philosophical aspects (Ayiku, 1998). The contextual inquiry illustrates

what art means, how art is valued and how it functions in the culture from which it

originates. An exploration that includes other beliefs can elaborate on a Western notion

of what art is, as well as sensitize viewers to the cultures from which the objects come

Furthermore, as Pearce (1989) explains, studying material culture "can make a unique

contribution to our understanding of the workings of individuals and societies - because,

in short, it can tell us more about ourselves" (p. 2)

Several authors acknowledge the "ethnocentric fallacy" of expecting all cultures

to classify their works according to the exclusively Western construct of art (Price, 1989,

p.89, Hunt, 1993) and, thus, they advocate the value of a cross-cultural examination of art

works (Parsons & Blocker, 1993; Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; Durrans, 1988, Sieber, 1971)

Others have also developed theoretical models or suggested strategies that consider art in

relation to its contextual aspect (Noble Fowler, 2002, Garoian, 2001, Brodie, 1997,

Anderson, 1995; Chanda, 1993; Museum of Science and Industry, 1993, Bourdon Caston,

1989). But perhaps because museums are so diverse, few authors describe a practical

application of a socio-cultural or contextual analysis of art works and their relevant

educational approaches.

The contextual engagement

Despite the frames of reference imposed upon works by exhibition strategies, a contextual analysis in education programs can help expose different aesthetic frameworks in the art museum. An innovative education program is an incentive for the public to visit the museum (American Association of Museums. 1992) and, given that museums need to be relevant to all visitors (Federal policy and program proposals for Canadian museums, 1988), discussions through education programs can elicit a variety of distinct perspectives with viewers from diverse backgrounds

Hooper-Greenhill (1991) writes that "one of the most useful effects of using objects for teaching is the amount of discussion that can be generated" (p 127) She suggests that this kind of exploration encourages opportunities to examine cross-cultural perspectives and address cultural stereotyping Similarly. Chanda (1992) proposes contextual methods for considering non-western works to dispel negative attitudes that derive from an ethnocentric perspective Chanda (1993) argues that the development of different approaches will enrich the viewer's understanding of non-western art and insists upon the need for teaching models that provide different ways of thinking and looking at Western and non-western art. Therefore, a relevant and contemporary exploration of the context of works exposed in the museum encourages viewers to recognize some of the various aesthetic frameworks manifested by artworks that are different from the Western formal aesthetic ideal.

Educators can apply methods in an education program that encourage and empower the viewer to decipher the different aesthetic frameworks that are often

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imperceptible in the exhibitions of the Western museum. Hooper-Greenhill (1994) writes

that "only when experiences are personally meaningful that they are truly valued" (p 263)

Therefore, the education program that relates the contextual engagement to the viewer's

lives will be an experience that they retain. Given that each person's culture is the

"window through which members of the population see the world around them"(Ogbu,

1995, p. 80), an education program that encourages an understanding of other cultural

practices, assists viewers in appreciating how different frames can be applied to windows

Interpreting with a contextual approach

In their book, Hein and Alexander (1998) consider some ways in which museum

education can support learning and emphasize unique learning opportunities Based on a

combination of learning theory and a theory of knowledge, they suggest that a

constructivist pedagogy is a good approach for museums A constructivist approach is

"designed to engage many different active learning modes" (p 44), one which teaches

viewers how to create meaning for themselves (Eiserman, 2000) Hein and Alexander

(1998) write that it requires learners "to manipulate, to experiment, to reach conclusions,

to increase their understanding about the phenomena with which they are engaged," while

the conclusions that are reached by the learner are "validated" within her/his experience

(p.36-37).

Csikszentmihalyi (1995) studied viewers' intrinsic motivation in the museum and

insists that a link between the museum and the visitor's life needs to be established. He

writes

It is to be hoped that the museum experience will inspire visitors to see the

relationship between the exhibits and their own concerns and perhaps be

stimulated to create art, pursue science, and so on, after leaving the museum

(p.73).

A constructivist pedagogy in an education program facilitates the personal

engagement with museum objects. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) state that

"what you see and experience will always and inevitably be a function of who you are"

(p.153). An educator can manipulate learning about museum objects according to the

objectives of the object-study by leading the viewer to recognize familiar concepts and

integrating new knowledge suggested by the objects. The challenge for the art educator is

to find out "how to make this deeper relationship with works of art available" to the

viewer (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p.150) – to take works of art and find a way

of transforming them, abstracting them or doing something with them to make them

accessible to the mind of the person who views the works. Ultimately, the process of

engaging with works empowers the viewer with her/his own viewpoint or teaches her/him

to look (Roberts, 1992), which is "vital to the appropriation of the object into the existing

mental set, the existing experience, of the looker" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, p.106)

Eiserman (2000) labels this process "active participation," which she explains as

...the viewer is cognitively involved in the discourse about the meaning of a

work of art. The viewer's aesthetic values and beliefs are in dialogue with

those suggested by the art world in the creation of a meaning that is

significant to the viewer (p.417).

She differentiates active from passive participation by explaining that passive learning implies accepting "prepackaged meanings" created by others that have little significance to the viewer's own system of values and beliefs (Ibid., p. 417).

A contextual exploration of an artwork based on constructivist pedagogy encourages the viewer to recognize common human experiences between her/himself and the experiences represented by the work. In this way, the viewer is actively participating in creating meaning, which allows for a "multiplicity of messages in the object" (Ravenhill, 1996, p. 279). Alternatively, a formal analysis, which depends on a prescribed knowledge and language base, is not readily available to every viewer and tends to cast the viewer in a passive role (Eiserman, 2000).

Given that a viewer's active participation with a work is more likely to be retained than a passive one, a contextual approach rooted in constructivist pedagogy offers all museum viewers the opportunity to engage in and exercise new learning (Bourdon Caston, 1989). Therefore, the educational role of the art museum can encourage viewers to create meaning for themselves within the discourse of art (Eiserman, 2000).

Pedagogical influences and Anderson's model

The contextual model that was developed for the Museum Education Project (MEP) grew primarily out of Tom Anderson's (1995) "Model for cross-cultural evaluation of works of art," as well as different writings on pedagogy and art education in museums. Anderson's model was used as a paradigm, to which I integrated contextual educational strategies and relevant arguments from other authors. Their practical and

theoretical recommendations for engaging the museum viewer in contextual learning with

objects helped shape the contextual model designed for the MEP (detailed in Chapter

Three).

A constructivist pedagogy, as it applies to the contextual examination of works, is

the approach proposed by several authors writing about education programs and cultural

objects. The external factors that predispose every viewer, such as historical epoch,

society and culture, as well as educational background, familiarity with a subject matter,

etc., are recognized as having a role to play in the viewer's understanding and

interpretation of a work of art from a foreign culture (Gallagher, 1992) The viewer's

background – what she/he brings to the subject   will provide what Hooper-Greenhill

(1991) calls a "range of interpretations" which encourage holistic learning to progress

(p.100). Moreover, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) suggest that a diversity of

"tools that highlight the perceptual, the emotional, the cognitive, and the communicative

content of the works" is necessary to assist the viewer in this process (p 175)

Several authors recognize the value of actively involving the viewer in the

construction of meaning and recommend strategies in museum education programs that

reflect and encourage this involvement (Harper, 1993, Schlereth, 1984, Williams, 1992)

Brodie (1997), an educator from the Diefenbaker Canada Centre, applies a

"hermeneutic"[4] approach of artifact interpretation in her museum program planning She

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[4]   Brodie (1997) respects the explanation by Palmer (1969) of hermeneutics as
       "something foreign, strange, separate in time, space, or experience is made
       familiar, present, comprehensible, something requiring representation,
       explanation, or translation is somehow 'brought to understanding' – is
       'interpreted'" (p.75).

proposes that six principles be used as guidelines for designing museum programs "which probe the essence of an artifact" (p 77). Brodie's interdisciplinary principles - "pre-knowledge, process, experience, connectedness to life, communication and meaning-in-context" (p. 75) – solicit the viewer's involvement in making meaning for her/himself based on her/his prior knowledge and experiences.

In a similar manner, Garoian (2001) describes five pedagogical strategies of critical inquiry that engage museum viewers from their own cultural perspectives A critical dialogue is encouraged between the personal narratives of the viewer and the museum site, and is constructed through a performative pedagogy Garoian's performative pedagogy includes content that is (1) perceptual. "whereby the subjective experience of the viewer intertwines with the object of the museum" (p 241). (2) autobiographical, whereby the viewer recognizes and acknowledges her place in the historical context suggested by the objects viewed. (3) cultural, as a counterpart to autobiography, this strategy encourages the viewer to assume the knowledge that the museum brings to the viewer. (4) interdisciplinary, which "exposes, examines and critiques the boundaries that exist between disciplines and works of art in order to interconnect academic knowledge with museum knowledge with experiences in the world"(p 245); and finally, (5) institutional, whereby the viewer is encouraged to recognize and critique the environmental conditions of the museum and its professional practices. Garoian's strategies establish a "dialogical play between the museum's academic subjectivity and the private subjectivities of the viewers" (p. 247).

