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TOURISME CULTUREL : TENDANCES ET STRATÉGIES  
CULTURAL TOURISM: TRENDS AND STRATEGIES  
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### Tourisme culturel : tendances et stratégies

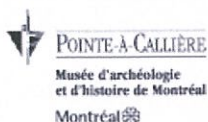
Colloque organisé par Pointe-à-Callière, musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal, et le Centre des sciences de Montréal. Du 29 septembre au 3 octobre 2008, Montréal, Québec, Canada

### Cultural Tourism: Trends and Strategies

Conference organized by Pointe-à-Callière, the Montréal Museum of Archaeology and History, and the Montréal Science Centre. September 29 to October 3, 2008, Montréal, Quebec, Canada

### Turismo cultural: Tendencias y estrategias

Coloquio organizado por Pointe-à-Callière, musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal y el Centre des Sciences de Montréal. Del 29 de septiembre al 3 de octubre de 2008, Montreal, Quebec, Canadá



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## METAPHORS AS CREATIVE THINKING IN AESTHETIC INTERPRETATION

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### Research Context

Renowned art critic and theorist Danto (1981) argues that aesthetic understanding has more in common with most intellectual and cognitive types of activities than it does with a simple pleasuring of the senses or the affect (as is too often assumed about art and other aesthetic activities). Efland (2002), a prominent and respected art educator, proposes that, in fact, a work of art is twice interpreted: first by the artist during the process of its creation, then again by the viewer who must symbolically recreate the work in order to elucidate its meaning. After completing an extensive review of the role of mental imagery in aesthetic cognition, Efland proposes that metaphoric expressions may be essential to creative and artistic activity. "The arts are places where the constructions of metaphor can and should become the principal object of study, where it is necessary to understand that the visual images or verbal expressions are not literal facts, but are embodiments of meanings" (p. 153).

According to Sagarin and Gruber (1999), a metaphor is a "symbolic or literary device that constructs or represents a qualitative relationship between two components that constructs or represents one component in terms of the other." Examples include the expressions "bitter cold" and "loud colours" (Holyoak & Thagard, 1995). Analogies differ from metaphors in that they provide a "mapping of similarity or relationships between two or more phenomena" that applies to all the knowledge domains targeted by the comparison (Mumford & Porter, 1999, p. 263). Shelley (2004) provides the following example: "Just as a ship needs a captain to direct her course, so a state needs a good leader to set its agenda" (p. 225). According to Mumford and Porter (1999), a growing number of scholars now consider that analogical and metaphoric reasoning likely provides the foundation for creative thought across a wide range of scholarly activities. In my last study (Lachapelle, 2005), I observed the presence of analogies and metaphors in many of the informants' hypotheses about the works of art; as a result, I have come to share Efland's interest in these as a strategy for aesthetic interpretation. At the present time, we know very little about the role of analogical and metaphoric constructions in viewers' art interpretation process. How do non-expert interpretations compare to expert ones in this regard? What types of analogies and metaphors do expert and non-expert viewers construct in their responses to works of art? How skilled are expert and non-expert viewers in analogical and metaphoric construction? These are some of the questions to be addressed by this study.

### The Research Program

The study of viewers' aesthetic responses to *contemporary* art is a recent problem for art museum research. Few studies have been conducted or undertaken on this topic. Consequently, this program of research seeks to construct a better understanding of the ways in which adult art viewers use certain thinking and learning strategies in order to interpret and appreciate works of contemporary visual art. To reveal a wider range of potential responses according to different viewer skill levels, the research program will compare the verbal art responses of a range of skilled and lesser skilled *non-expert viewers*.

To allow for a comparison of the skills of various non-expert viewers, an existing database consisting of non-expert viewers' responses to works of public contemporary art will be used. To create this data base, my research team and I conducted research sessions with 51 non-expert viewers in order to document their verbal responses to works of contemporary art under two different art viewing conditions: a self-guided visit of a collection of public contemporary art and a researcher-directed art viewing activity requiring sustained and organized viewing and thinking about a single work of contemporary art. The two analytic procedures described below will require the use of selected case studies taken from this data bank. More specifically, through the two studies proposed in this summary, I wish to determine the importance of creative thinking strategies in non-expert adults' art interpretation activities.

First, I will investigate and compare the extent to which differently skilled viewers resort to using analogies as a thinking strategy for art interpretation. Second, I will also examine the role of metaphors in these same viewers' verbal appreciations of works of contemporary visual art. Analogical and metaphoric reasoning are generally acknowledged to play a significant role in creative thinking (Gibbs, 1999; Sagarin & Gruber, 1999; Mumford & Porter, 1999). It is my view that creative thinking is an essential component of a productive and successful art interpretation strategy.

By comparing non-expert viewers of varying skill levels, the research program presented in this proposal has the potential of identifying specific strengths and shortcomings in the interpretation skills and strategies of adult art viewers, particularly in the lesser skilled viewers. Also, through the exemplars provided by the responses of the more skilled informants, this research program also has the potential to shed light on the pathways of learning that can lead to better art viewing experiences. The long-term goal of my research is to eventually propose practical strategies that museums and schools may use for addressing the educational needs of all their visitors or students.

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