In his article, Anderson (1995) examines an inquiry structure of art criticism that

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adopts a cross-cultural approach. He writes that many educationally-oriented models of art criticism remain formalist and, instead, he proposes a model that considers art in its social context. His approach suggests that a work be used as an instrument to understand the embedded meanings and realities of the people who make it, rather than simply as an ends to be evaluated. Anderson writes

although the aesthetic is foundationally significant, meaning in art can only be fully discovered in its social context, which makes the anthropological method a logical mode of approach (p 202)

Anderson's model suggests an exploration of the aesthetic frameworks from the perspective of the people who made the work. In this way, the viewer is encouraged to seek a personally meaningful and relevant interpretation of art that impels beyond an evaluation of the formal properties of the work

His model provides a visual framework that integrates the recommendations and practices outlined by the above authors. The following part will describe how his model directs the viewer through a progressively richer exploration of cultural objects

Anderson's Model

Anderson (1995) designed an educational model for the cross-cultural examination of works of art drawing from the discipline of anthropology. His questioning strategy examines the object in relation to its cultural context "because it is [the] contextual understanding that provides the critical foundation for discovering meaning in works of art"(p.203). In Anderson's model, the object remains central to any exploration, while the question "what is it for?" generates discussion concerning the

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objects' practical functions, social functions and the belief systems. Since the viewer is

focused on the function and on the makers of the object, personal experience and

knowledge is sought to bridge the distance between the work and the viewer's world.

Anderson writes

... it is through understanding the roles of the work in its cultural context that

we will discover its meaning and significance as well as gain insight about
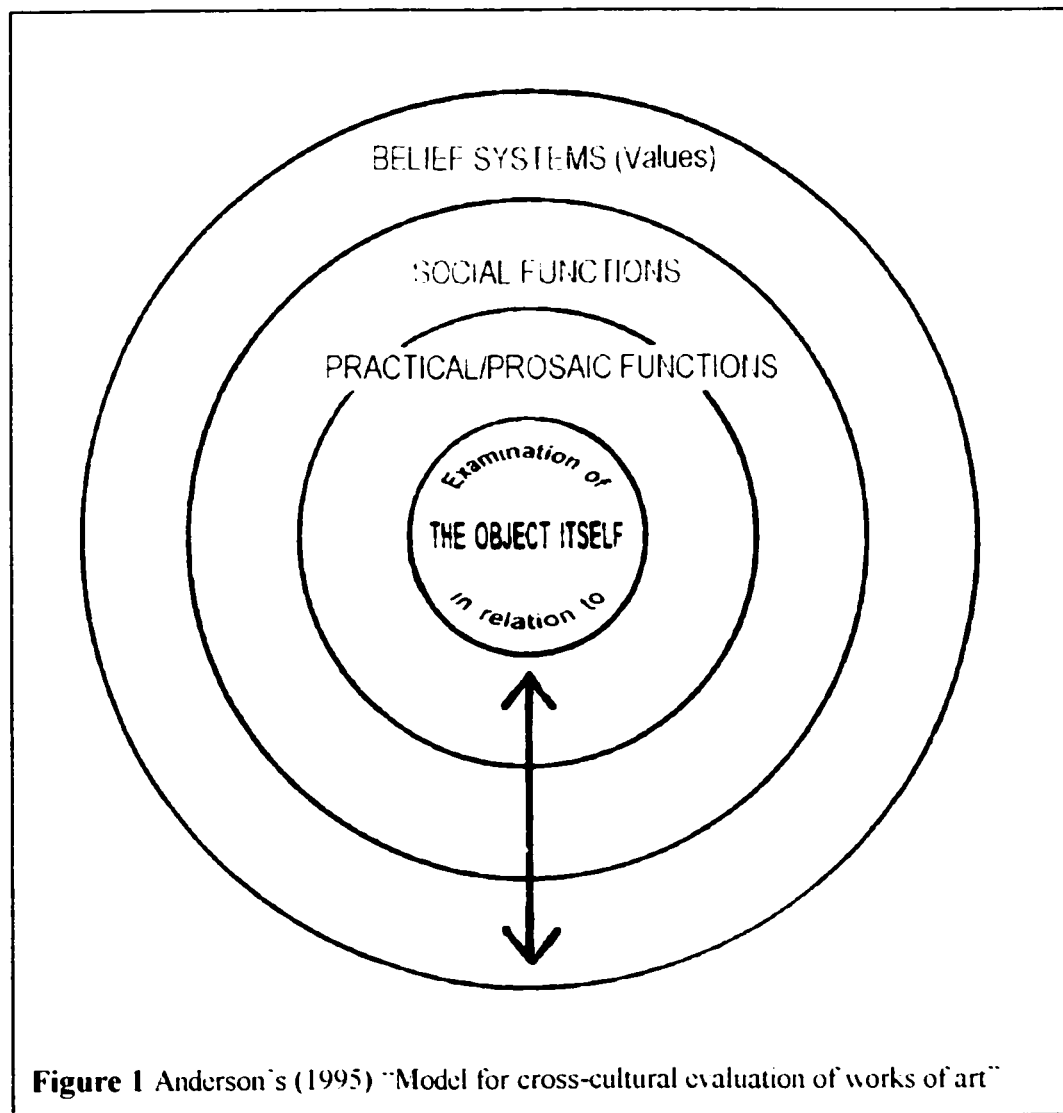
Figure 1 Anderson's (1995) "Model for cross-cultural evaluation of works of art"

the people and culture of its genesis (p.204).

His cross-cultural evaluation model resembles the resounding circles of deeper understanding beginning with a specific or concrete meaning and expanding concentrically to include more abstract or ideological concerns. Asking the question: "what is it for?" related to the object, generates responses that Anderson labels "typological" and "functional" (p.205). By identifying these categories, fundamentally common human pursuits become distinct and, despite social, geographical and cultural differences between the viewer and the maker of the object, parallel perceptions are encouraged.

Anderson suggests that all works can be categorized as one or more of four "artistic typologies" 1) ceremonial art includes "that which serves religious and civil functions, social bonding activities, and rites of passage ", 2) utilitarian art includes works that have a "specific prosaic function" such as a mug, a planter, a bow and arrow or a bicycle; 3) decorative or aesthetic art is "that which is made, perceived, and reflected on for its own sake," and 4) play, fantasy or instructional art is that which includes games or functions as a conceptual image (205-206).

Anderson's list of functional responses to the question "what is it for?" work in tandem with his typological categories to identify commonalities between peoples. His list consists of:

> 1) food (gathering, preparation, consumption), 2) shelter; 3) kinship, gender, and other social human relationships; 4) symbolic communication, 5) territorial defense, territorial aggression; 6) cosmology and religion, 7) health

and healing; 8) leisure; 9) fertility; 10) work and labor; 11) understanding the

relationship to the natural environment; 12) protection from natural disasters;

13) commerce or trade; and 14) education and training (p.206).

Anderson impresses upon his reader that the typological categorization and the functional

inquiry interact together in a contextual exploration and that neither precedes the other

Rather, the works serve to exemplify individual (or cultural) responses to the broad

meanings that are established by his categories. These categories are useful to both the

educator in planning a program (by anticipating certain responses from the viewer, for

example) and the viewer in recognizing common or parallel concerns between

her/himself and the object's maker(s)

Anderson suggests a sequence for the cross-cultural examination of work that

guides the viewer in her/his exploration of functions for the work. The sequence, which

begins with "reaction" and follows with "perceptual analysis, contextual examination [ ]

interpretation and synthesis" (p 203), encourages the viewer to recognize parallel

experiences while enhancing her/his understanding of the object. The sequence he

proposes directs the viewer's learning into richer and multi-faceted levels of recognition

by concentrating upon a work's practical functions, social functions and finally the belief

systems implied by the work

Anderson's model suggests an approach to exploring museum objects in

educational programs that contextualizes works and relies on parallel concerns identified

by the viewers' experiences. Furthermore, layers of information are progressively added

to expand a viewer's understanding of an object. Anderson's model proposes that the

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viewer's experience can be compared to the experience suggested by an object and, in

this way, the viewer might empathize with the object's makers. This dialogical

interaction is made possible when a viewer engages with a work. Since, "artworks

concretely manifest constructed realities that can be presented in no other way"

(Anderson, 1995, p.207), an education program that facilitates this approach encourages a

viewer to explore the realities represented by the works.

An example of a method developed out of Anderson's model, including the

pedagogical influences discussed above, is explored, applied and assessed in Chapter

Three.

CHAPTER III
EDUCATIONAL MODEL

Chapter Three is a discussion of the Museum Education Project (MEP) and will

explain and outline how the Contextual Analysis Model was applied to explore cultural

objects in the art museum. First, an explanation of the methodology used will establish

the parameters of the study. Then, the theoretical Contextual Analysis Model will be

described. The third section will outline the particular conditions in which the MEP was

tested, and will include brief descriptions of the objectives. the site. the participants and

the cultural objects. Finally, the implementation of the theoretical Contextual Analysis

Model will be explained, including some strategies that were used in the model's

practical application. An assessment of the MEP with particular emphasis upon a

reflexive consideration of the Contextual Model and its transferability will be considered

in the concluding Chapter.

Methodology for the Museum Education Project

In this thesis, I used action-research to develop and examine a theoretical model

and its practical implications for a Museum Education Project. This methodology was

chosen because an education program is the practical manifestation of theory, and to

suggest an alternate approach to that being used in the art museum, steps in both theory

and practice need to be examined. In this study, I put new ideas to the test: "Action

research provides a way of working which links theory and practice into the one whole.

ideas-in-action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1984, p.5).

Action-research emphasizes reflexive thinking, applying theory and practice in a

systematic process to better understand and resolve practice-based issues. Elliott (1991)

defines action-research as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the

quality of action within it"(p.69). While action-research consists of three phases –

planning, action and evaluation – Kuhne and Quigley (1997) note that problem-posing

and problem-solving proceed through four core processes that create a "cycle of research

efforts" (p.24). The core processes are planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Ibid,

p. 25).

In this thesis, I propose the practical application of a theoretical model with the

aim of reflecting on its usefulness. While the assessment of the MEP caused me to

consider modifications and further applications, I will not be implementing them at this

time as they are beyond the scope of this study.

The theoretical model and the Museum Education Project

As in the three phases outlined by action-research, the core of this thesis consists

of the three interdependent phases: planning, action and evaluation. The three phases

combine to form the initial cycle of action-research. First, in the planning phase, I

propose a theoretical Contextual Model for cultural objects in the art museum. Second,

in the action phase, I apply this theoretical structure in the design and implementation of a

small Museum Education Project (MEP). The MEP is a one-hour, one-time lesson

designed for a group of three participants (aged 10-11) with a selection of three traditional

objects from Africa exhibited in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA). Third,

given the small scale of the action phase, the evaluation phase takes the form of an

assessment of the two previous phases, commenting upon some issues that are raised by the MEP. Since it is my intention to reflect on this process to better understand and contribute to the practice-based issues in museum education programming, my objective is to suggest an inquiry structure and strategies that could be adapted in future applications to education programs that examine non-western objects in the art museum.

The Contextual Analysis Model

This section describes the Contextual Analysis Model that I developed for the practical exploration of cultural objects in the art museum. The Contextual Analysis Model integrates the pedagogical influences from Anderson and other authors mentioned in Chapter Two. Some practical implementation strategies of the Contextual Model — in reference to the MEP – will be considered in the last section of this Chapter.

I designed the Contextual Analysis Model for the educator wishing to establish a contextual examination of museum works with viewers. It is one possibility in the range of possibilities that exist in which to discuss artworks. The model that I developed retains the approach and most of the theoretical aspects of Anderson's (1995) "Model for cross-cultural examination of works of art." It is also influenced by those authors who recommend theoretical contextual approaches for museum education (Venet, 2002; Garoian, 2001; Wastiau, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Parsons & Blocker, 1993; Chanda, 1992; Dissanayake, 1988; etc.). While my Contextual Model emerged from a combination of these theoretical proposals, my foremost intention was that the design should lend to a practical application for actual museum education conditions.

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As in Anderson's model (discussed in Chapter Two), I developed a process that

examines the object in relation to its cultural context for the Contextual Analysis Model

The museum object is the focus of an exploration with viewers, while the question "what

is it for?" steers each discussion concerning the objects' practical functions, social

functions and the belief systems. Anderson's "artistic typologies" and "functional

categories" (p. 206) establish a fundamental classification of human pursuits in which the

THEMATIC CONTEXT

values/belief systems

WORK 1

social functions

practical functions

WORK 2

WHAT IS IT FOR?

WORK 3

practical functions

social functions

values/belief systems
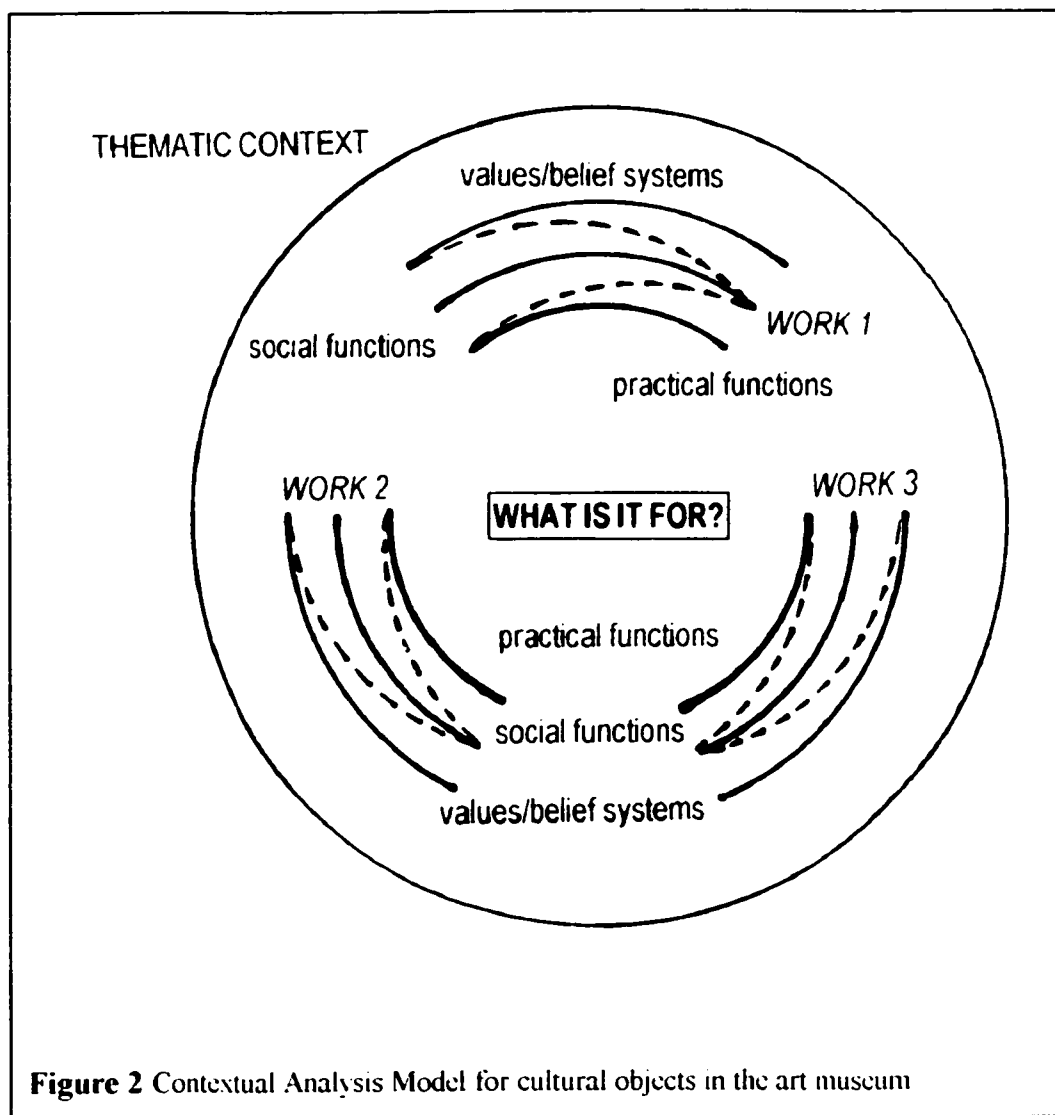
Figure 2 Contextual Analysis Model for cultural objects in the art museum

viewer can reconcile her/his own personal experience and knowledge. The Contextual

Analysis Model develops along progressive stages, which lead the viewer on an

exploration of the realities represented by the works.

For practical application purposes, however, the Contextual Analysis Model

elaborates upon Anderson's model in two distinct ways. First, while Anderson's example

provided a contextual exploration of a single object, for a practical museum application, a

visit would have to include the viewer's consideration of more than one object.

Therefore, to address this, the Contextual Analysis Model proposes the contextual

exploration of a broadly defined theme, which is illustrated by several objects (For

example, in the MEP, three objects are used to discuss the theme of body art) The theme

links the presumed experiences of the viewer, the objective(s) of the examination, and

provides a focal point for the exploration of the contextual nature of the works

The theme should be broad enough to include the viewer's experience as well as

notions put forth by the works It should appeal to all viewers regardless of their

backgrounds and have the flexibility to become detailed when considering specific ideas

expressed by the works. For these reasons, museum works should be selected to

exemplify the theme (and not the reverse, whereby a theme is created to coalesce a set of

works). It is impossible to assume that a museum exhibit or an education program can

illustrate the original context of any work as its definitions vary with new settings

Therefore, by focusing on a distinct theme in the work(s), the viewer is exposed to

different versions of the same concept as expressed by various cultures (and/or makers).

Second, where Anderson's progressive rings of deeper understanding are

distinctly insulated phases, the Contextual Analysis Model connects them In this way, the Contextual Analysis Model implies that a viewer's contextual learning slides inadvertently between concrete and ideological concerns. Again, in the practical translation of Anderson's model, viewers would not likely progress definitively from one phase to the next, but drift between prosaic, social and value-based considerations depending upon their personal experiences and knowledge

Finally, the Contextual Analysis Model retains the examination method that Anderson's model suggests by proposing a sequential examination beginning with the viewer's reaction, followed by her/his perceptual analysis, contextual examination, interpretation and synthesis. (According to Anderson, this sequence can be altered depending on the needs of the situation, the artwork and the educator) This sequence of examination facilitates the viewer's transitional understanding of notions that grow increasingly more abstract and, like Anderson's model, implies points at which parallel concepts are examined. I propose that each examination stage introduce parallel concepts so that the viewer can make personal associations in relation to those extended by the object

The Museum Education Project (MEP)

The MEP is a small trial to assess the validity of the Contextual Analysis Model that transposes the theoretical model into a practical format. This section describes the specific variables used in the MEP that ultimately influenced an assessment of the Contextual Model. First, the objectives that are sought by the MEP are outlined. Next,

the site, the participants and the works used in the MEP are explained to provide the conditions under which the Contextual Model was tested.

MEP objectives

The MEP (the script can be read in Appendix A) was directed by two objectives in order to derive the best conditions in which to test the Contextual Analysis Model. The objectives directed the practical outcomes and influenced the long-term desired effects. The primary objective for the MEP was to explore a strategy of learning that embraces alternate definitions of what "aesthetic" means to different cultures by considering their works in the museum. To do this, I focused on some emblematic signs of body art reflected in three traditional, figurative African works to encourage the participants to recognize some different expressions of aesthetic frameworks.

The secondary objective for the MEP was to encourage the viewer to be less ethnocentric, and to foster tolerance and creativity by understanding what others do and why. I anticipated that these objectives would affect the development and application of the MEP, and I intended that this experience would provide the participants with strategies to independently explore cultural objects in the art museum in the future.

The site

The MEP was developed for and implemented in the African Gallery of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA). The African Gallery is one section in a series of MMFA galleries labelled "Ancient Cultures" located in an underground passage linking the new and the old pavilions of the MMFA. The African Gallery includes approximately 100 works - arranged by regional origin - from various countries

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throughout Africa. All works are grouped and displayed behind glass. The African

Gallery is directly connected to the "Oceanic Gallery" by a wide archway whose exhibits

are displayed in the same manner.

A didactic panel is located on the inside wall of the entrance to the African

Gallery. This panel suggests the important influence that African works had on Western

artists, notably Picasso. Each work is accompanied by a label stating the title, the country

and cultural group from which it comes, the year (if it is known), the materials and the

work's provenance. Occasionally, brief explanatory descriptions will also be included on

the label.

The participants

Three participants volunteered to assist me in assessing the viability of the

Contextual Model in the form of the MEP. The preteen girls - one aged 10 and two aged

11 - had previously visited the MMFA with me once before in another context. They all

knew each other quite well from regular outings with their Home School Association, and

each girl actively participated in the hour-long discussion of the selected works.

The works

I selected three works from the African Gallery of the MMFA to be explored

using the approach outlined by the Contextual Model. A brief interpretation and

photograph of each work is included below to illustrate some of their contextual

significance.

The background information about each work was culled mostly from sources

other than the archives at the MMFA, as these had little or no information available. I

assume that it was difficult to learn about the works from the MMFA for two reasons.

First, each of the works studied in the MEP came as gifts from a Jesuit order rather than as specific acquisitions made by a team of curators. I venture that had the acquisitions been sought after, they would likely have yielded a substantial body of research documented in the archives. Second, Vogel (1988) points out that cultural objects, included in an art display, are often stripped of their contextual information in order that they conform to the Western concept of art. Therefore, it seems that the MMFA is predominantly concerned with the Western aesthetic value of these objects, which is reflected in their exhibition. However, this perspective can be appended through education programs, such as I propose in this thesis.

Research on the Internet and in books for similar works yielded the brief explanations included here, which are by no means exhaustive and focus primarily on each works' decorative markings. For the purpose of the application of the Contextual Model, the research should present an overview of some contextual circumstances. While these works were selected to help illustrate the larger theme of body art, each work represents very distinct practices and traditions specific to their respective cultures.

BaChokwe or Lwena Mask (Mwana Pwo), Angola[5] (Figure 3)
wood, string, vegetable fibre, clay, metal
(no attributed date)

The *mwana pwo* (meaning "young woman") is described as an "entertainment mask," which takes on "political, social, therapeutic, sexual or other overtones" during

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[5]   The prefix "Ba" means "people," thus "BaChokwe" translates into "Chokwe people." Without the prefix "Ba," Chokwe and other tribal group names are used as adjectives.

performances (Wastiau, 2000, p.29). While these masks are worn exclusively by itinerant male dancers for *mukanda* male initiation ceremonies, they represent female ancestors and emphasize features that are valued by the BaChokwe. Masks of this type were worn with a costume of netting that covered the male dancer's entire body. Women accept this male concept of the ideal female if they feel the performance honours them, but they may "chase away" a performer whom they feel is not up to their standards. It is said that the best female dancers in the community often dance alongside Pwo to test the skills of the impersonator (Pérez, 2002).

Pwo, a female role model, speaks gracefully and displays gentle manners, she also demonstrates considerable assertiveness by orchestrating specific songs and instructing drummers to accompany her dances on cue. Pwo also directs and engages the public through hand gestures and with implements that may include a whistle, an adze, or a flywhisk (Pérez, 2002).

This mask of a beautiful female ancestor has almond-shaped eyes set into depressions that echo the eyes. The mouth is slightly open revealing teeth chiselled to points that are typical among the BaChokwe. The tooth deformation is one way in which the audience recognizes the mask as Chokwe (Verswijver, 1995). Scarification is visible on the slender nose, forehead, under each eye and on the chin (MMFA archives) which might instead be representative of tattoos (Verswijver, 1995, p.322) or tears as they remind the viewer of painful experiences and death (Jones, 1996).

Figure 3 BaChokwe or Lwena Mask (Mwana Pwo)

Masks with facial markings can also be used to connect the world of the living

with the world of spirits, and sometimes with the dead. Like tattoos and body paint,

masks create a second skin that serves as a bridge between the ordinary world of the

living and the forces that are believed to control human destiny (American Museum of

Natural History, 2000).

The markings of the mask (including, in this case, a Maltese cross design on the

forehead) are generally ancient patterns and may reflect the status of the woman

represented, as they do on living women. With respect to Chokwe decorative practices,

Vogel (1986) writes

Scarification and other forms of body decoration were traditionally

considered marks of civilization. They distinguished the civilized, socialized

human body from the body in its natural state and from animals. The Chokwe

say that teeth not filed to points are like the teeth of animals (p 25)

While not exclusively BaChokwe (this mask is also found among other cultural

groups from Angola, Zambia and the Congo), the string hairstyle reflects the fashionable

Chokwe female plaited hairstyle of a particular time and place of Chokwe women from

Angola (Wastiau, 2000). The coiffure and other ornaments serve to emphasize the

figure's status and identify the character portrayed (Biebuyck, 1996)

Yoruba Twin Figures (Ere Ibeji), Nigeria (Figure 4: Male Twin Figure)
wood
(19th-20th c)

The ere ibeji or twin male and female figure statuettes from Nigeria are small

standing figures with elongated heads and elaborate hairstyles The male figure is

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Figure 4 <u>Yoruba MaleTwin Figure (Ere Ibeji)</u>

slightly larger and exhibits some scarification patterns on the arms and torso, and wears a beaded necklace. A triangular pendant is also carved on the torso of the male

The Yoruba have an exceptionally high rate of twin births (45 in 1,000 or four times that of Great Britain) which is believed to bring both fortune and trouble to their parents (Ulrich, 1996). Since the infant mortality rate is also high, a mother commissions a carving of an *ere ibeji* in commemoration of the twin that dies. It is believed by the Yoruba that twins share a soul and thus a commemorative statue is fed, clothed and revered to honour the god of twins, *Ibeji*, and to deter the living twin from finding the rest of its soul (Ulrich, 1996).

The statues are carved in the same sex of the dead twin, but portrayed in adulthood. Yoruba craftsman are noted for their skill, and care is taken to represent a likeness to the deceased, including the scars administered at initiation (Ulrich, 1996) While the statues are highly stylized (and in some cases bear a striking resemblance to those who they are made for), they are not portraits (Willett, 1995). Instead, the figures embody Yoruba aesthetic ideals, which include an exaggerated head that is one-third the size of the body. The head is believed to be associated with a person's destiny or "inner head," which determines success and failure in life (Ray, 1998). Other Yoruba aesthetic qualities include a youthful and serene appearance and a smooth luminous surface.

Scarification patterns among the Yoruba often demonstrate an individual's inner qualities, such as bravery. However, not all scars are symbolic. Some scars are simply the traces of medical treatment where the skin as been broken to inject medicinal substances (Gröning, 1997).

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The indigo dye applied to the head is either a natural blue dye or a blue laundry

powder. It is applied to the figures to consecrate them to Shango, the god of thunder,

lightening and the provider of material wealth (Ulrich, 1996).

Asante Doll (Akua'ba), Ghana (Figure 5)
wood
(19th-20th c)

The *Akua'ba* or "child of Akua" is a typical example of a female statuette from

the Asante people of Ghana. Asante legend recounts that the barren Akua commissioned

a small, female doll to care for as though it was real until she successfully gave birth to a

female child. The mother, gazing upon this idealized expression of beauty, also

encouraged the child to be beautiful (Willett, 1995).

The *Akua'ba* can serve as one or more of four functions: a fertility symbol, a

beauty symbol, a charm or a child's toy (Ayiku, 1998). Each function (determined by the

person who commissions it) will influence its forms. The example in the MMFA

collection is a common type and likely acted as a toy. As a child's toy, the doll acts

didactically for the daughter to learn about nurturing (MBAM, 1989). A daughter's entire

life is a preparation for motherhood and, traditionally, the user of the Asante doll would

have prayed to it, strapped it to her back, carried it the way she would a real child and

generally tended to the doll as if it had life (Johnson & Smith, 2002).

Since Asante society is matrilineal, it is essential that women have daughters to

perpetuate the family line and thus the dolls are often female. The dolls are portable and

highly stylized featuring Asante standards of beauty and intelligence: a high flat forehead,

a ringed neck displaying good health (mimicking the creases of fat and thus a healthy

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Figure 5 <u>Asante Doll (Akua'ba)</u>
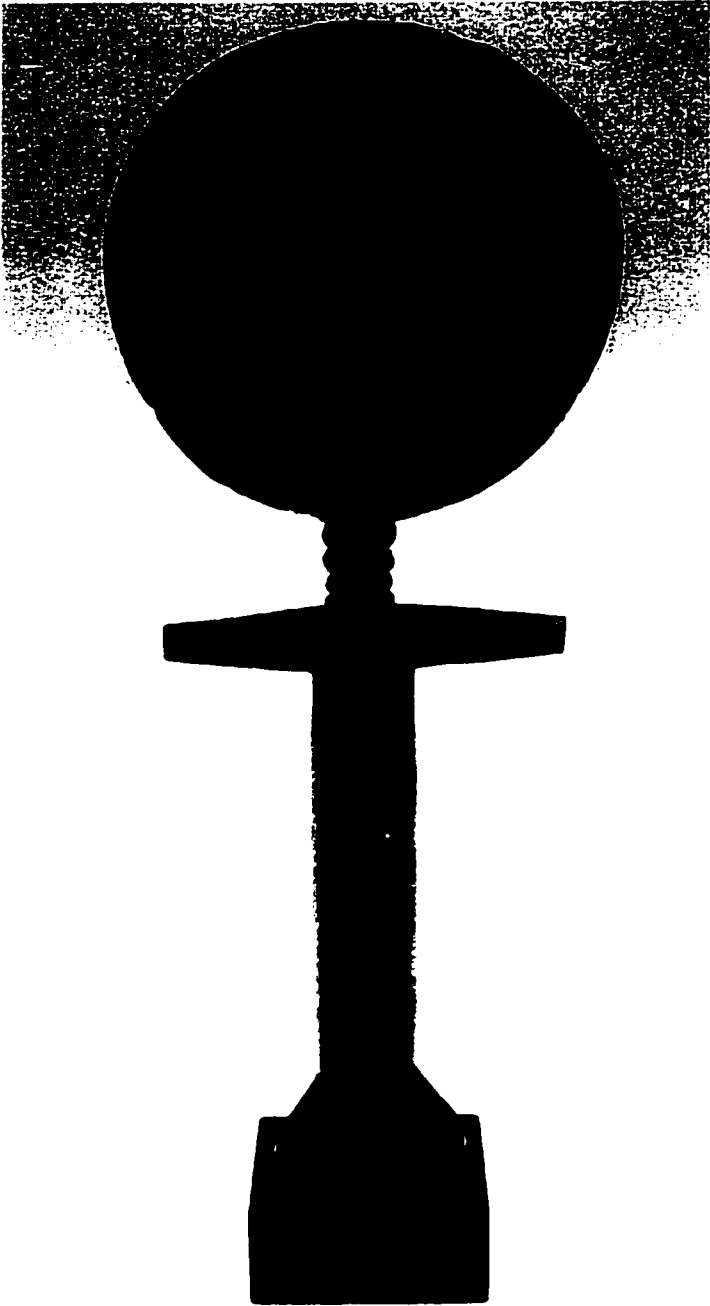
diet), arched eyebrows, small nose and mouth, a long torso with a prominent navel ("to

indicate the proper workings of the organs") and breasts symbolising motherhood

(MBAM, 1989, p.54).

Implementation of the Contextual Analysis Model in the MEP

To assess the practical validity of the Contextual Analysis Model, I created a

Museum Education Project (MEP) as mentioned above. While the assessment of the

Contextual Model (Chapter Four) is specifically related to the circumstances of the MEP,

I hope to imply some general conclusions about the model's usefulness and its application

in future education programs. To give the reader a sense of the transposition of a

theoretical model into a practical application, this section considers the more significant

strategies, illustrated with examples, used to realize the objectives of the MEP

The MEP: An example with the BaChokwe Mask

The grid below demonstrates the progressive stages of analysis as outlined by the

Contextual Analysis Model in an exploration of the BaChokwe Mask considered in the

MEP. (The full grid and MEP outline is included in Appendix A)

practical functions	description of work	questions to draw viewer's attention	supporting information about work (contextual information the educator provides to supplement or exemplify understanding)
	a wooden mask with a string hairstyle, pointed teeth from the Chokwe people in Angola	◗what is this? ◗what kinds of markings can we identify? ◗what is special about the teeth? the eyes?...	✹mask of a beautiful young woman (mwana pwo means "young woman")

social functions	_parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge_ multiple functions of a mask: (protects, beautifies, scares, etc.) who wears masks & what for? (eg. goalie's mask)... tranformative nature of mask: what happens when you put on a mask (at Halloween?) and when you take it off, do you go back to being yourself?...	_contextual information about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels_ ● this mask represents idealized female ancestors and is worn exclusively by men. It would be worn with a costume and danced with at initiation ceremonies ●women may "chase away" a performer whom they feel is not up to their standards. In fact, the best female dancers in the community often dance alongside Pwo to test the skills of the impersonator
belief systems	_parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge (concentration on body decoration)_ identity with a cultural group: when you see someone who is different from you, what is it that you notice? (Eg. a pop celebrity? - dress, hairstyle, etc.) do you dress and wear your hair in the same kind of ways as your classmates or are you very different from everyone else? if you wanted to stick out, what kinds of things could you do to your appearance?	_contextual information about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels (conceptually illustrated through body art)_ ●two marks of beauty, a Maltese Cross design (Cingelyengelye) on the forehead and tooth deformation, are characteristic cultural features of the Chokwe-Lunda ●the Chokwe say that teeth not filed to points are like the teeth of animals ●scarification

		identifies a person's social standing in a group and also marks him as a member of a particular group

Strategies in the MEP

The MEP was divided into three sections: an introduction that outlined the program with the participants; the exploration of the three works in the gallery; and a brief drawing activity to emphasize and personalize the notions explored in the works All three participants engaged in the three sections of the MEP while I kept notes of their reactions, their comments and my reflections as the MEP progressed

Based on the Contextual Analysis Model, the MEP suggests an approach that is different from that of existing educational programs in art museums. By encouraging the viewer to reflect on contemporary and personally relevant experiences as they relate to the theme and objectives in the MEP, I hope to suggest other strategies for the educator These strategies should assist the educator in facilitating an exploration of aesthetic frameworks represented by the exhibited objects

Strategy 1 - Exploiting parallel concepts

In the MEP, the participants and I examined each object in order to yield increasingly complex conceptual possibilities of meaning. An object's practical functions, social functions and belief systems in relation to the participants' knowledge were constructed by that meaning. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) points out that meaning is not found entirely in the object, nor entirely in the viewer, but in a dialogue between the

object and the viewer. Given that each dialogue is unique, the Contextual Model and its application in the MEP, employ processes of interpretation that are constructivist in nature, to encourage the viewer to seek a personally meaningful and contextually relevant interpretation of art objects from different cultures.

The progressive exploration of works in the MEP proposed phases of examination that became increasingly profound (a practical explanation is discussed in the next strategy). This was achieved by leading the participants in an investigation of what they recognized in each work and integrating contextually significant parallels between the work and the participants' experiences. The parallel concepts were as concrete or as abstract as the participants suggested. However, I tried to keep them focused on the understanding of the contextual conditions of the work.

The parallel concepts were identified by considering how the artistic typologies and functional categories (described by Anderson and listed on pages 26-27) link the experience, expressed by the object, to the viewer's reality. For example, a discussion in the MEP concerning the multiple functions of a goalie's mask yielded parallel considerations of the BaChokwe initiation mask. In Anderson's categories, masks might fall under any one of his four artistic typologies and several (but not all) of his functional categories. Both the goalie and the BaChokwe masks are worn to beautify, scare, protect or transform the wearer.

By considering some of the contextual parallels between the two masks, the participants and I shared our understanding of the roles that masks play and we recognized some of the similarities despite different cultural contexts. Once it was

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established that the transformative nature of wearing a mask is experienced in a like

manner, we were able to proceed into an investigation of the cultural discrepancies

suggested by the BaChokwe mask. The participants were specifically curious about what

the BaChokwe mask was used for and why, and they speculated about how the materials

and markings gave them clues. The participant discussions, ignited by parallel concepts,

led to progressively richer interest in the work and broader understandings of the work's

significance to the culture from which it comes.

By drawing parallel associations between the works and the participants'

experiences, the discussions progressively introduced a more profound understanding of

the works' contextual significance. The parallel concepts provoked the participants into

thinking about similar ideas from personal experience and proved particularly successful

in developing their understanding, helping them shift from concrete to abstract notions

In this way, the participants imagined the contexts from which the works came

Furthermore, as the explorations continued, references were drawn among the different

stages and between the works, contributing to a more global understanding of the works,

including the participants' position with regard to the works, as well as to the MEP theme

of body art.

Strategy 2 - Building upon the stages of exploration

Each of the three objects was examined in turn from their practical functions

through to their social functions and, finally, some of the belief systems that my research

substantiated. I conducted the exploration by asking open-ended discussion questions

based on topics that solicited parallel concepts. For example, the exploration of the

Yoruba twin statuettes began with a description of what the participants saw, including

what they felt was special about it. Next, to focus their attention on some social functions

of the object, I proposed discussion questions that related some personal knowledge to

some aspects of social functions represented by the Yoruba twins. One discussion

addressed ideas of commemoration to expose the functional necessity of a statuette in

Yoruba society it represents a deceased twin infant. To prompt the participants to

consider some of the belief systems held by the Yoruba, a discussion topic included some

physical depictions of unseen qualities such as intelligence or success and failure. The

discussion served to demonstrate how the elongated heads of the statuettes signify some

of the Yoruba's aesthetic ideals.

At every stage, Anderson's question "what is it for?" fueled the exploration of the

work. The MEP concentrated upon the functions of each work as they related to

fundamental human pursuits that the participants understood. For a meaningful

understanding of each work, however, I suggest that each work be explored thoroughly

from its practical functions to its more abstract concerns before exploring a new work.

Each subsequent work can include elements or build on discussions generated by the

previous works. But a discussion should be completed before another begins.

I recommend this procedure for two reasons. One, each work represents a distinct

(and perhaps vastly different) culture. Therefore, merging discussions of the social

functions of several works, for example, only serves to disrupt the viewer's receptivity of

the culture from which the object comes. Two, should several works be under

consideration at once, the educator, who is practically applying the progressive phases,

may experience an onslaught of personal associations made by the viewers without a point of reference. By circumscribing each discussion by a progressive exploration of each work, the personal associations are somewhat mitigated and can be addressed

Strategy 3 - Applying a theme

The theme of body art in the MEP subtly threaded the various discussions and connected the exploration to the participants' personal experiences. I felt that the theme was helpful in the design of the MEP because I was able to select examples to specifically explore different conceptions of body art. Also, the theme was beneficial in the implementation of the MEP because it helped me discriminate what was useful in the exploration from what was not

As mentioned earlier, one of the stated objectives for the MEP was to expose viewers to different expressions of aesthetic frameworks. This was encouraged through the contextual exploration of different African cultures that are represented by their objects in the MMFA. The theme of body art helped to correlate the viewer's own understanding with the objects' expressions of body art. For example, the participants recognized some tattoos on the works. Their own cultural understandings of tattoos were examined in relation to the meanings of those exhibited by the works. While the theme limited the examination of the whole context of each work, by isolating one aspect, the participants could grasp some notions influenced by the greater context. In this way, the theme served as a conduit that enabled the participant to focus on how different contextual conditions affect the aesthetic expression represented by the exhibited works

Strategy 4 - Integrating ideas into a hands-on activity

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At the end of our exploration of the works, I asked the participants to create a personal drawing integrating some of the notions we had discussed. They were to choose a method of body decoration and a personal symbol to represent graphically (as though they were truly applying it to themselves).

The drawing activity compelled the participants to engage with the learned information and express it in a tangible way. By focusing the participants' attention on an activity that combined their learning about the museum objects (and MEP theme) with their personal interests, they learned to identify some distinctiveness among the different aesthetic frameworks. Moreover, the activity varied the rhythm of the MEP and reinforced the ideas discussed in the explorations. Therefore, while the Contextual Analysis Model is based on certain educational approaches, it does not limit any creative solution that substantiates its process.

Finally, while the Contextual Analysis Model is a proposal for one way of exploring cultural objects in the Western art museum, it is not the only way. Ideally, the strategies proposed here could be applied to education programs with cultural objects in the art museum in order that the viewer relate to or imagine the conditions surrounding the work's original context. That way, the aesthetic qualities that contribute to the cultural object's value in the art museum are considered in terms that have significance to the people that use and/or recognize it. Therefore, while the word "art" may not be applied to the object (by its makers), the work's conceptual meaning can help illustrate to the Western viewer in the Western art museum what aesthetic choices have been made

and why.

The final Chapter of the thesis will comment on the usefulness of the Contextual Analysis Model with respect to an assessment of the MEP. It will describe my evaluation of the MEP – specifically three issues that arose in its application for this study – and offer some insight on the viability and the transferability of the Contextual Analysis Model. These conclusions will enable me to comment on the transferability of the Contextual Analysis Model for other cultural objects in the art museum, as well as the implications of applying it to works of Western fine arts

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this study, a contextual approach to examining cultural objects in the art museum has been examined in order to consider how museum education programs can assist the viewer in contemplating different aesthetic frameworks from the perspective of the culture from which the objects come. In the design, implementation and reflection of a small Museum Education Project (MEP), I found that the Contextual Analysis Model is a useful educational approach for examining cultural objects that educators can employ to improve their museum practice. To be utilitarian beyond the scope of this study, however, the Contextual Model has to be viable and transferable to other circumstances. Therefore, in this final Chapter of the thesis, I will briefly discuss how the Contextual Analysis Model is applicable to educational programming in the art museum

In the first section of the Chapter, I will assess the MEP by emphasizing some of the strengths and weaknesses that I noted as I animated the program. Three issues serve to illustrate the Contextual Model's viability as well as act as guidelines for the reader wishing to implement the model. Next, the transferability of the Contextual Model is discussed in terms of the variables operating at every museum. Finally, as a proposal for the model's further application, I briefly note some of the implications of applying the Contextual Model to works of Western fine arts.

Assessment of the MEP

The main objective of the Contextual Analysis Model was to encourage learning

about museum objects by exploring the original contexts from which the objects come in relation to the viewer's experience. The Contextual Model was practically applied in the form of a MEP to assess its viability.

Three significant issues emerged as I reflected on the process of the MEP. Like the suggested strategies for implementing the Contextual Model, these issues are guidelines for improving the MEP in a future action-research cycle and could also be beneficial to the reader. While these reflections stem from the practical application of the MEP, they influence the theoretical Contextual Analysis Model and should be considered in terms of whether an intervention of this kind is suitable for further applications. Ultimately, I hope that these reflective issues will be useful to the reader by providing some insight into engaging viewers in education programs with the art and cultural objects they experience in the art museum.

Issue 1. Directing the discussion

To illustrate a parallel function between the experience expressed by the work and the experience of the participants. I engaged the participants in contemporary and personally relevant discussions. Hardly knowing the participants (as in most museum education situations), I anticipated certain responses in order that I could then integrate the similar concerns of the makers of the objects under consideration. Therefore, my lesson plan for the MEP included open-ended questions that explored some contextual information of the objects. While these discussions were beneficial (as I will discuss further below), the discussions of the participants' personal understandings or experiences sometimes became the focus of the exploration. I felt that these tangential

byproducts of personal experiences or thoughts served to detract from the MEP's objectives and diffuse the focus of the parallel functions between the object and the participant.

As an educator actively animating an exploration with an expressed objective (in this case, to better understand the contextual significance of the work), I recognized the need for flexible methods to limit the tangential discussions. Often, the participants' tangential suggestions led the discussion toward notions that were inconsequential (and wasted time) or that contradicted the MEP's objectives. Therefore, while every situation is unique, I grew to realize over the course of this MEP, that a cognizant educator needs to actively listen, to be comfortable with the works and the program objectives, and, most importantly, to always be able to focus on the contextual significance of the work and how that contributes to the larger issues as needed. This receptivity will elicit methods that better direct a discussion and limit extreme tangential suggestions.

In directing a discussion, one of the greatest challenges was to recognize which tangential discussions were meaningful to the program objectives and which were not. For example, a discussion in the MEP which detracted somewhat from looking at the specific work particularly enriched the general program objectives. Sparked by a discussion about the function of a mask, one participant in the MEP suggested that some traditions are "crazy." While her examples illustrated how certain cultures engage(d) in "crazy" practices, the group discussion resolved that the traditions seemed "crazy" only to those of us who are not part of the culture and who have no basis for reference. The unanticipated, tangential discussion led the group away from the objectives sought for a

discussion of the mask, but it led fittingly into one of the overall objectives of the MEP - that of fostering acceptance and tolerance toward the cultures whose objects are exhibited. Ultimately, this discussion served to complement the participants' learning within the expressed parameters of the MEP. Had this discussion been curtailed, the participants might not have resolved their idea of "crazy traditions." Therefore, I realized that an educator has to be flexible enough to allow some seemingly distracting tangents in case they may be beneficial.

The Contextual Analysis Model allows the educator to be flexible in directing discussions. The progressive stages of examination enable participants to consider concrete or abstract notions as they see fit. Moreover, the Contextual Model can guide the educator by identifying and circumscribing experiences which are relevant to the stages of exploration.

Issue 2: Gauging discussion time

A second issue that arose during the MEP and caused me to reflect on the application of the Contextual Model was the discussion time necessary in the examination of the progressive stages. The personal associations that the participants unearthed in the course of an exploration of the cultural objects sometimes generated long discussions. It was my experience in the MEP that when they became prolonged (even if they were relevant), the discussions sometimes caused participants to lose interest. Moreover, each progressive stage upon which the MEP is built (discussions concerning the practical functions, the social functions and the belief systems of each work) required a minimum amount of discussion which, put together, easily became lengthy.

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While I noted the advantages of progressing through the stages, a discussion that solicited too many parallel personal associations or that presented too many facets became taxing for the participants. This may be due in part to the young age of the participants. However, a prolonged discussion (even when it is relevant) risks exhausting anyone. Therefore, I realized that the educator needs to be actively aware of each participant's involvement and identify when to abbreviate and redirect the discussion.

The Contextual Analysis Model entails a minimum of discussion to advance the participants through the progressive stages. However, the discussions can be tailored to meet the needs of the participants. For instance, should I have the opportunity to redo this program with this age group, I would pepper the program with more dynamic parallel examples to seize their attention. Alternatively, the drawing activity (or some other hands-on activity) can be introduced at any point to change the rhythm of the program while minding the objectives. The Contextual Model allows for a progressive analysis that can be adapted to the group's needs.

Issue 3: Prior knowledge and its effect on present learning

What stood out for me as the most significant issue with the MEP and challenge with the Contextual Analysis Model was converting participants' preconceived knowledge and opinions/beliefs into contextually authentic understandings of the African works. The participants were bright and offered interpretations that integrated their interdisciplinary schooling, such as the associations that one participant suggested between the works and the Mayan rituals she had recently studied. Nevertheless, I noted repeatedly how the participants labelled and drew conclusive interpretations about the

African objects, which were mostly inaccurate and occasionally stereotypical (which I believe was due to a lack of familiarity with African works).

As an educator, I felt conflicted because I wanted to encourage the participants' personal meaning-making, yet I also wanted to encourage a recognition of other contextual points of view – primarily those which propose a perspective from which the works were made. Where I usually welcome a palette of personal associations to draw conclusions about a work, in the contextual exploration of these works I felt obliged to circumscribe the participants' conclusions. In other words, unless they were profusely directed (by parallel concepts), participants' personal responses often did not correspond to the contextual significance represented by the object.

To apply the Contextual Model meant that participants' prior knowledge would occasionally be contradicted. For example, during an examination of the Asante Doll, a discussion of the object began with a description of what it was. One participant surmised that it was a replica of a woman who wears brass rings around her neck. Her explanation, drawn from her knowledge, continued with a description of the brass rings and their effect on an individual. The participant was so convinced (and convincing) that it seemed nearly impossible to consider other ideas (and the other participants did not). Without wanting to cause her to lose confidence in her abilities to interpret, I sought a way to encourage the group to consider other possibilities. Finally, I had to share my research concerning the work, contradicting her well-considered interpretation.

This process left me feeling like I was in search of the "one right answer" to my questions rather than encouraging a variety of creative responses. However, once the

basic stage (practical functions) of exploration was established, it seemed that a range of possible interpretations for the social functions and belief systems was more fluid. The contextually significant parallels between the work and the participants' experiences (in the form of pre-determined discussion topics) directed participants' thinking along the broader artistic typologies and the functional categories comprised by the Contextual Model.

The explorations of parallel concepts were particularly effective in illustrating to the participants the fundamental similarities or differences between the maker and themselves. For example, a chronicle of the participants' last names resulted in the recognition that Western familial patterns generally follow patrilineal lines. This understanding demonstrated how social patterns are conceived differently should matrilineal lines take precedence, as they do among the Asante. The contextual significance of the Asante Doll – the material expression of cultural beliefs was clearer to the participants when they became aware of the ideological differences between themselves and the culture under consideration.

Therefore, while my encouragement of personal associations and prior knowledge needed to be monitored when examining the works in the first stage (the description of the work), the participants' experiences and prior knowledge – when counterbalanced by the parallel concepts – were particularly useful in helping them to understand the later stages (social functions and belief systems) of exploration. The Contextual Model limited how the works would be explored, yet ultimately, this new perspective compelled the participants to recognize the different aesthetic frameworks represented by the works.

But as I feel that it is important to conceive of the original social and cultural context of cultural objects, further thought must be given to some constructivist strategies to be employed in the first stage of a progressive analysis.

Assessment of the contextual analysis model

In light of the issues raised above in the MEP, I feel that the Contextual Analysis Model provides a flexible yet solid structure with which to construct practical education programs for the art museum that exhibits cultural objects. The value of using the Contextual Model is as much in the process as in what is discovered. Anderson (1995) writes of his model upon which the Contextual Model is based

> (...) cross-cultural criticism not only accesses other cultures, but through examining the way others do things, it sheds light on possibly unexamined cultural assumptions of our own (p.207)

The Contextual Model proposes a method of educational analysis of cultural objects in the museum. I propose that the structure of the Contextual Analysis Model is transferable to other museum education programs with art works from different cultures as well as with Western fine arts (which I discuss below). To be a truly universal practical model, however, further consideration has to be given to the variables that were outlined in this MEP. These variables – the site, the works and the participants – will affect the application of the Contextual Analysis Model in other museum education settings.

The variables

The first variable considers the Contextual Model in relation to a site-specific mandate. The objectives of a museum's education programs will prescribe the appropriate educational approaches. In this application, I implemented the Contextual Model with the intention that it should meet the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' education mandate. In their mission statement, the MMFA writes

> The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (...) has a mission to attract the broadest
>
> and most heterogeneous public possible, and to provide that public with first-
>
> hand access to a universal artistic heritage (MMFA, 2000-2001).

Therefore, a model which engages the public in a contextual examination of works in an effort to examine different aesthetic frameworks could be an asset to the existing models at the MMFA.

As stated previously, Anderson (1995) mentions that many educationally-oriented models of art criticism remain formalist, and hence he recommends an inquiry structure that adopts a cross-cultural approach. Since the Contextual Analysis Model proposes some strategies for exploring works that are different than a formal analysis, it is a befitting complement to or a substitute for the educational models in place in many art museums.

The second variable – the museum works – examined using the Contextual Model are circumscribed primarily by the museum display. However, the model can be adapted for the examination of works from different cultures. For example, in this inquiry the works chosen for a contextual analysis came from different cultural groups in Africa.

The selection of works was due to the limitations imposed by the exhibition given that no single African cultural group is overly represented at the MMFA. Therefore, a theme, such as body art, was identified and different works in the exhibition were selected to illustrate it.

An educational program's theme need not necessarily be articulated by an exhibition. However, as in this inquiry, the selected examples should clearly contribute to the contextual objectives in the program. While the exhibition delineates the substantive conditions, including what works are exhibited and how and where they are placed, the educational design of a contextual program can stretch beyond what is suggested by an exhibition. It is for this reason that I propose that the Contextual Model is appropriate for the exploration of any kind of artwork.

The third variable, the participants, is considered in relation to a successful application of the Contextual Analysis Model. While it can be adapted to suit the various ages of participants, the model would be very difficult to implement with young children since it focuses on and is propelled by the personal understandings of the participants. Even with the participants aged 10 and 11, there were times when I noted that the progressive stages outlined by the Contextual Model were too conjectural. Nevertheless, some of the examination strategies proposed by the Contextual Model could be complementary to other kinds of explorations with young children. (For example, simple associations with parallel concepts).

In contrast, because the Contextual Model concentrates on the personal understandings of viewers, it readily accommodates the heterogeneity of museum visitors

The culturally diverse backgrounds of viewers coming to the museum are an asset to a contextual exploration of artworks. The exchange of personal understanding, elicited by these examination strategies, can generate new learning, creative ideas and appreciation toward other cultures. Therefore, while the Contextual Model is not a suitable exploration strategy for all visitors, it can complement other educational programs and it proposes methods that invite diverse responses from viewers.

Overall, the Contextual Model suggests an exploration format that is highly transferable and advantageous to an examination of all works. Given the multiplicity of art museums and the viewers who visit them (as well as their respective agendas), the three variables above need serious consideration prior to the model's adaptation. Notwithstanding, some parts of the model may be more useful than others given particular conditions.

The contextual analysis model as an approach for works of Western fine arts

The Contextual Analysis model discussed in this study need not be limited to the examination of cultural objects in the art museum. A recommendation for future exploration is how the model can be applied to education programs with Western fine artworks.

It is my experience that a contextual analysis already complements many education programs in art museums. However, an analysis that specifically addresses the different aesthetic frameworks in which artists work might serve to further elucidate the

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formal choices they make. For example, a contextual examination of a *Madonna* painting by Raphael would reveal some of the cultural circumstances regarding the religious and commercial systems in which Renaissance painters worked. As the progressive stages of a contextual analysis would disclose, these circumstances directly influenced the formal elements and the intended audience's perceptions of them. Moreover, at its most abstract stage (belief systems), a contemporary interpretation would expose the modified role the painting plays in museum exhibits today.

In spite of everything, each museum display contributes to the changes in criteria and definition of any work, as Philips and Steiner (1999) suggest

At each point in its movement through space and time, an object has the

potential to shift from one category to another and, in so doing, to slide along

the slippery line that divides art from artifact from commodity (p 15)

An extensive contextual analysis of Western works would concentrate on the particular cultural circumstances and unearth the different aesthetic frameworks in which artworks are created. It would also lead the viewer to recognize how the work is re-defined by its inclusion in a museum exhibit. Perhaps it is through the contextual studies of non-Western art that some initial models can be established for the contextual studies of Western aesthetic frameworks.

Summary comments

Learning in the art museum is a unique experience for every visitor. As museum education rejuvenates its timeworn role (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991), the potential to

develop education programs that stimulate viewers is immeasurable. Education programs can be among the most influential instruments in a museum, incorporating contemporary debate even when exhibits remain static and resolute. Consequently, the viewer's informal learning in museums can alter or broaden how they understand the world and their place in it.

Experimentation with different educational approaches can lead to creative meaning-making between the viewer and the works being explored. Csikszentmihalyi (1995) recommends that museums experiment more with what works with the learning in their institutions while Gallant (1992) encourages further research into visual learning in the museum. The educational model (and its subsequent application in a museum program) designed in this study is an attempt at both research and experimentation in museum learning that examines works from various perspectives - in particular their point of origin. By examining works in context and proposing one interpretation among possibilities, the viewer is encouraged to learn beyond what can be seen on the work's surface. I suggest -- with the model in this study - that this type of learning engages the viewer's personal experience, enhancing the viewer's ability to understand her/himself more clearly in relation to the ideas proposed by the works. Therefore, a contextual analysis of works in the museum encourages the viewer to relate this learning to the human situation of which she/he is a part.

Finally, a contextual analysis proposes a structure to examining museum works in order that the viewer recognize how her/his experience is defined by the art museum. An education program can acculturate the viewer to the museum's codes by deconstructing

and/or illuminating different messages. As works from various cultures assume their role

as "art" in the museum exhibition, the viewer's ability to experience the aesthetic

frameworks the objects represent resides in the learning tools she/he can access

Carefully constructed educational experiences, such as the one modelled on the

Contextual Analysis, invites the viewer to explore works by exposing the messages

mediated by the museum.

APPENDIX A

Museum Education Project:
procedure of practical implementation with a group of children

Intro (10 min)	What gallery we are in and what we are going to do
MEP (30 min)	Consideration of three African works with a thematic link to body art
Conclusion (20 min)	Consideration of body art as it relates to self and drawing activity

<u>Intro (10 min)</u>   <u>What gallery we are in and what we are going to do</u>

<Today. we are going to look at some works in the African galleries and see how the people that made them think about the same kinds of things we do but they express it differently than we do. We are also going to look at the way they decorate their things, which tells us a little about the different ways they decorate their own bodies. Then we are going to draw a picture of how we might transform our appearance by adding a symbol to our bodies. ·

<u>MEP (30 min)</u>   <u>Consideration of three African works with a thematic link to body art</u>

Bachokwe or Lwena Mask (Mwana Pwo), Angola
accession no. 1975.F162 (MBAM)
wood, string, vegetable fibre, clay, metal

practical functions	*description of work*	*questions to draw viewer's attention*	*supporting information about work (contextual info the educator provides to supplement or exemplify understanding)*
	a wooden mask with a string hairstyle, pointed teeth from the Chokwe people in Angola	▶what is this? ▶what kinds of markings can we identify? ▶what is special about the teeth? the eyes	●mask of a beautiful young woman (*mwana pwo* means "young woman")

social functions	*parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge* multiple functions of a mask: (protects, beautifies, scares, etc.) who wears masks and what for? (eg. goalie's mask) tranformative nature of mask: what happens when you put on a mask (at Halloween)? and when you take it off, do you go back to being yourself?	*contextual info about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels* ● this mask represents idealized female ancestors and is worn exclusively by men. It would be worn with a costume and danced with at initiation ceremonies ● women may "chase away" a performer whom they feel is not up to their standards. In fact, the best female dancers in the community often dance alongside Pwo to test the skills of the impersonator
belief systems	*parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge (concentration on body decoration)* identity with a cultural group: when you see someone who is different from you, what is it that you notice? (e.g. a pop celebrity? - dress, hairstyle, etc.) do you dress and wear your hair in the same kind of ways as your classmates or are you very different from everyone else? if you wanted to stick out, what kinds of things could you do to your appearance?	*contextual info about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels (conceptually illustrated through body art)* ● two marks of beauty, a Maltese Cross design (Cingelyengelye) on the forehead and tooth deformation, are characteristic cultural features of the Chokwe-Lunda ● the Chokwe say that teeth not filed to points are like the teeth of animals ● scarification

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			identifies a person's social standing in a group and also marks him as a member of a particular group

Asante Doll *(Akua'ba)*, Ghana

accession no. 1975 F 146 (MBAM)
wood

practical functions	*description of work* a typical example of a female statuette from the Asante in Ghana made of wood	*questions to draw viewer's attention* ●what is this? ●what might be this used for? does it make you think of anything you played with when you were young? ●what kinds of markings can we identify? ●what is special about the neck? the forehead?	*supporting information about work (contextual info the educator provides to supplement or exemplify understanding)* ● the *Akua 'ba* means "child of Akua" Asante legend recounts that the barren Akua commissioned a small, female doll to care for as though it was real until she successfully gave birth to a female child ● as a child's toy, the doll is acts didactically for the daughter to learn about nurturing
social functions	*parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge* real life games (also with statuette) girls/sisters - when you play with your dolls, what kinds of things do you do? do you treat the doll as though it were real? (feed it, put it in the stroller, etc.), where do you learn how to care for your doll? matrilineal/patrilineal patterns do you carry your mom or your dad's last name - or both? do (did) your 4 grandparents all have the same last	*contextual info about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels* ●a daughter's entire life is a preparation for motherhood and, traditionally, the user of the Asante doll would have it prayed

	name as you? which are different?	over, strap it to her back, carry it the way she would an actual child and generally tend to the doll as if it had life ● the Asante are a matrilineal people and daughters are essential to perpetuate the family line, therefore, the dolls are almost always female
belief systems	*parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge (concentration on body decoration)* conception of beauty: think of someone that you think is "beautiful," what are the kinds of things that make that person beautiful? does everybody think the same things make someone beautiful?	*contextual info about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels (conceptually illustrated through body art)* ● the doll demonstrates Asante standards of beauty and intelligence a high flat forehead, a ringed neck displaying good health (mimicking the creases of fat and thus a healthy diet), arched eyebrows, small nose and mouth, a long torso with a prominent navel ("to indicate the proper workings of the organs") and breasts symbolising motherhood

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Yoruba Twin Figures (Ere Ibeji), Nigeria
accession no. 1975.F.150 (MBAM)
wood

practical functions	description of work	questions to draw viewer's attention	supporting information about work (contextual info the educator provides to supplement or exemplify understanding)
	wooden twin figure statuettes from the Yoruba in Nigeria elongated heads coloured in indigo	●what is this? ●what might be this used for? does it make you think of anything you played with when you were young? ●what is special about the head? the hairstyle? ●what kinds of markings can we identify?	●the statues are commissioned by a mother whose twin baby has died. She carries and treats it as though it were alive ●the indigo colour is either a natural blue dye or laundry powder and is applied to the figures to consecrate them to Shango (the god of material wealth)
social functions	parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge commemoration: how do you remember someone (or a pet) who has died? what kinds of things do you do? what do you do with that person's things? real life games (also with doll): girls/sisters - when you play with your dolls, what kinds of things do you do? do you treat the doll as though it were real? (feed it, put it in the stroller, etc.)		contextual info about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels ●the Yoruba have an exceptionally high rate of twin births. Since the infant mortality rate is also high, a mother commissions a carving of an ere ibeji in commemoration of the twin that dies ●it is believed by the Yoruba that twins share a soul and thus a commemorative statue is fed, clothed and revered to honour the

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		god of twins, *Ibeji*, and to deter the living twin to find the rest of its soul
belief systems	*parallel concepts between work and viewer's personal experience knowledge (concentration on body decoration)* ideas of intelligence: what are some of the ways we recognize 'smart people' on tv? (glasses, nerdy, scientific types); how can we see what "smartness" looks like? badges of honour: what kinds of things do we do for athletes who win at the Olympics? what about soldiers who are brave/who are heros?	*contextual info about the work that the educator provides to illustrate parallels (conceptually illustrated through body art)* ● the head is believed to be associated with a person's destiny or "inner head," which determines success and failure in life. Yoruba aesthetic ideals also include an exaggerated head that is one third the size of the body ● scarification patterns among the Yoruba often demonstrate an individual's inner qualities, such as bravery. However, not all scars are symbolic. Some are simply the traces of medical treatments where the skin as been broken to inject medicinal substances

Conclusion (20 min):   Consideration of body art as it relates to self and drawing activity

<Now that we've seen three different objects from different parts and different peoples in Africa, can you name some of the ways they decorated their objects that is also similar to how they make their bodies beautiful? [scarification, elongated heads, hairstyles, pointed

teeth]. What are some other ways that you know of that change the way a person looks or decorates their body? [make-up, piercing, adorning with jewellery, painting, tattooing, scarring, body shaping (foot or head binding, plastic surgery)]. For every thing a person chooses to do, they have a reason. Even today, as you look at what you decided to wear, your style of hair cut, the jewellery you're wearing, etc. has good reason - whether you are aware of it or not. Many things about you also identify you with your culture: your family, your classmates, your friends.

Today, we're going to draw a picture of how we could make ourselves over differently if we wanted to stand out. Find something in your pocket or on you - could be a ring, a hair barrette, a key chain figurine, a gum wrapper - this is going to be your "symbol." This item and how it looks is going to represent an idea you have about yourself. For example, if it's a gum wrapper - you like chewing gum; if it's a Spiderman figurine, you might like his speed, ability to climb walls, etc.>

Activity:
- Take the chosen item and represent it visually on your body through some decorative application (by drawing on paper the body part it will be applied to and then the depiction of the item)

To consider:
- where on your body you will put this?
- transforming an item into a two-dimensional picture (will you modify, add to it, take away from it?)
- colours used (will you keep the same ones? add in more, use less?)
- permanence (scarring, tatooing, painting, shaving, piercing)

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